

## POSTSCRIPT

ON Armistice Day 1922 there was unveiled at its headquarters a Memorial to those of the Corps who lost their lives in the Great War, over 600 in number. The names inscribed on this Cenotaph are given in an Appendix, while another details the Honours granted to members of the Corps, included among which were 82 direct awards in the field for gallant conduct.

By this time the Army Ordnance Department of officers and the Corps of other ranks had been amalgamated under the title Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

A Colonel-in-Chief had been appointed with a Royal Duke to hold the office, and a Colonel Commandant—a post held in turn by Sir John Steevens, who may be termed the father of the modern Department, by Sir Harold Parsons, equally the father of the modern Corps, and now by Sir Charles Mathew, a distinguished soldier who has seen as much active service probably as anyone in the Army.

Corps Headquarters had moved from Woolwich, a crowded suburb of London, to more spacious premises amid healthier surroundings at Hilsea. There a school of instruction in Ordnance duties had been formed, attended by officers—Regular, Territorial and Dominion—from every part of the Empire. In connection with the Corps Cenotaph a fund was raised for the purpose of training and educating the children of those who died during the Great War. A Corps Association was also formed, affiliated to the British Legion and numbering some two thousand members, to link up past and present members and to help those quitting the army in finding employment.

Had it ever been dreamt that a time would come when we should need to place millions of men under arms, it is possible that the War Office would have hesitated to entrust the supply of munitions, equipment and clothing of such variety and in such immense quantities to one small administrative branch of the army. It might instead

have adopted the plan of continental nations with their great conscript armies where such services are spread among several Corps—artillery, engineers and others—each furnishing its special requirements. I remember Sir Ronald Maxwell, when Quartermaster General in France, telling me in 1916 that he thought the time was then ripe for the Ordnance to shed some of its work, so heavy was its load becoming. Yet, although it had to put forward even greater efforts in the years that followed, it managed to shoulder the burden staunchly throughout.

This goes to prove that concentration of cognate supply services is a sound principle, especially when dealing with technical equipment where elaborately equipped workshops and skilled artisans are needed. Now that warfare is becoming even more scientific and that mechanization is making such rapid strides, this policy is being extended and the Corps has become responsible for the supply of those latest engines of war, Tanks and Dragons, reverting once more to a Master General of Ordnance who is in future to be represented among the Privy Council of a Commander-in-Chief on active service.

Where is this expansion to end? Lately there has been talk of putting the three fighting forces—Army, Navy and Air Force—under the management of one Secretary of State, and the subject crops up periodically when estimates are discussed in Parliament. So far the Cabinet, with its expert advisers, has looked askance at the idea of combining such multifarious duties under one Ministry of War. But if the more civilized nations should succeed in banning warfare as a means of redress among themselves, and in further disarming, it seems not improbable that such a change may come about in time in the interests of economy; for the three services would then form nothing more than an Imperial Police Force.

Any such step would doubtless be followed by a reorganization of Military, Naval and Air Force ancillary services. Probably the supply of kindred types of material would be combined, and it might well happen that the R.A.O.C. would be called upon to furnish all

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three fighting services with munitions and other equipment which they use in common.

In that case the wheel would have turned full circle and the Corps would resume the rôle it fulfilled in Tudor or even Mediæval days, when it provided all the Fighting Forces of the Crown with such war-like equipment as had to be drawn from a common and central source.