



XXVI.—A VETERINARY SURGEON

VETERINARY surgery is one of the few professions in which the number of entries has shown a considerable decline in recent years. This decline is probably due to the belief that the expansion in motor traffic and similar changes have reduced the prospects of success in the profession. The belief is a mistaken one, however, for the decline in importance of the horse is being at least partially counteracted by the growing demand for the services of the veterinary surgeon in other directions. The prospects of those now entering this comparatively neglected profession are bright, particularly if they approach it with a real liking for animals and for the open air life that it entails, and are prepared to devote their energies to a thorough study of the scientific side of their work.

Veterinary surgery is a "closed" profession in the sense that no person is entitled to describe himself as a veterinary surgeon unless he holds the diploma of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the governing body of the profession. The power to grant registration rests with the Royal College in accordance with the Veterinary Surgeons Acts of 1881, which also enacts that anyone who is not registered is not entitled to recover at law any fees that he may have charged for veterinary attendance or advice.

A good general education is essential for a veterinary surgeon, and those who intend to follow this career on leaving school should aim first at obtaining the matriculation certificate. It is not absolutely necessary to secure this certificate in order to enter the profession, as the possession of a School Certificate with four credits, or proof of having passed an examination of equal standing, is sufficient in certain instances. Those who wish to reach the higher ranks must take the matriculation examination, however, for this is the first step towards securing a university degree in veterinary surgery. Others also should take it unless they are prepared to remain at school in order to sit for the Higher School Certificate examination, for the training they receive will be of value to them in their later studies.

English, mathematics and one language, which may be Latin, or Greek, or French, German or any other approved modern language, must be included in the subjects of the chosen preliminary examination. A second language also may be taken, the alternatives to this being higher mathematics, geography and a branch of science. A sound elementary knowledge of chemistry, physics and biology also should be obtained. For this reason it is advisable to stay at school after passing the preliminary examination and to study these subjects to the Higher School Certificate standard, for preparation of this kind will form a valuable foundation for later instruction. It may be pointed out that a student cannot become a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons until he has attained the age of 21, and little is gained by taking up higher studies at the earliest possible moment.

When a boy who intends to become a veterinary surgeon leaves school he may receive his professional education at one of five veterinary colleges. These are the Royal Veterinary College, London; the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College, Edinburgh; the Veterinary School, University of Liverpool; the Glasgow Veterinary College; and the Royal Veterinary College of Ireland, Dublin. All students who attend these colleges must aim at obtaining the diploma of membership of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, which entitles the recipient to make use of the letters M.R.C.V.S.

The cost of training varies, but the actual tuition fees may be taken as from £27 to £30 per annum. The cost of books and instruments, examination fees and subscriptions to social and athletic clubs must be added to this, and students who are unable to live at home also will have the expense of suitable lodgings. The general cost of training, taking all these circumstances into account, may be placed at £150 per annum to £200 per annum.

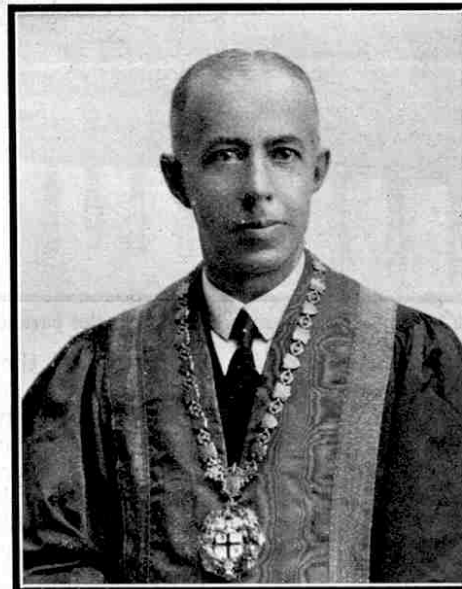
The course for the diploma of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons at present occupies four years, but in October of 1932 it will be lengthened to extend over five years. The student should apply to the Royal College for registration before commencing his course. In the first year, chemistry, physics, zoology and botany are studied. The scientific subjects underlying the practice of medicine—including anatomy, physiology, pathology, materia medica and hygiene—are dealt with in succeeding years, and in the final year the theory and practice of veterinary medicine and surgery are studied. Practical work naturally plays a great part in the training. A proportion of the student's time is spent in animal hospitals attached to the colleges, and experience with a veterinary surgeon should be gained during vacations.

Under certain conditions university graduates are excused the first year of the usual course of training, and this

privilege also may be granted to matriculated students who have passed with honours an approved examination in chemistry, physics, botany and zoology. On the completion of each year of training, the student at a Veterinary College is required to pass an examination conducted by a Court appointed by the Royal College. Examinations of this kind are held twice yearly, in July and December; failure in more than one subject involves taking the entire examination a second time. When a student has satisfactorily completed the course and passed the requisite examination he is entitled to his diploma.

Membership of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons is a sufficient qualification for practice, but it also is advisable to take a degree in veterinary surgery, for although this is not in itself a qualification, the more advanced instruction given in preparation for it is of great value to a veterinary surgeon who is really keen and desires to make good in the profession. Degrees are granted by the Universities of London, Edinburgh and Liverpool. As

President of the R.C.V.S.



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far as possible, the courses of training are arranged to run concurrently with the preparation for the diploma of the Royal College and the fees involved in the double course of study are slightly higher than if membership of the Royal College only is aimed at.

The cost of training may be reduced considerably by means of scholarships and bursaries. Some are tenable only at particular colleges, while others are granted by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Colonial Office. Full details of these scholarships may be obtained from the Registrars of the Universities and Colleges concerned, or from a list contained in a booklet, issued by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, that deals with courses qualifying for the diploma and other degrees in veterinary surgery. This booklet may be obtained on application to the Secretary and Registrar, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, 10, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1.

In general there are two courses open to the qualified veterinary surgeon. He may take up an official appointment or he may enter into private practice. In each case additional experience is advisable, and this should be gained by service in a veterinary hospital attached to a veterinary school, or as assistant to a veterinary surgeon already in practice. An alternative that is particularly useful for those who wish to take up an official post is to follow a course of post-graduate training. This may be taken up with a view to obtaining the diploma of Fellowship of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons or the Diploma in Veterinary State Medicine, an award that is intended as a qualification for those who propose to take up official appointments. Similar diplomas are granted by Liverpool and Manchester Universities and valuable post-graduate scholarships are awarded at these institutions, and also by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the Royal (Dick) College, Edinburgh, these being chiefly intended for those engaged in research work.

Private practice in large towns usually is more remunerative than in the country. It is more general in character, and certain branches, such as the treatment of smaller animals and domestic pets, appear to offer suitable opportunities for women practitioners. Veterinary surgeons who are particularly interested in horses probably would find profitable occupation in centres devoted to racing or hunting, while their services may be found useful in agricultural districts where machinery has not yet displaced horses. In the country veterinary surgeons are chiefly required for work in connection with farm animals, and it is probable that for many years the best openings for general practitioners in this profession will be found in cattle-raising areas. To-day strenuous efforts are being made to eradicate diseases that for centuries have affected cattle, sheep, pigs and other farm animals, and the services of fully qualified veterinary surgeons are required in connection with the schemes of control that have been introduced for this purpose under the Diseases of Animals Acts. The activities of the Government Departments concerned with the purity of food

supplies also has added to the work that can only be performed by a fully qualified veterinary surgeon.

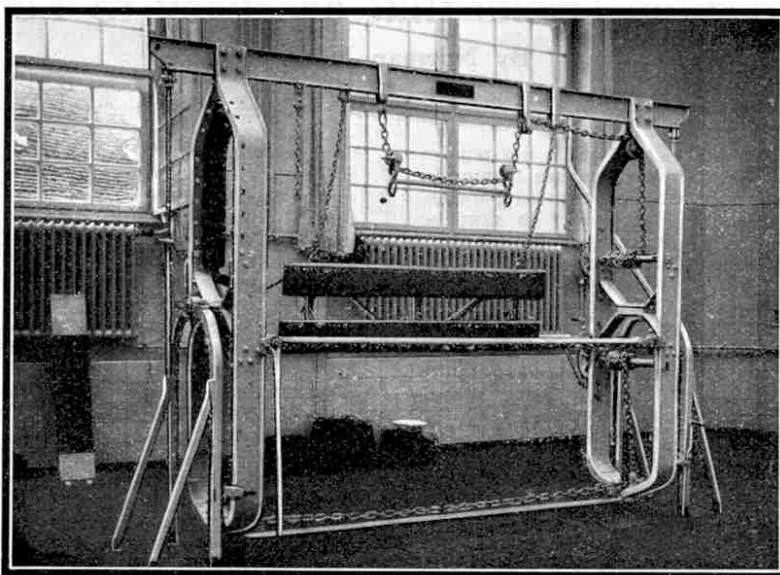
Turning now to official posts open to veterinary surgeons, a large staff of inspectors of various grades is maintained by the Ministry of Agriculture. Members of the Royal College are eligible for appointments as Assistant Inspectors. They serve a probationary period of two years and are then required to pass a special examination, from part of which they are exempt if they already hold the Diploma in Veterinary State Medicine. An appointment in this capacity carries an initial salary of £250 per annum, rising to £450 per annum, and promotion may be secured to the positions of Divisional and Superintendent Inspector, the maximum salaries of these being £600 per annum and £800 per annum respectively. A civil service bonus is paid to all members of the veterinary staff of the Ministry.

Veterinary inspectors are now maintained by local authorities in order to assist in the enforcement of the regulations of the Diseases of Animals Acts, while the Health Departments of many boroughs and county councils make use of the services of veterinary surgeons for inspector work in

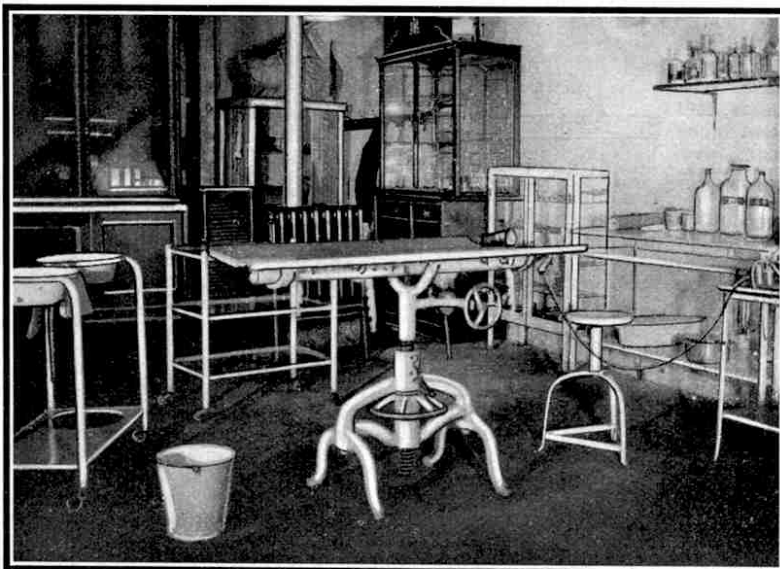
connection with the control of the quality of food supplies, especially meat and milk. There are good prospects in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps for young men who are attracted by an Army career. Candidates for commissions in the R.A.V.C. must be members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and under 28 years of age. They are required to undergo a written examination and success in this is followed by the grant of a commission as Lieutenant on probation. Further technical instruction is given and certain examinations are passed before the appointment is confirmed. Promotion in the R.A.V.C. follows the usual course and on retirement, gratuities or retired pay are awarded, the nature and amount depending on the length of service.

There is a limited number of overseas appointments for veterinary surgeons. Posts of an official character in the Colonies are under the control of the Colonial Office, about 150 veterinary officers being employed. The work involved is largely administrative in character, being principally concerned with the enforcement of regulations, and tact and initiative are desirable qualities in those who take up appointments of this kind. The present tendency is to demand scientific as well as technical qualifications.

General veterinary work in our overseas Dominions is different in type from that at home and is more limited in scope. Large areas are covered by veterinary surgeons in practice, and there is little chance of establishing localised practices similar to those in this country. It should be pointed out that the demand for veterinary surgeons in Australia, Canada and South Africa, is supplied by colleges in those countries. There is more opportunity in New Zealand, but those who leave Great Britain in order to take up practice there, or indeed in any of our overseas Dominions, should first obtain several years' varied experience in rural practice in Great Britain.



Operating table used when horses are the patients. For the two illustrations on this page we are indebted to the courtesy of Professor F. T. G. Hobday, of the Royal Veterinary College.



An operating theatre in the Royal Veterinary College, Camden Town, London, N.W.1. This illustration shows the table that is employed when operations on dogs are to be performed.