The Ist Battalion West India Regiment.

A Brief Historical Sketch

BY

COLONEL A. R. LOSCOMBE.

Photo by J. W. Cleary].

The Band of the 1st Battalion West India Regiment, Up-Park Camp, Jamaica.

PREFACE.

IN view of the recent statements as to the policy of His Majesty's Government concerning the defences of our West Indian Colonies, and having regard also to the visit of the band of the regiment in connection with the Colonial and Indian Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, the brief history of the 1st West India Regiment, which is reproduced in this pamphlet from the columns of *The West India Committee Circular*, should prove of more than ordinary interest. Colonel Loscombe traces the history of the regiment from its origin in a corps of settlers who remained loyal in the revolted North American Colonies in 1779, and gives an outline of the services which it has rendered to the British Empire from its formation down to the present day. The fact that the regiment has gained the commendation of such famous commanders as Sir Ralph Abercromby, Sir John Moore, Sir George Prevost, Sir Edward Pakenham and Lord Wolseley will convey to the reader some idea as to how greatly its distinguished services have been esteemed, and if the publication of this small pamphlet serves in some measure to strengthen the ties between the West Indies and the Mother Country, and if further it tends to make better known in this country the services of this distinguished corps, which should merit the title of a Royal Regiment, there will be still further cause for satisfaction.

Algernon E. Aspinall.

The West India Committee Rooms,
15, Seething Lane,
London, E.C.

before 1921

The 1st West India Regiment.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH

BY

COLONEL A. R. LOSCOMBE.

In these days, when volunteering, and especially the recent employment of volunteers in South Africa, has made the army popular, and has caused the general public to take an interest to an extent they never used in the ins and outs of military life and regimental lore, there is still a corps of whose composition and history little is generally known, and this in spite of the fact that the West India Regiment has formed an integral part of the British Army for over a hundred years. Indeed the first battalion of the regiment dates still farther back, and came into existence under a different name so long ago as 1779. The present visit of the band of the 1st West India Regiment to England for the purpose of playing at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition at the Crystal Palace renders it likely that the public may wish to know something about its past.

Before tracing the history of the 1st West India Regiment it may be well to state that there were originally twelve West India regiments raised for the British service in 1795 and the three following years during the great war with France, but of these only the 1st and 2nd have had an unbroken career to the present time. Those numbered from six to twelve had but a short existence, having been disbanded shortly after the battle of Waterloo and the commencement of the long peace, while the 3rd, 4th and 5th lasted with some intervals up to 1870, when the last of them ceased to exist. In 1887 the 1st and 2nd West India Regiments were amalgamated under the title of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the West India Regiment, while ten years later a third battalion was added, but only lasted for six years, being disbanded in 1903.

When first raised in 1795 each of the twelve regiments consisted of nine companies of infantry and one troop of cavalry (probably dragoons), and, though the system of having a troop of cavalry was discontinued in 1797, it is interesting to compare this organisation with that existing in British infantry regiments at the present day, when a certain proportion of the men are trained as mounted infantry.

Originally recruits for the regiments were largely obtained from the negroes imported from West Africa into the West Indies for the purpose of slavery, the men thus enlisted becoming "King's men," as distinguished from the slaves, and even after the abolition of slavery in 1841, a large number of recruits were still obtained from Africa, recruiting companies being stationed at Sierra Leone and the Gambia for this purpose; but it was found that these men, being obtained from uncivilized tribes, were not up to the requirements expected from the modern soldier, and for the last twenty-five years the regiments have been entirely recruited in the West Indies, the great bulk of the men coming from the islands of Jamaica and Barbados. The whole of the officers and a proportion of the non-commissioned officers are English, the former having passed through Sandhurst or the militia, while the latter are selected from line regiments to fill the higher non-commissioned ranks in the West India Regiment. The remainder of the non-commissioned officers and all the men are West Indians of negro or mixed descent. The organization, equipment, and training are precisely the same as in a white regiment, the chief difference being that the private soldier receives only ninepence a day pay in lieu of a shilling, the other native ranks being paid in proportion.

The uniform of the officers is similar to that of other infantry officers of the line, but since 1858—up to which date they also were clad as were their white comrades—the non-commissioned officers and men have worn the Zouave uniform. This consists of a white jacket, somewhat like in shape to the undress jacket worn by the Guards, over which is worn a short red Zouave jacket laced with yellow braid, open in front and without sleeves. Very wide and loose blue knickerbockers with two narrow yellow stripes down each leg, are finished off with white stockings and white spat gaiters, while a red fez, ornamented with a white tassel (yellow for the to band) and round which a white turban is wound, completes a uniform which is generally allowed be the most picturesque in the British service. The story goes that it was introduced at the

wish of Queen Victoria, who was greatly struck with the dress of the French Zouaves, and asked, "Why have I not some Zouaves too?" It seems a pity that the officers do not wear the same uniform as their men, and its adoption for ceremonial purposes would be generally welcomed by them.

Now to come to the history of the 1st West India Regiment. I have already mentioned that it dates its existence, though not its present name, from 1779. In the year previous to that, during the American War of Independence, an expedition was despatched by the British from New York for the purpose of capturing Savannah, the capital of Georgia. This was so rapidly successful that by January 1779, not only Savannah, but the whole of Georgia, was in our hands. One result of this success was that numbers of royalists flocked into the British camps, where they were formed into corps, of which the South Carolina Regiment was one. It is first mentioned as taking part in the action of Briar Creek on 3rd March, 1779, when the British under General Prevost surprised and badly routed the American General Lincoln. A couple of months later, having been considerably augmented by loyalists and freed negroes, it took part in an abortive attempt to capture the City of Charleston, and in the subsequent obstinate engagement at Stono Ferry, where the Americans unsuccessfully endeavoured to intercept the British retreat.

A Bandsman of the W.I. Regiment in Review Order.

The uniform is the same as that of the private (see p. 12) except for the fact that the turban surrounding the red fez is relieved with red, and that the tassel is yellow.

The following September it formed part of the garrison of Savannah when it was besieged by the American army and a French fleet of 22 sail of the line under Count d'Estaing. On the 9th of October the French and Americans, led by the Count in person, advanced to the assault, the principal attack being directed on the Ebenezer Redoubt, which was held by the South Carolina Regiment and the 60th Rifles. This attack met with the most determined resistance, and was eventually repulsed, and shortly after, the siege was raised.

Next year we find the South Carolina Regiment taking part in the capture of Charleston by Sir Henry Clinton, and later on in a bloody engagement between Lord Rawdon and the American General Greene, in which a certain Lieut.-Colonel Washington commanded the enemy's cavalry.

About this time, the loyalists of Charleston having subscribed 3,000 guineas for a corps of dragoons, the South Carolina Regiment was selected for conversion into cavalry, and in this capacity took part in the relief of Ninety-six Post, and in the bloody and indecisive battle of Eutaw Springs, which was the last engagement of any importance in the South, as shortly afterwards Lord Cornwallis' surrender at York Town in the north put an end to hostilities.

At the close of the war the South Carolina Regiment was moved to Jamaica, and in the Jamaica almanack for 1782 they are shown as stationed at Fort Augusta in Kingston Harbour, being there commanded by Lord Charles Montague, a captain in the 88th Regiment. It must be understood that the regiment at this time consisted partly of white and partly of black soldiers, and while on the general disbandment of provincial corps in the following year, it was easy to compensate the whites with grants of land, it was a problem what to do with the black troopers. In a slave-holding colony, such as Jamaica then was, we can readily understand the planters objecting to the presence of a number of free negroes in their midst, and we accordingly find them, after some agitation, removed to the Leeward Islands, where they were combined with some black artificers (as engineers were then called), also from America. War again broke out with France in 1793, and the black Carolina Corps, as it appears to have been now designated, took part in various military operations during that year in the Islands of Martinique, St. Lucia, and Guadeloupe.

About this time a new corps made its appearance in the West Indies, called indifferently the

Royal Rangers, Malcolm's Rangers, and Malcolm's Corps, from the name of its commander. This corps took part under Sir Ralph Abercromby in the desperate fighting in St. Lucia in 1795, and also in the fierce struggles in St. Vincent between the British on the one side and the Caribs, assisted by the French, on the other.

We thus see that there were two corps of blacks engaged in the fighting in the West Indies in 1795; the Carolina Corps, consisting of loyal blacks from the revolted states of America, and Malcolm's, or the Royal, Rangers raised on the spot. Besides these there were others, the St. Vincent Rangers, the Dominica Rangers, the Island Rangers (of Martinique), the Black Rangers (of Grenada), the Tobago Blacks, and Angus's Black Corps, which were raised on the spot as need required, just as recently local corps were raised in South Africa to meet emergencies. Some of these, notably the Carolina Corps, Malcolm's Rangers, and the St. Vincent Rangers were in imperial pay; and in 1795 it was decided to consolidate these various black corps, and to raise others to make a total of eight regiments. Accordingly the Carolina Corps and the Royal (or Malcolm's) Rangers were amalgamated and formed into a regiment of foot, which, after the custom of those days was called after the name of its colonel, Whyte's Regiment of Foot. The St. Vincent Rangers became Myer's Regiment of Foot, and the other six regiments were known as Keppell's, Nicoll's, Howe's, Whitelocke's, Lewe's and Skerrett's Regiments respectively, and appear under these names, and under the general heading "Regiments raised to serve in the West Indies" in the 1796 Army List. In the West Indies, however, they at once became styled the West India Regiments—Whyte's being the 1st, Myer's the 2nd, Keppell's the 3rd, and so on; and in 1798 the Army List also adopted these names. It is curious to note, however, that down to so late as 1888 the 2nd West India Regiment bore on its buttons the legend "West Indies—2nd Regiment"—instead of "2nd West India Regiment," this being evidently a survival of the old general title "Regiments raised to serve in the West Indies."

The descent of the old 1st West India Regiment from the South Carolina Regiment is commemorated by the crossed wreaths of laurel and Carolina laurel borne on its appointments, and this descent is also kept in mind by the air to which they march past, which is "South Carolina 's a sultry clime."

I have now traced the evolution of the 1st West India Regiment from irregular corps raised in America and the West Indies, as stress of circumstances demanded, to a regular battalion of the British Army, constituted under practically the same title it now bears. It was not long before the new title received its baptism of fire, the Royal Rangers, who, though under orders for drafting into the regiment, appear for a time to have acted as a separate corps, being engaged in desperate fighting while carrying relief to the Island of Grenada, which had been for some time past ravaged by the French.

The rupture of the peace of Amiens in 1803 again brought war to the West Indies, and two years later we find the 1st West India and 46th Regiments forming the garrison of Dominica, when that island was attacked by a large French fleet assisted by 4,000 troops. The landing was resisted by the grenadier company of the 46th and the light company of the 1st West India, subsequently re-inforced by the remainder of the 46th, all under command of Major Nunn, of the 1st West India, and subsequently, on Major Nunn being mortally wounded, by Captain O'Connell of the same corps, and it was not until the enemy had landed all his 4,000 men that he succeeded, after four assaults, in taking the town of Roseau. Our force now fell back towards Prince Rupert, where the rest of the 1st West India were, and succeeded, after four days, in effecting a junction with them. The enemy now appeared off Prince Rupert, and summoned it to surrender, but on this being refused did not assault, having no doubt, after their rough handling at Roseau, a wholesome respect for the British force; and, after hovering about for a day or two, they drew off and returned to Martinique. The House of Assembly of Dominica erected a monument to Major Nunn, purchased for a hundred guineas a sword of honour for Capt. O'Connell, and thanked the regiment for its gallant conduct; while the Home Government authorized the name "Dominica" being inscribed on the colours.

The regiment took part in the reduction of the Danish West Indian Islands in 1807, and in the following year three companies, aided by a small naval detachment, caused the surrender, after four engagements, of a French force of over 200 men who had thrown themselves into Marie Galante, a small island off Guadeloupe. On the return of these three companies General Beckwith, who then commanded in the West Indies, presented his own sword to their commander, Lieut.-Colonel Blackwell, on a parade of all the garrison, at the same time thanking and complimenting the other officers

and the men. On this occasion was captured the Drum-Major's staff of the 26th Battalion of the French line, which is still a cherished possession of the regiment. Application has been made more than once that, in order to commemorate this gallant exploit, the regiment might be permitted to add the name " Marie Galante " to those already on its colours, but this request has hitherto been refused on the somewhat technical ground that the headquarters of the regiment were not present on the occasion.

In 1809 the 1st West India formed part of two divisions engaged in the conquest of Martinique. This was a most brilliant campaign, which after much hard fighting, in which the grenadier company especially distinguished itself, resulted in the surrender of 2,700 French soldiers, and the capture of three eagles. The regiment was specially thanked in general orders for its services, and in token of approbation was permitted to retain two brass kettle-drums and five battle-axes, or halberts, which it had captured. The drums are still preserved in the battalion.

The following year saw a force of two divisions assembled at Dominica for the conquest of Guadeloupe, and in it were included the flank companies of the 1st West India Regiment, the grenadier company being joined to the grenadiers of the 46th, 60th, and 96th regiments to form one battalion, while the light company with those of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, and 8th West India Regiments formed another, as was then customary. Within nine days of landing the island was conquered, and the French, having lost 600 men killed, had capitulated, 2,000 of them becoming prisoners of war. " As a mark of royal favour and approbation, and in commemoration of the distinguished gallantry displayed by the regiment " it was permitted to bear on its colours the words " Martinique " and " Guadeloupe."

The next service in which we find the 1st West India Regiment engaged is in the mismanaged and ill-fated expedition to New Orleans in 1814-15, in which it took part, together with the 5th West India. The details of this disastrous campaign are too well-known to need recapitulation, suffice it to say that both West India Regiments behaved with such desperate valour as to win not only approbation from their own generals, but also encomiums from the American General Jackson. Both regiments, too, suffered very severe losses, not only at the hands of the enemy, but also from exposure

to the rigours of the American winter, which, owing to not having been provided with warm clothing, they were but ill-adapted to withstand.

A Soldier of the 1st W.I. Regiment.

The blue Zouave trousers have yellow piping. A white shell jacket is worn with a scarlet over-jacket, both relieved with yellow braid. A red fez with a white tassel is surrounded by a white turban.

On the escape of the Emperor Napoleon from Elba in 1815, the governor and island of Guadeloupe threw off their allegiance to King Louis XVIII., and for a third time a British force, in which were included 400 picked men of the 1st West India Regiment, invaded that place. This expedition, like the one preceding it, was entirely successful, the 1st West India contributing its share of the hard work and hard fighting, especially in the guerilla warfare, which succeeded the regular operations. Two officers of the regiment—Major Cassidy and Captain Winkler—were each presented with a sword of honour by the general commanding, and moreover, received from King Louis the Order of the Fleur-de-Lys for their services in this campaign.

This was the last occasion on which the regiment was engaged in warfare against a European foe, but since that time it has been constantly engaged with savage enemies on the frontiers of the Empire, in Central and South America, in West Africa, on the Gold Coast, and at Lagos; and in suppressing rebellions in Barbados, in Demerara, and in Jamaica. To enumerate all these occasions, and far more to attempt to describe them, however interesting it

might be to the military student, would be apt to prove wearisome to the general reader, and I must content myself with picking out incidents here and there which appear to be worthy of record.

At the end of the year 1815 the regiment was ordered to transfer all its private soldiers to the other West India regiments, and the officers, non-commissioned officers, band, and drummers proceeded to Bermuda, with the object of there receiving 700 loyal American blacks who had thrown themselves on British protection and had been embodied as Colonial marines. These men were, however, found to be of a very inferior description, and, moreover, unwilling to enlist. The regiment, therefore, or what remained of it, returned to the West Indies, where it was made up to strength by drafts from the lately disbanded Bourbon Regiment. This latter corps I believe to have been composed of French emigrés, who remaining loyal to their king, had on the outbreak of the French Revolution left the neighbouring French islands, and entering the British service had accepted British pay.

For the services of the regiment, "which the Court cannot too highly estimate," in suppressing a very formidable insurrection of slaves in 1823, the Court of Policy of Demerara voted a sum of two hundred guineas to be expended in plate for the officers' mess; some of which is still in possession of the mess. A similar grant was voted to the 21st Regiment.

In 1855 the regiment, on this occasion in conjunction with their quondam foes the French—stormed and captured, after fierce fighting, the strongly stockaded Marabout town of Sattagee on the Gambia in West Africa which was defended by a large force of Mohammedan fanatics. Two large kettle-drums—one a war-drum and the other a death-drum, that is to say, a drum beaten while an execution is taking place—which were then captured, are now still retained by the regiment.

During the Badibu war of 1860 against a fierce and warlike Mohammedan tribe on the Gambia, four companies of the regiment, while engaged in skirmishing with the enemies' infantry, were suddenly attacked by a force of about 300 Mandingo cavalry. Though taken by surprise the men at once formed rallying squares, and opened so steady and well sustained a fire that the enemy were beaten off. A group of five men, who being somewhat in advance had not time to reach any of the squares, was ridden down, but not until it had shot or bayonetted thirteen Mandingoes, who were afterwards found lying dead around it.

During the Jamaica rebellion of 1866 the loyalty of the regiment was exposed to a severe test

from which it emerged triumphantly. Nine-tenths of the men were Jamaicans by birth, and the rebels, against whom they were acting, and upon whom they were exercising repressive measures of the most severe nature, were their own countrymen, and indeed in some instances their own relations. Yet not merely was there no instance of lack of fidelity, but the loyalty of the regiment was never even a matter of question. The Government of Jamaica presented to the officers a silver centre-piece of the value of one hundred guineas in recognition of the "valuable and efficient services rendered by the regiment during the rebellion."

On the 1st September, 1872, a sudden and unexpected attack was made by a large body of Indians upon the post of Orange Walk, on the northern frontier of British Honduras, at that time held by a small party of thirty-eight men of the 1st West India under Lieutenant Graham Smith. So sudden was the attack, no state of hostilities existing at the the time, that Lieutenant Smith was in his bath, and was only able to rejoin his men in a state of partial nudity. He was almost immediately severely wounded, but he retained the command so long as his strength lasted, when it devolved on Sergeant Belizario, who was aided by Assistant-Surgeon Edge, the only other officer present. The defence was so successfully maintained that the Indians were beaten off, though not until one officer and sixteen men of the small garrison had fallen—killed or wounded. The Duke of Cambridge, then Commander-in-Chief, highly complimented the detachment on "their gallant and exemplary conduct," and directed that it should be at once recognised by the promotion of Lieutenant Smith and Assistant-Surgeon Edge, and by the grant to Sergeant Belizario and two other non-commissioned officers of medals for distinguished conduct in the field. The Duke's commendation was notified to the whole army in general orders.

The regiment took part in the Ashantee wars of 1864 and 1873. In the latter campaign at a most critical moment when, owing to the carriers engaged for transport purposes having deserted by whole tribes, the advance was for the time being paralysed for lack of supplies, the 1st West India and the 42nd Highlanders, on the approval of Sir Garnet Wolseley, volunteered to carry supplies to the front, and continued to do so for several days, until the pressure was relaxed. A company of the regiment also distinguished itself in the defence of the post of Fomena on the line of communications in rear of the army, which was heavily attacked by the Ashantees on the 2nd February, 1874. The

general order, which I quote, issued by Sir Garnet (now Lord) Wolseley on his departure shows in what estimate this distinguished soldier held the West India Regiments.

> "Before leaving for England the Major-General Commanding wishes to convey to the soldiers of the 1st and 2nd West India Regiments his appreciation of their soldier-like qualities, and of the manner in which they have performed their duties during the present campaign. Portions of the 2nd West India Regiment have been in every affair of the war, and the regiment generally has undergone fatigue and exposure in a most creditable manner.
>
> "When, owing to the desertion of carriers, the transport difficulties became serious, the men of both these regiments responded most cheerfully to the call made upon them, and by daily carrying loads helped to relieve the force from its most pressing difficulties.
>
> "In saying good-bye the Major-General assures them that he will always remember with pride and pleasure that he has had the honour of commanding men whose loyalty to the Queen, and whose soldier-like qualities have been so well proved in the war now happily at an end."

Her Majesty the Queen also conveyed to the regiment her thanks and highest approbation, and directed that the name "Ashantee" should be added to those inscribed on the colours. During the war no less than eight officers died from the effects of the pestilential climate.

The narrative now brings us down to comparatively recent times. In 1892 a body of frontier police having been repulsed from the stockaded town of Tambi, about 60 miles north-west of Kambia on the Great Scarcies River, Sierra Leone, an expeditionary force of about 500 men of the 1st West India under the command of Colonel Ellis was despatched thither, and on the 7th April the town was taken by storm, and burnt, the enemy, some 2000 in number, being totally defeated with heavy loss.

Shortly before this a small party of about sixty men of the regiment, having endeavoured, unaided by artillery, to take the Mohammedan mud-built fort of Toniataba on the River Gambia, had been forced to retreat from before it with some loss. During this unsuccessful attack Drummer William Gordon gained the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry in having, when several muskets had suddenly been protruded through some loopholes commanding a gate which his party were endeavouring to batter down with a heavy beam, thrown himself between his officer and the fire, thus undoubtedly saving his officer's life, though he himself fell shot through the lungs. This was not the first Victoria

Cross awarded to a West Indian soldier, Private Samuel Hodge, of the 3rd West India Regiment having previously won this coveted distinction at the storming of a Mohammedan stockade at Tubarcolong—the white man's well—on the River Gambia, for having, under a heavy fire, together with another pioneer named Boswell, who was killed, chopped and torn away the logs forming the stockade, thus effecting a breach.*

Immediately on the return of the expedition from Tambi, Colonel Ellis, with 300 men of the 1st West India, proceeded to the Gambia for the purpose of retrieving this repulse, and there, aided by a small naval brigade, took by storm the Toniataba fort, which was subsequently blown up.

At the same time that these operations were going on at the Gambia, a company of the regiment had been despatched to the colony of Lagos, where in conjunction with a force of Houssa constabulary, it was engaged in an expedition against the powerful Jebu tribe. This company distinguished itself at the passage of the river Oshun, the only approach to which was by a narrow path, which had been worn by the rains into the semblance of a ravine. On this path so heavy a fire was brought to bear by the enemy that the Houssas, who were in the advance, could not be induced to leave cover and cross. For a full hour the advance was delayed till the company of the West India Regiment was brought up, who at once rushed across the river, when the Houssas, emboldened by their example, followed, and crossed with them. This expedition also was entirely successful. The Jebu capital, Jebu Odi, was occupied, and the king made submission.

At the latter end of 1893 an expeditionary force under Colonel Ellis, consisting of the 1st West India Regiment and about fifty Frontier Police, with a few details, left Freetown for the purpose of punishing the Sofas, who had for some time past been devastating a large tract of country on the eastern frontier of the colony of Sierra Leone. These Sofas were soldiers (the term Sofa means a soldier) who had detached themselves from the army of the powerful Mohammedan Chieftain Samory, or Samadu, as he is sometimes called, and entering British territory had become nothing more or less than slave-hunters. The depredations they had committed were incredible. Their operations extended over a tract of country measuring 75 miles by 55 miles, and every part of this traversed by the

* A picture by the Chevalier Dessauges representing this incident used to hang in the Victoria Cross Gallery at the Crystal Palace.

expedition was a complete desert with scarcely a single human inhabitant, the entire population having been killed or sold into slavery, and all the towns and villages burnt. The expedition was absent 51 days, during which it marched 541 miles through an exceedingly difficult country, as may be gathered when it is stated that on one day the troops waded through no less than 96 swampy streams and across 25 large swamps with mud from ankle to knee-deep. During part of the time, too, they were on half rations. It is small wonder that the expedition returned to Freetown in a terribly ragged condition, the great majority of the men being without boots, while in many instances great-coats were the only serviceable garment left to them. It was, however, entirely successful, the enemy's war camp having been taken after some sharp fighting, and the Sofas practically exterminated. A large number of slaves were released, and peace once more established throughout the district.

A Bandsman and a Soldier of the 1st W.I. Regiment.

It was during this expedition that an unfortunate collision occurred with lamentable results with a French force which was also operating against the Sofas. The British force was encamped at a place called Waima, without a suspicion that any French troops were in the neighbourhood, when before daybreak on a dark night, a heavy fire was suddenly opened on them from the surrounding bush. Under the impression that they were attacked by the Sofas our men at once lined the defences and returned

the fire, which was kept up on both sides until daylight, when an advance was made from the defences for the purpose of clearing the bush. It was then found that the attack had been made by a party of French Senegalese troops with a large body of native allies, who had been led by a treacherous native chief to believe that the village was occupied by the Sofas. This lamentable occurrence cost the 1st West India Regiment the lives of 2 officers and 5 men, and 15 men severely wounded; while the gallant French commander, Lieut. Maritz, was mortally wounded, and at least 10 of his Senegalese soldiers killed.

The year 1894 again saw the 1st West India on service at the Gambia, where a naval brigade, which had been landed to coerce a recalcitrant chief had met with a serious repulse. Three companies of the regiment were at once despatched from Sierra Leone to the Gambia, and were landed in the Combo country, where, in conjunction with the Royal Navy, they, in a short campaign, lasting only eleven days, completely overran the enemy's country, destroying ten of his towns, of which eight were fortified with stockades.

In these various expeditions the battalion lost seven officers (including Colonel Ellis, who died from the effects of hardships undergone on the Sofa expedition, before he had heard that he had been made a K.C.B. for his services), three English sergeant-majors, two native sergeants, and forty-seven men, besides many wounded.

In the spring of 1898 a serious rebellion broke out in Sierra Leone owing to the imposition of a hut-tax, or more probably owing to the manner in which it was collected, which was only suppressed after many months hard fighting, in which the 1st West India lost heavily, no less than five officers and twenty-two men giving their lives in the course of a tedious and difficult campaign, in which, owing to the densely-wooded nature of the country, the native warrior had every advantage as compared with the regular soldier.

The following honours were placed on the colours in recognition of the services of the regiment during these recent campaigns: "West Africa, 1887, 1892-3-4," and "Sierra Leone."

This was the last active service on which the 1st West India has been engaged, the regiment taking no part in the South African war, it being considered inexpedient for political reasons to employ

native troops. It however formed part of the garrison of Bermuda during the time that nearly 5000 Boer prisoners of war were interned there.

I have now traced the history of the 1st West India Regiment from its origin in a corps of settlers who remained loyal in the revolted North American Colonies in the year 1779, and have given an outline, necessarily bald and incomplete, of the services it has rendered to its Sovereign and to the British Empire down to the present day. How those services were esteemed at the time they were rendered may be gathered from the fact that it has served under and has gained the commendation of such famous commanders as Sir Ralph Abercromby, Sir John Moore, Sir George Prevost, Sir Edward Pakenham, and Lord Wolseley. This being the case it will strike many, after reading the above, as a strange thing that at a time like the present, when the supply of soldiers is barely sufficient for our needs, there should be only two West India battalions in our service. The West Indies afford a magnificent recruiting field, of which the fringe is scarcely touched upon, to obtain the supply now demanded, and it could yield the number required for six battalions as easily as it now does those needed for two. The employment of West Indian troops in Europe presents difficulties other than those of climate, which are sufficiently obvious, and which it would be difficult to overcome; but these diffi-

A Bandsman of the 1st W.I. Regiment.

culties disappear, I suggest, in the case of such places as Ceylon, Egypt, Mauritius, South Africa, and Bermuda, where their employment would release a corresponding number of British soldiers, whose services might be utilized nearer home.

That the regiment exercises a powerful civilizing and educational influence in the West Indies is a fact which is scarcely sufficiently recognised even in the islands themselves, but it is none the less the case that few men leave its ranks without being better men and better citizens for the twelve years they have spent in them.

I might here mention that the West India Regiment, as now constituted, has a certain claim, at present unrecognised, to be regarded as a "Royal regiment," representing as it does the old 3rd West India and the 5th or Duke of York's West India, both of them Royal regiments. This claim moreover receives some heraldic support from the fact that the Garter forms a component part of the regimental badge, a distinction granted as a rule only to Royal regiments.

I do not think I can better conclude this sketch than by quoting from a speech made in the House of Commons by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the then Secretary of State for War, when introducing the Army Estimates for 1895-96. The occasion was shortly after the return of the Sofa expedition, and he said:—

> "I wish to say a word of sincere and well-earned praise to a particular corps. The West India Regiment . . . . has never failed in its duty, and its gallantry and endurance have stood every test. The whole army in my opinion may well be proud of their comrades in the West India Regiment." (Cheers.)