

## Ambulance Dogs in the German Army.

BY FREDERICK A. TALBOT.



It has been said that the most comforting companion to a man is his dog. Certainly, few members of the brute creation possess the intelligence, sagacity, fidelity, and reliability with which this animal is so characteristically gifted. The shepherd would sooner part with his home than be deprived of his faithful collie—the safeguard of his flock. Then what an unfading, glorious roll of fame is associated with the dogs of St. Bernard in their heroic rescues of exhausted travellers from death. Numerous instances could be cited where the dog has rendered invaluable services as life-saver, messenger, guardian, and what not. But it is extremely doubtful whether the animal has ever been subjected to a stranger and more dangerous, albeit humane and necessary, service than that for which it is retained in the German army. The military authorities of that country have trained the dog to become a four-footed member of the Red Cross Society, to minister to and to succour the wounded on the battlefield, besides fulfilling other duties which it would be either impossible, or undesirable, for an ordinary soldier to fulfil. Needless to say the dog, with its innate proclivity, has accommodated itself to the requirements of its new duties, notwithstanding their arduous nature, with great readiness, and has already proved itself to be, under certain conditions, a more apt and thorough servant than the soldier himself.

The idea of utilizing the dog upon the battlefield emanated from Herr J. Bungartz, the celebrated German animal painter and author. It was fifteen years ago, in 1885, that he first devoted his energies towards the training of these clever little animals, and with such success have his efforts been

crowned that he has received the grateful thanks of all the leading officers in the German army. Questioned as to what induced Herr Burgartz to employ the dog in this unique capacity, he replied:—

“In reading the results of sanguinary conflicts I have always been impressed with the large number of men that are counted as ‘missing.’ The term is far-reaching and ambiguous in its significance. It neither implies that the men are prisoners, wounded, killed, nor escaped. In the Franco-German War the loss on the German side in ‘missing’ alone was proved to be very large indeed. Turning to the present conflict in

South Africa, what a large number of English soldiers have been reckoned in the casualty lists under that ominous heading! Their relatives and friends have not the remotest idea as to whether they are alive or dead, and in many instances they have never been seen or heard of again. An officer in the German army, Major-General Von Herget, has rightly asked, ‘What is the use of all the progress we make in medical science if the wounded are not found?’ Well, I considered that some means should be established to discover the wounded, and as I have always evinced such an

enthusiastic interest in animals, particularly in dogs, it occurred to me that it would be possible to utilize the canine intelligence and sagacity to accomplish such a humane and beneficial object.”

“Did you experience any difficulty in the training of the animals?” I asked.

“Well, the work was arduous at first,” he replied. “It required unremitting attention, since the work was absolutely new to them. But by dint of perseverance and patience, together with kind treatment, the clever animals soon became accustomed to the work. They are mainly employed for the



From a) HERR BUNGARTZ. [Photo.]



From a] A DOG EQUIPPED FOR SERVICE. [Photo.

searching of the battlefield for wounded soldiers, and bringing those found to the notice of the ambulance-bearers, also to act as messengers; but the former duty is that for which they have been principally trained. A big battle, the fighting-line of which may, as has been the case in South Africa, stretch over a frontage of twenty miles, and be followed up for several miles, necessarily means a large expanse of country for the stretcher-bearers to search for those who have fallen. If the battle has been a keenly contested one, the number of wounded is necessarily large, and it is impossible for the ambulance-bearers to attend to them with that urgency and dispatch which it is expedient should be employed. When they have been brought to the ground, the wounded soldiers with their last remaining strength drag themselves away to some sheltered position so as to be safe from the fierce rays of the sun, and also to escape the enemy's fire. They crawl along until forced to stop from sheer exhaustion. They lose con-

sciousness, and, perhaps, in that interval of senselessness the ambulance-bearers pass that way, and the wounded man is overlooked. Or, again, he may be so exhausted that, although the ambulance-bearers may pass within a few feet of him, he may be too weak to cry out for help. Still, he hopes against hope, and looks anxiously for that assistance which never comes, and after hours of hard struggling dies. If he had remained where he had fallen he would have been found and succoured. Many a wounded soldier has been found dead, where it was proved that had help reached him an hour or two before he would have been saved. After nightfall the work of the ambulance-bearers, difficult though it has been throughout the day, is rendered exceedingly more so. Then they are only able to render aid to those who are lying immediately in their path, while those who have sought shelter in the ditches, furrows, or in the undergrowth are unconsciously left to languish in their pain. But with the employment of ambulance dogs such is not the case. The wonderful instinct of the animals guides them directly to the spot where a wounded man is lying, wherever it may be, and the ambulance-bearers following up in the rear are piloted to the spot by the dog."

The outfit of the dog consists of a little saddle-bag fastened round his body. This contains a small quantity of nourishing and stimulating refreshments. Then he also carries a small supply of surgical bandages in a wallet something similar to that which is sewn up in the coat of every English soldier, and which the man can utilize for the purpose of binding up his own wounds if he is sufficiently strong to do so. Over



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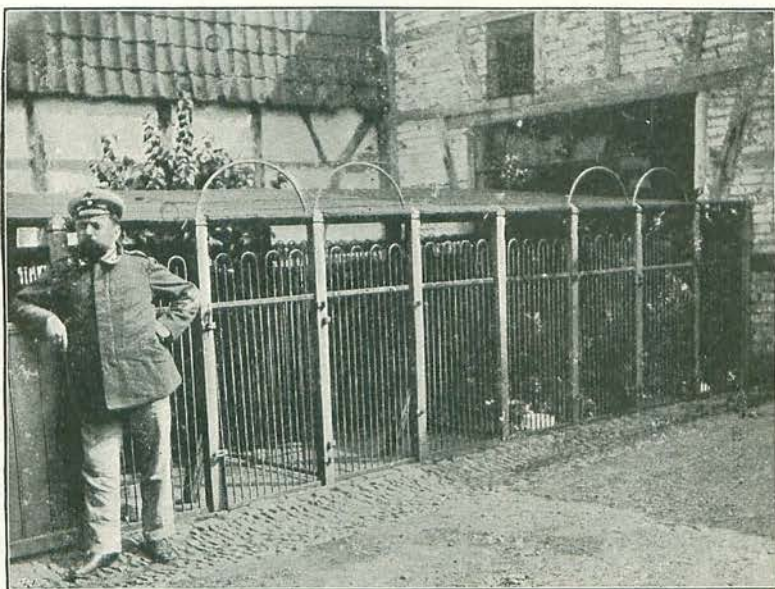
A GROUP OF AMBULANCE DOGS.

[Photo.

these two bags is wound a coverlet with a large Red Cross imprinted upon it, to designate the mission in which the dog is engaged. The dog is accompanied by a conductor. When the battlefield is reached the dog immediately commences its search, and so sensitive are its faculties that it will trace out the concealed wounded with astonishing celerity and surety. When it has found the man it lies down beside him and attracts his attention. The man, if he be not too exhausted, releases the saddle bag containing the refreshments, and also the surgical bandages. The dog remains by him, and presently, if the man has regained his strength and bound up his wounds, he follows the dog, who guides him quickly back to the conductor, who in turn signals the ambulance-bearers, and the rescued soldier is quickly removed to the hospital. If, when the dog reaches a wounded man, and after lying beside him for a few minutes finds that the soldier makes no effort to obtain the food, the animal recognises intuitively that something serious is amiss, and accordingly hastens back to his conductor, who,

tion to the foregoing accoutrements adjusted to its body the animal is provided with a little bell upon its collar, something similar to the sheep-bell, which is constantly tinkling. The wounded soldiers are able to hear this tinkling, and the slightest movement they may make is immediately realized by the dog, since its ear is far more sensitive than the human ear, so that it is enabled to perceive sounds which are absolutely inaudible to the conductor. The tinkling bell also serves as a guide to the latter when he is being piloted to the spot where the wounded man is lying. The conductor is provided with a small acetylene lamp, with a powerful reflector, so that a brilliant white light is cast over a wide area upon the ground. The sagacity and intelligence displayed by these dogs are marvellous. They are indefatigable in their efforts and they never make a mistake, though some of the conditions under which they pursue their errands of mercy and humanity are sufficiently trying to render them almost incapable.

The kennels for the dogs are at Lechenich, at which place they also undergo their



From a

THE KENNELS AT LECHENICH.

[Photo.

seeing that the bag on the animal's back has not been touched, and answering the dog's mute appeals, follows it, and is soon brought to the wounded soldier, who was, perhaps, too weak to assist himself upon the dog's former visit.

But it is at night that the dog displays its cleverness to the best advantage. In addi-

systematic training under the supervision of Herr J. Bungartz himself, assisted by his son and one or two other interested gentlemen and military officers. The Red Cross dogs are owned by a society of which Herr Bungartz is the president, and which now possesses some 700 members, who pay an annual subscription towards the support



From a

SEPP.

[Photo.

of the association. The society has received the highest patronage in the country, and all the prominent officials, both in the Civil and Military Administrations, are interested in its welfare and the introduction of the dogs upon the battlefield. The training of the dogs is purely complimentary, neither is any charge levied upon the dogs when they are taken over by the military authorities.

It will undoubtedly be a satisfactory point to the inhabitants of this country to know that the dogs best adapted, and indeed the only ones that can accomplish this task, are the Scotch collies. Not the modern collie, however, which has somewhat deteriorated in the essential characteristics for which it has so long been famed, but the old type of collie, which is somewhat difficult to obtain nowadays. Naturally the dogs should be taken in hand while they are young, as the labour of training is thus much facilitated.

"Have you yet been able to adequately prove the services these dogs would render upon the battlefield?" I then inquired.

"We have not yet experimented with them upon an actual battlefield," was his reply, "but we have attended several military manœuvres, in which the dogs have acquitted themselves so magnificently that they have earned unstinted praise from some of the leading officers in the German army. One of the most comprehensive and difficult trials we have conducted was at Coblenz last year by the order of the officer commanding the Eighth Army Corps. The dogs were subjected to a very exacting test under adverse conditions, both by day and night. As

may be supposed, the latter was the more difficult. Two hundred soldiers were ordered to lie out upon the field to represent the wounded. Some of them simply lay in the open, but others were ordered to conceal themselves in the shrubbery, undergrowth, and in such places. A base hospital was improvised, and at first the ambulance-bearers, to the number of 500, equipped with lanterns throwing a brilliant light, were ordered to search the field to minister to the wounded and to bring all those they discovered back to the hospital. When they had searched the field the dogs were called out together with their conductors. There were four dogs: Castor, with Mr. Moers; Tominka, with Non-commissioned Officer Henn; Sepp, with my son; and Resi, conducted by myself. I started first with Resi, followed shortly afterwards by my son and the others. The ground was terribly uneven and quite strange to the dogs. Then, again, we were followed



From a

WRITING A MESSAGE FOR THE DOG TO CARRY.

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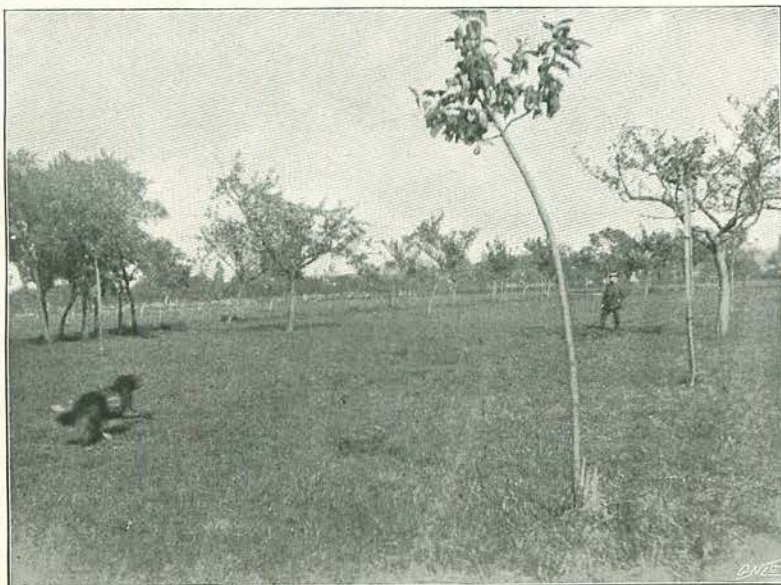
by the principal officers conducting the experiments, riding on horseback, with the ambulance-bearers bringing up the rear. The noise of the horses' hoofs, together with that of the stretcher-bearers, considerably disturbed the dogs, so that no little difficulty was experienced in inducing them to settle down to the work in hand. Presently, however, they regained their usual quietness and proceeded steadily with their task. The search commenced in the Forest of Coblenz, where twelve men had successfully concealed themselves. The work, therefore, under these circumstances, could not have been more difficult had it been conducted under the conditions of grim reality. In one place, while jumping a wide ditch, Resi broke a small lantern which she was carrying. The twelve men, however, were very soon revealed by the two dogs Resi and Sepp, while the other two animals also discovered six men that had been well hidden in another part of the forest.

"The following day a similar test was undertaken, this time in broad daylight. The same number of soldiers were laid out as wounded, and the Ambulance Corps made a thorough search of the field. Then the dogs were brought into action, and at the end of twenty minutes, when the command of 'halt' was given, they had discovered no fewer than eighteen men concealed in ditches, among the dense undergrowth, and so forth, who had been completely overlooked by the stretcher-bearers. Eighteen men missing out of two hundred wounded is a large percentage! What an enormous number it would represent, in a proportionate degree, after a large battle where the wounded can be counted in their thousands! The commanding officer was so convinced by this conclusive test of the superiority of the dogs in this remarkable work that he advised the different regiments in his (the

Eighth) Army Corps to take over ambulance dogs."

"Was it a difficult matter to induce the military authorities to favour the scheme?" was my next inquiry.

"No, they warmly favoured our scheme from its very beginning. We experienced great difficulty, however, in obtaining the necessary facilities to employ the dogs at the manoeuvres. When we founded the society for some time we were working in the dark, and were completely at a loss to know whether our dogs were advantageously placed in case of need. The military authorities, however, came to our aid by taking over some of the dogs,



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DOG RETURNING FROM A WOUNDED MAN TO THE CONDUCTOR.

[Photo.

and the majority of them are in good hands, so that I am sure, at the psychological moment, they will acquit themselves with perfect success and satisfaction. But I am sorry to say that in some cases faulty treatment of the creatures exists, and therefore it cannot be expected that they will, in time of need, accomplish their work so well as those which have been kindly and persistently trained.

Remembering that Herr Bungartz had mentioned that the dogs would be employed for other purposes in addition to their ambulance duties, I inquired the nature of these additional duties.

"They can be employed for the transmission of messages, and they prove very fleet messengers indeed," was his answer. "One dog, which was stationed at Coburg, was trained specially for this work. His training



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DOG BRINGS SUCCOUR TO A WOUNDED MAN.

[Photo.

runs comprised distances of about 150yds., and were undertaken in varying weathers, so that he might become thoroughly accustomed to the work. He accompanied his master through the manœuvres, and on one occasion carried a message over a distance of about a mile and a half in the rapid time of four minutes, and this notwithstanding the fact that he was considerably hindered on his journey by the inhabitants of one or two hamlets through which he passed. This particular dog is out training, about five times a week, generally in the early morning, so that you will recognise that the training of the dogs necessitates considerable patience and time, so that it should not only remember what it has learned, but should be taught new things as well.

"Then, in addition to carrying messages, they could be requisitioned to carry ammunition from the waggons up to the firing line; to guard baggage, and also to insure the safety of the outposts at night. For this last duty they are peculiarly adapted on account of their keen sense of hearing; so that the outpost would receive tidings of the approach of an enemy by the behaviour of the dog long before any movements were audible to his own ear."

Last year this society trained seven new

dogs, which have now been attached to the medical corps stationed at Cologne, Würtemberg, Straubing, Landau, Süchteln, Limbach, and Hohenlimburg respectively. There are several other dogs in course of training at present, and they will doubtless be attached to other corps when they have completed their inculcation. Last year the cost of training and maintaining the dogs and kennels amounted to about £130. Of course, the dogs are not retained at the head-quarters at Lechenich any longer than is possible after their course of training has been completed, but they are attached to some regiment.

It is the desire of Herr Bungartz that the utilization of dogs in connection with ambulance work should become international. In developing his scheme he has been simply animated by the desire to mitigate, as far as possible, the horrors of war, and to make the lot of the wounded easier. He is quite prepared to divulge his method of training the dogs, which is peculiarly his own, to the Government of any nation. The success of the scheme has been adequately proved in the case of the German army. Will our military authorities make a similar introduction of canine ambulance workers into the British Army?