

News, Notes and Queries

Oxysaccharum, juice of lemons and oranges to which a simple juice of roses or honey has been added. In the case of severe vomiting, Aeginetus prescribes the following: cataplasma from vine root boiled in wine and *panis Montagnae* bark if gall is vomited. In cases of frequent diarrhoea clusters of oil are administered. I also give starch to improve the condition of a weakened body, but an overdose must be avoided. Headache, insomnia and excitement have the same origin, and require the same treatment. Even if meningitis is avoided, the vapours of the hot blood, if excessive, cause severe headache and loss of senses. Finally, if the humidity of the brain causes insomnia, poultices which absorb the vapours are placed on the head. If the headache is very bad, roots of raphania with salt may be applied to the back of the skull. In the case of dark delirium the head is wrapped round with alabaster ointment. If the legs are becoming dead, we may treat them by washing, or the application of a narcotic. This is what I wished to say from my own experience, and knowledge; but I would welcome any further information.

Johannes Jessenius a Jessen (Jessenský, Jessinský) was born in 1566 in Breslau in Poland. He studied at Leipzig and several universities in Italy, and took his degree of Doctor of Medicine at Wittenberg in 1596. He became the personal physician of the Kurfürst of Sachsen, and was appointed Professor of the University of Wittenberg, where he lived until 1601. He was then invited to Prague as a Professor of the University of Prague. Here he became a close friend of Tycho Brahe, was appointed personal physician to the Emperor Rudolph II and to Matthias, and finally became the Rector and Chancellor of the University of Prague. On his return from an expedition of Czech noblemen to Hungary, he was arrested in Vienna and imprisoned. After his release, he took part in a rebellion against Ferdinand II, and was sentenced to death by a Viennese Court. Before his execution, on 23 June 1621, his tongue was torn out, and he was executed by the same executioner, Mydlář, from whom he used to buy corpses for his post-mortem examinations. His body was cut to pieces and impaled at the town gates. His head, together with the heads of twenty-seven other Czech noblemen executed on the same day, hung for ten years on the Old Town Tower, and only then was he buried in Tyn Church, where Tycho Brahe was also buried.

Among the possessions of Jessenius were found 190 scientific papers, some his own, some dedicated to him. His own were later burned by the Jesuits. Some of them, without deep scientific significance, but showing a good deal of the author's wit, are as follows:

Vita et mors Tychonis Brahei, Wittenberg, 1601.

Zoroaster, Wittenberg, 1593.

De generationis et vitae humanae periodis, Wittenberg, 1602.

Anatomiae Pragae anno 1600 ab se solemniter administratae historia, Wittenberg, 1601.

Institutiones chirurgicae quibus universa manu medendi ratio ostenditur, Giessen, 1614.

Adversus pestem consilium, Giessen, 1614.

Historica relatio de rustico Bohemo, Hamburg, 1628.

De sanguine, vena secta dimisso iudicium, Prague, 1618; Frankfurt, 1618.

Andreae Vesalii anatomi carmen, Hamburg, 1628.

EMIL SVAGR

'TEETH AND TAILS' IN THE CRIMEA*

IN October of last year I had the honour of addressing this Club on the experience of a young officer, William Cattell who, as R.M.O. to the 5th Dragoon Guards, gave a 'worm's eye view' of the disastrous Crimean campaign.

* Given at the Osler Club, 7 June 1962

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We have subsequently received a large trunk full of the documents of the man at the other end of the scale, Sir John Hall who was Principal Medical Officer to Lord Raglan; they make an interesting comparison.

Among these documents are two small notebooks into which Hall confided the almost intolerable difficulties and frustrations he was called upon to endure.

Born in 1795 Sir John had none of the advantages of wealth, birth or position. His father was a Westmorland farmer and he was educated at Appleby Grammar School before studying at Guy's and St. Thomas's. He entered the army a few days after the Battle of Waterloo and, after long and meritorious service in most parts of the world was, in 1854, filling the post of P.M.O. Bombay Presidency when he received an order from the Horse Guards appointing him in medical charge of the army proceeding to Turkey.

In mid-Victorian days the army was sharply divided into the 'TEETH' and the 'TAIL'. The higher command of the teeth largely consisted of elderly aristocrats, all over sixty except the Duke of Cambridge who was sent home prematurely. Lord Raglan himself was sixty-eight and, having had an arm blown off at Waterloo, had spent forty years on an office chair. Most of the junior officers, as Cattell pointed out, looked upon their army service, with its three parades a week, as an agreeable way of spending a year or two before inheriting their estates. Surrounded since babyhood by a large retinue of servants they naturally did not concern themselves with the domestic 'chores' of the army which were largely run by the 'tail'. Thus such matters as rations, transport, supplies and medical care were left to commissaries, purveyors, contractors, and doctors all of whom came under the heading 'civil departments'. The appalling administrative chaos which resulted is a matter of history.

When the fifty-nine-year-old farmer's son landed at Varna on 27 June 1854 he had to face a collection of elderly, irascible aristocrats with a totally incompetent staff and was early to experience the obstruction and intolerance which bedevilled his life for the next two years. Writing of the old barracks allotted as a hospital he complains of the lukewarmness of the authorities: 'The place is alive with fleas and quite uninhabitable . . . spoke to Lord Raglan on the subject . . . establishment in great confusion and admissions numerous. . . .'

Already, after about a week he was having grave forebodings about the health of the army: 'It is very unwise of the allied commanders to put off their operations until the sickly season arrives when half their force would be crippled by disease.'

Parkinson's Law was unknown and nearly all office copies of reports, etc., are in his own meticulous handwriting: 'I am obliged to work 8 or 9 hours a day at office drudgery owing to the stupidity of my clerk whose brain is addled, poor devil! he never ought to have left Chatham.'

The first report of cholera is dated 12 July and it occurred in the camp at Devna about ten miles north of Varna. Hall had visited and roundly condemned this well-known plague-spot. Cattell records this visit and tells how Sir George Brown the Divisional Commander had ignored the report on account of the beautiful view, warning his doctor that it was his duty to treat sickness and not to try to prevent it.

25 July. Report from Devna gives five more deaths and seven remaining. The French lost 25 last night. August 6. Cholera still continues to rage and we have lost 380 men from it already. Lord Raglan talks of embarking the army soon but I doubt whether under existing circumstances 50,000 men will not take Sebastopol.

(How right he was!)

The army arrived off the coast of the Crimea in 450 craft on 7 August and Hall was

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faced with a desperate situation. They were about to take part in a major campaign and his only medical cover was the regimental hospitals under the administration of unit commanders and some sixty decrepit old pensioners who formed a so-called 'ambulance corps'. The ambulance wagons they brought were landed without harness or horses and were by some administrative mistake on the part of the Navy sent back to Varna. The old men themselves soon went sick or took to the bottle to such an extent that on at least one occasion the patients had to load them on to the vehicle and drive themselves to hospital. There were no hospitals on the beaches behind them and evacuations to Scutari depended on the uncertain sailings of totally unsuitable craft. And they were in the midst of a raging cholera epidemic!

On 27 September after the Battle of Alma he arrived in Balaclava and wrote in his diary: 'Sick continue to pour in from divisions labouring from cholera.'

On 1 October he received an hour's notice to go down to Scutari where he found the hospitals crowded with sick and wounded. 'The ship *Bombay* was so filthy that it will be necessary to land the sick and get her purified. At present there are 2,574 sick at Scutari.'

The first rumblings of the newspaper storm came on 8 November when Dr. Spence came as one of a commission to investigate the truth or falsehoods of *The Times* reports.

The winter of '54 and '55 proved the very nadir of his fortunes. He found some huts at Karani well suited for the reception of sick, which were occupied by commissariat mules and drivers and made application to Lord Raglan and the Quartermaster General. This was the result:

Received thro' Q.M.G. remonstrance from the Commissariat about turning out their mules which they think a monstrous hardship but I do not. . . . Lord Raglan startled at there being 2,160 sick in camp and directed his Adjutant General to ask if means were taken to get them to Balaclava as ordered. I answered yes so far as our limited means of transport would permit and the commissariat would not assist. Pointed out the causes of sickness at which he was displeased. Applications from many officers to get away, virtually everyone anxious to depart.

His Lordship still angry about the newspaper reports . . . straining at gnats when men are dying at the rate of 100 a day in camp from exposure, want of clothing and food. . . . Timber is required to cover the huts and I asked if two shiploads had not arrived. The Q.M.G. said yes but Lord Raglan had desired that cavalry horses should be put under cover first. When I applied for sheds at Karani it was the commissariat donkeys that were to have preference over sick soldiers, now it is the horses, asses, horses then men. Ha Ha! the world has come to a fine pass. No provision has been made for sheltering any portion of the army. They are overworked, badly fed, many of them have no shoes and are dying by hundreds of exhaustion, yet his Lordship pounces on a solitary instance where he thinks the medical department is concerned to chime in with the newspaper cry that has been raised against it and so add weight to what would otherwise be empty as air. . . . It is quite evident that his Lordship is preparing for an enquiry and his intention is to throw as much discredit as he can on the medical department and make them the scapegoat of all the other mis-managements, both military and commissariat. And so it will be the weakest goes to the wall. I see now that an effort will be made to sacrifice me for political purposes.

Nov. 29th. A Mr. Stafford has been at the hospital at Scutari to see what the sick want. Troublesome fellow this and not too particular about the truth.

Mr. Stafford was one of the Parliamentary deputation sent to investigate conditions. Hall's doubts as to his veracity were not without justification. Young David Greig, who had studied under Sir James Simpson at Edinburgh wrote on 27 July 1855:

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I lived longer in Scutari Hospital than Mr. Stafford and I must say I never saw what he describes. The gentleman who writes the present article must either be mad or a most consummate fool and ought to be drummed out of the service to the Rogue's March. He said he could not get drinking cups, water, food, splints, etc. Why? because he was an ass and did not know where to get them as he should have done. I have never applied in vain for anything which would be of use to my patients, even to calve's foot jelly, turtle soup and even champagne.

The diary continues:

Jan. 27. A Mr. Bracebridge, who has come out with Miss Nightingale, writes irritating letters which keep his Lordship's temper at boiling point.

Another angry letter from Lord Raglan about the *Trent* which went down on the 20th and which was inspected by Dr. Lawson. It is possible that his Lordship wants to get rid of me and make room for his protégé Barry, if so well and good but don't persecute other people on that account. Lawson is not only a good officer but an active and conscientious man, none better in the service.

The Barry mentioned here is the famous James Barry who after a turbulent career as an army surgeon, finishing as an Inspector of Hospitals, was found, after death to have been a woman. She was in charge of the hospital at Corfu at the time and we know she visited Lord Raglan and had a clash with Florence Nightingale, from whom Sir Harry Verney has a letter in which she describes Barry riding into the Scutari Hospital and giving her the most 'blackguard rating of my life. She behaved like a brute and was the most hardened creature I have ever met.'

The diary continues:

My position is one of utter misery, better dead than exist like this and this is only the commencement of the winter and what will it be like in another month when the intense cold sets in. . . . Received a note to explain a paragraph in *The Times* about a want of lint at Scutari when it appeared there were 3,750 lb. in store.

The last small notebook which covers the period from the middle of 1855 onward is a curious medley of memoranda, facts and figures only parts of which are in diary form.

Lord Raglan had died in July and could no longer make Hall's life a burden. His reports show that the hospitals and medical arrangements were running fairly smoothly, medical societies were formed and he took the chair at conferences on deficiency diseases and other subjects.

Florence Nightingale, however, still remained something of a thorn in the flesh:

Miss Nightingale packing up her goods and free gifts which amount to more than 100 cases which she does not know what to do with, like those at Balaclava which she sent to the Russian hospitals uninvited.

Those at Scutari are to be distributed to the commandants of the military stations in the Mediterranean and NOT to the medical department. Can nonsense go beyond this? Either these stores were wanted or they were not, and, like the wine and arrowroot thrust on the French after it had been refused were simply a matter . . . of silly ambitious vanity on her part to have the reputation of being the Guardian Angel of the sick and wounded; but if she and her supporters could hear the commentary of our neighbours it would cool if not cure her officious interfering with other people's affairs.

Mitra records how M. Baudens, the French Chief Inspector of Hospitals, called on Hall to enquire how it was that Miss Nightingale had the disposal of such vast quantities of stores as she had just unloaded on them some 6,000 litres of port wine as well as quantities of arrowroot and essence of beef. On learning that Hall knew nothing of the transaction the Frenchman shrugged his shoulders exclaiming, '*C'est bien drôle, mon ami!*'

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He arrived home on 23 July 1856 after two years of difficulty and frustration and, as so often before and since, the incompetence and muddle of the various civil and military departments had resulted in the broken bodies of the long-suffering British soldier and, as Hall had predicted, the 'teeth', Press, and Parliament all combined to heap the blame on the medical services.

There is no doubt, however, that, in spite of everything, Hall's dogged persistence had built a really efficient medical service and that he had won the respect of our allies and the affection of his junior officers by the spirited defence he always put up on their behalf.

He finally emerged with a K.C.B. (charitably described by Florence Nightingale as 'Knight of Crimean Burial Grounds'), a Legion of Honour and a Reward for Distinguished Conduct. Surely he must have felt that he had been vindicated.

But how wrong he was! Such is the power of propaganda, influence and publicity that today he is almost completely forgotten and the whole credit of cleansing the Crimean Augean Stables goes to Florence Nightingale whose forceful genius for army administration did not come to full fruition until several years later.

The tragic events of the war had not been altogether in vain for they impressed upon the 'teeth' that when an army goes to war it faces two enemies, and that throughout all history disease has always been more destructive than all the most devastating engines of war that the most ruthless enemy has been able to bring against us, and that such questions as transport, rations, clothing and hygiene are as essential to victory as the cannon, the musket and the sword.

So it was that in 1898 medical officers ceased to be merely 'doctors in uniform' and that the unhappy semi-civilian 'tail' with its 'courtesy hyphenated titles' developed into a Corps with a tradition of sixty-four years and two world wars behind it and one which takes its place at the council table when strategic and tactical plans are discussed.

A leader writer in *The Times* of 10 August 1951 put the case in a nutshell: 'Army doctors are members of two professions and unless they have mastered them both they fail in their duty.'

It will be remembered that it was this very newspaper whose voice was loudest in the vitriolic attacks on the medical services in general and on Sir John Hall in particular. In this same article, however, it makes something of an *amende honorable* as it concludes: 'The R.A.M.C. of today, rightly proud of the honourable position it now holds can afford to look back over its shoulder with respect upon the pioneers who did their best with such hardships.'

R. E. BARNSELY

LEBORGNE—IN MEMORIAM

OVER ONE HUNDRED years ago, on 17 April 1861, a patient aged fifty-one, died in Paris who owes great fame to the fact that he could not give his history or even his name. He died of cellulitis of the right leg, which had been paralysed for seven years. One week before his death, and after twenty-one years of residence at the Hospice of Bicêtre, that terminal surgical condition caused his transfer to the Infirmary of the same hospital, and aroused belated but intense interest in his case. The surgeon under whose care he was admitted did not save his life. But he saved his brain, after making some fascinating clinical observations which we would call neurological—in a tradition that that surgeon helped to create. The brain remains uncut. It has evoked many erudite storms.