

# HOW THE HORSE IS CARED FOR AT THE FRONT

## The Magnificent Work being Done in France for Britain's War-horses

By Colonel the Right Hon. MARK LOCKWOOD, C.V.O., M.P.

**S**INCE the beginning of the age of chivalry, when first knights spurred into battle, the horse has been always associated with the romantic pageantry of warfare. Until the last few months, to think of war was to conjure up stirring visions of reckless cavalry charges, of foam-flecked chargers "clothed with thunder," and to imagine the thudding of hoo's, and the fierce shouts of maddened men on no less maddened steeds. Of late the opinion seems to be held among civilians that horses are no longer a very important factor in the success of a campaign; this is a fallacy.

### The Horse's Nameless Terror

Although it has been proved that motor traction can replace the horse in many ways, it must be remembered that good roads and country where the "going" is easy are essential for motor-transport; and these conveniences, of course, are not always accessible at the front. Therefore, in addition to cavalry—soon to play a greater part in this war—thousands of horses are necessary for drawing guns, ammunition waggons, ambulances, and for transporting food and other essential supplies for the troops over bad roads and broken country.

The foregoing is not written in advocacy of the use of horses at the front, or of the extension of their present spheres, for every animal lover will welcome the day—if that day ever dawns—when it will no longer be imperative to utilise and sacrifice horses on the field of battle. As circumstances are, however, horses are almost as necessary to General Joffre, Sir John French, and the other leaders as they have been to every commander since the very earliest campaigns, when horses were used to drag chariots and to carry loads, and the time of Xenophon, whose "Guide for a Cavalry Commander" provides the first detailed evidence of the existence of squadrons of horse-soldiers.

So, regrettable as it is, the war-horse must still know the nameless terror of the battlefield, and suffer, and be maimed and killed for the benefit of Man. What, one wonders, does the horse think of it all? Imagine the terror of the horse that once calmly delivered a shopman's goods in quiet suburban streets as, standing hitched to a gun-carriage amid the wreck and ruin at the back of the firing-line, he hears above and all around him the crash of bursting shells; he starts, sets his ears back, and trembles; in his wondering eyes is the light of fear. He knows nothing of duty, patriotism, glory, heroism, honour—but he does know that he is in danger. At the crack of the whip he gallops into the open, amid the smoke and fumes, nearer the din of battle. Possibly he neighs wildly; he may even go temporarily mad, for chargers have been known to fight fiercely with their teeth and hoofs. Then, a sudden sharp pain, and he falls wounded; or, a rending pang, and he is dead.

### "Horse First; Man Afterwards"

Although, unhappily, the time has not yet come when horses are recognised as deserving of protection under the Red Cross flag, war-horses are at last coming into their own; for, with the splendid Army Veterinary Corps to look after them, they are within sight of being more generously treated by Authority. In all the many branches of the Army there is no department that deserves more credit, or shows more astonishing foresight in the preparation, alleviation of suffering, and general superintendence of the animal than does the A.V.C. and the Remount Department.

From the beginning of the war until October 16th only, the A.V.C. had, I believe, already treated no less than 27,000 horses, and succeeded in saving the lives of many that would, even in times of peace, have been condemned as incurable. The horses are treated with as much

care and skill as are shown to wounded soldiers, and are given an anæsthetic before being operated upon by the surgeons.

High tribute is also due to that splendid organisation, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Working under the supervision and at the request of the War Office, the Society is rendering reliable relief to the suffering animals. The R.S.P.C.A. has built many hospital stables for thousands of horses at various points at the front; it has supplied motor-lorries and medicaments of all descriptions, and all are most satisfactory. In short, one who inspected the horses in France would not observe a single instance of neglect throughout the many thousands that are being used.

In one of the healthiest parts of France the Convalescent Horse Depot is established, and covers an area of no less than twenty miles. Here, under the careful supervision of officers of the A.V.C., they run to grass in well-sheltered paddocks, and so a large number of horses are saved, and soon are well enough to return to active service.

### The Starting of the A.V.C.

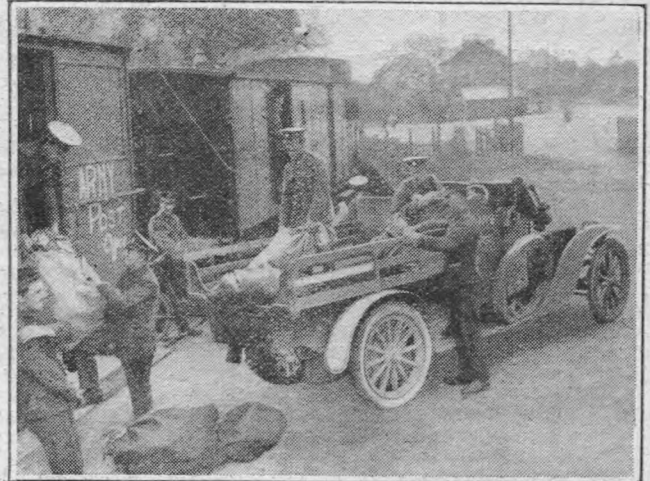
Prior to, and during the South African War, there was no satisfactory organisation for the care of horses on active service. The experience of the South African campaign showed clearly the disadvantages of the old system, and in 1903 the Army Veterinary Corps was established. In this new corps a complete personnel was appointed. The veterinary surgeons had the assistance of trained non-commissioned officers and men to carry out, in an efficient manner, the work hitherto attempted by the farriers. The commissioned officers of the corps are qualified veterinary surgeons who have passed four years at a veterinary college or university.

At the numerous places throughout Northern France where the A.V.C. horse hospitals are situated more help of various kinds is needed. I can assure all those who have subscribed in answer to the Duke of Portland's appeal on behalf of the R.S.P.C.A. Fund that nothing could be of more benefit to horses at the front than this fund. The Society is the only one recognised and authorised by the Army Council to collect funds for our horses with the armies. Its aim is to augment the supply of horse hospitals, horse shelters, medical stores, hospital and stable requisites—such as rugs, woollen bandages, head collars, halters—and to provide horse-drawn ambulances and motor-ambulances, which are very badly wanted to convey from railway stations horses kicked and lamed en route, and horses not injured severely enough to necessitate their being destroyed, but suffering from wounds that prevent their walking from the station to the convalescent farms. Motor-lorries are needed for the rapid conveyance of fodder from the base hospitals, where the stores are kept, to the convalescent farms and hospitals miles away. With the advent of winter, the horses will be unable to graze, and so there will be more feeding to be done.

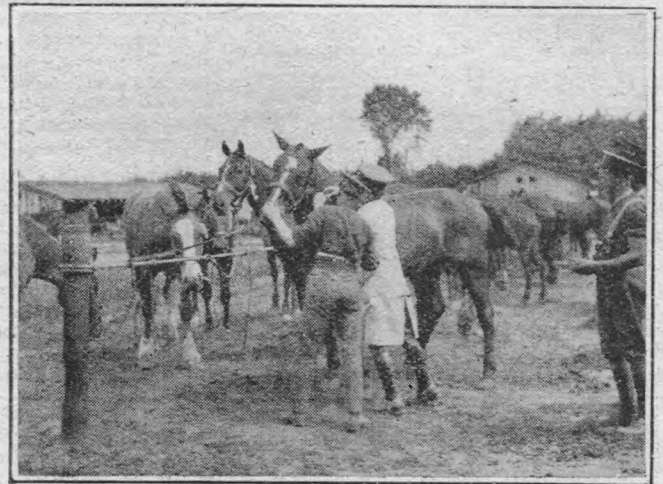
Until the time comes when the Red Cross of Geneva protects human and animal combatants alike, we, who have made laws to protect animals in peace time, must take all care to protect them also in war time. The horses of the British Army are an integral part of the British Army itself, and the care which the soldiers give to their horses shows that they value their co-operation and their friendship. We all want to help the men who are fighting for their country's honour, and, having helped them to the best of our ability, we must continue to see that their horses are not neglected.

M. Lockwood

# Some Phases in a Horse's Life at the Front



Hay being collected from an abandoned forage depot to be conveyed to an advanced position. The strictest economy is practised at the base camps in France. Right: Motor mail-van collecting postal sacks at an outpost station.



Left: One of the many Army Veterinary Corps' hospitals in France that have been built by the R.S.P.C.A. Above: Horse being inoculated by an army veterinary surgeon. An operation as necessary for animals as for men.



Cowboy, with one of the Canadian Contingents in France, finds his lasso as useful at the front as on the prairie. This photograph was taken near Dieppe, where a number of the Canadians' horses were allowed to run to grass before their journey to the firing-line.