

**'In Memoriam Dr. Edmund Alexander Parkes' Reprinted from the British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review, July 1876**

**Publication/Creation**

Jul 1876

**Persistent URL**

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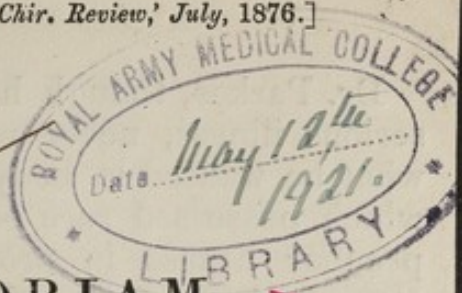


*J.W. Burdett*

*Presented by Dr. J. C. Parkes.  
R.M.C. 182*

Reprinted from the 'Brit. and For. Med.-Chir. Review,' July, 1876.]

*with  
the writer's kind  
regards J.W.*



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## IN MEMORIAM.

DR. PARKES, F.R.S.

1182

It is with profound grief, shared not only by ourselves but by the whole medical and scientific world, that we sit down to write a short memoir of Edmund Alexander Parkes, who died at his residence, Bitterne, near Southampton, on the 15th of March, having nearly completed his 57th year. He survived the death of his wife, which took place in 1870, but he has left no family. Independent of the fact of his having been for some years Editor of this 'Review,' and one of its most valued contributors, his useful and lasting labours in the cause of humanity entitle the memory of this great and good man to more than a passing notice.

Short and fragmentary accounts of his life and works have already appeared in the medical journals of this country and the Continent; but we want more—we want a detailed account of the unselfish life and labours of a man, who during his career commanded the respect of the civilised world and, at his death, universal regret. We must express a hope that some personal friend who knew him well will write his biography for the benefit of future generations, or even as a stimulus to the student of medicine; but at any rate his writings will remain as monuments of patience, industry, and learning, and they will proclaim his greatness.



Dr. Parkes, though he did not often suffer from serious illness, never was physically strong ; but what he wanted in body he made up for in a mind which possessed rare powers of discrimination and peculiar fitness in prosecuting original research. He was born at Warwick on the 30th of March, 1819, of parents possessed of those upright qualities which distinguish the Christian character—qualities which became farther evolved and perfected in their offspring. Parkes, though a patient and industrious investigator, was an example of hereditary genius ; for his mother, we understand, was an authoress of several popular works, and no doubt in early youth he learned to cultivate those characters, literary and scientific, under the able guidance of his parents, which in after life raised for himself a name as the founder of Hygiene—a name destined to become famous in the history and practice of Medicine. He received some of his early education at that excellent institution, Christ's Hospital, which has given to the world many men who have distinguished themselves in various walks of life ; but none more so than the subject of this memoir. He obtained his medical education at University College and passed through the various classes with distinction, taking both medals and other honours ; in fact, while a student at College, he reflected his after greatness. He took M.B. in 1841, gaining honours in almost all the subjects of examination, and his M.D. in 1846.

While at University College he assisted his uncle, Dr. Anthony Todd Thompson in his Laboratory, and no doubt he there became imbued with those habits of accuracy and research, especially in chemical investigations, which distinguished him to the end of his days. It may not be generally known that the Army Medical Department had the honour of claiming him as one of its own, at an early period of



his career; but he did not remain long in that service. In 1842 he was gazetted Assistant Surgeon to the 84th Regiment, in which he served for three years in Madras and Burmah, and where by steady and close observation he became acquainted with the nature of those tropical diseases, especially cholera, dysentery, and hepatic affections, so perfectly that, soon after his arrival in England, he was induced to publish an account of each. He returned to England in 1845, resigned his commission and settled down to private practice in London, where he resided for nearly ten years.

During the period of his residence in London he was able to publish, besides attending to his private practice, numerous papers and pamphlets of great value, notably 'Remarks on the Dysentery and Hepatitis of India,' and 'On Asiatic and Algide Cholera,' besides papers and contributions to the medical journals. In 1849 he was elected Professor of Clinical Medicine to University College and Physician to University College Hospital—a proper position it will be admitted for a man of his unusual attainments to occupy; and it was there, at the patient's bedside, his great powers of observation and teaching first became apparent—powers which gathered, as it were, increased strength and charms with his advancing years. We who have been his pupils at a later period, and who have known him well, cannot easily forget one to whom we owe so much either as a faithful teacher, as a man or a true friend.

In 1851 he edited a new edition of 'Thomson's Diseases of the Skin,' a subject in which he took great interest.

In 1852, in addition to his other duties, he became Editor of this 'Review,' and continued in that capacity for three years, when, during the Crimean War, he was selected by Government to



organise and superintend a hospital in Turkey for the relief of our sick and wounded. The confidence of the Government in him was not misplaced, and he eventually chose Renkioi, on the Dardanelles where a large hospital was constructed and managed in the most perfect manner. From that time he may be said to have formed his second connection with the Medical Department of the Army, and to have commenced that career of usefulness, particularly in Hygiène, which has led to the improvement in the sanitary condition of all classes, more especially the soldier; and which connection was continued until his comparatively early death. In 1855 he delivered the Gulstonian lectures on pyrexia, afterwards published in the 'Medical Times,' and he was appointed in the same year Examiner of Candidates for the Indian Medical Service, and subsequently for the other Public Medical Services—positions for which he was specially qualified and which occupied a great deal of his time and attention. In 1860 he was selected Professor of Hygiène for the Army Medical School, Fort Pitt, and in the same year he published a work on the 'Composition of the Urine in Health and Disease.'

The high rate of mortality and sickness of our troops, from preventable causes, during the Crimean War, and always in India, and the want of special knowledge in Military Medicine, Surgery, and Hygiène amongst the medical officers of the Army, were, no doubt, fully observed by Dr. Parkes in the Crimea. To his labours, therefore, and to those of the late Lord Herbert, we are principally indebted for the Army Medical School, which was removed from Chatham in 1863 to that more spacious and elegant edifice the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, and where instruction in all the above specialities has been since given to all departments of the Public Medical Services.



The means of preserving health and the prevention of disease as taught by Parkes at the Army Medical School soon began to excite attention, and consequently at the recommendation of Sir James Gibson, K.C.B., the Medical Director-General, he published in the 'Annual Department volumes' a Report on Hygiène, collected from the various published works bearing on the subject, whether in this country or abroad. These Reports, which commenced in 1862 and were continued up to near the time of his death, are monuments of industry, the results of careful thought, extensive reading, and research, and were always most anxiously looked for by army medical officers all over the world, as well as by all those interested in the progress of Hygiène. He delivered the Introductory Lecture at the opening of the Winter Session of the Army Medical School at Fort Pitt, on the 1st of October, 1862, which was afterwards published in the 'Lancet.' In 1864 he brought out his great work on Hygiène, which he specially prepared, in order to carry out the wishes of the Royal Commission on Army Sanitation, &c., by providing a text-book of Hygiène illustrated by examples drawn from army life, for the gentlemen attending the Army Medical School.

That book has since passed through four editions, so great has been the demand, and at present it is so arranged that it forms a complete guide to Hygiène adapted to all who are entrusted with the duties of the various departments of public health. It has, moreover, been translated into many languages; it is the text-book of Hygiène in America, and is as well known perhaps in France and Germany as in this country.

In 1868 he published a 'Scheme of Medical Tuition,' which appeared in the 'Lancet,' and which should be read by every one engaged in the



instruction of Medical Students. Amongst other things in the 'Scheme' he recommended compulsory attendance of the students at the patients' bedsides, where they would be taught by the teacher and made to examine each case for themselves, in accordance with the system introduced by Dr. Gairdner, at Glasgow; in fact, he impressed the necessity of their becoming practical professional men instead of useless theorists.

His broad and enlightened views on Medical Education often found expression in the occasional lively debates of the General Medical Council, of which he was one of the principal members, and it must be said that when he spoke in that assembly he always by his good sense, commanded the respect and goodwill of his colleagues who might differ from him.

He published various papers which appeared in the 'Proceedings' of the Royal Society in 1867 and 1871, "On the Elimination of Nitrogen during Muscular Action," and again in 1872 and 1874, "On the Effects of Alcohol on the Human Body," besides numerous other papers which appeared in the various medical journals.

He was a powerful advocate of the Contagious Diseases Acts, because he realised the benefits that would result to all classes from their successful application; and he always met the opponents of the Acts by crushing arguments and incontrovertible statistics as to their value.

He worked hard for the benefit of the soldier, and assisted in introducing many reforms in his dress and equipment, so as to enable him to preserve his health and efficiency at the same time.

What greater proof is needed of his world-wide and philanthropic labours than the eloquent tribute recently paid to his memory by Baron Mundy, of the Austrian Army, and published in the 'Wiener



Medizinisch Wochenschrift' for April. After alluding to his loss, Baron Mundy says: "Every Continental army should, were it only for a moment, dip its crape-clad standards on parade, in memory of the founder and the best teacher of military hygiene in our times. The friend and benefactor of every soldier, Edmund Alexander Parkes, is no more!"

In a short notice like the present it is impossible even to enumerate the labours of Dr. Parkes, much less to give any idea of their nature. He was always busy; it was natural to him, and he made the most of his time, not for his own benefit, but for the good of others. Shortly before his death he wrote a popular work on Hygiene, entitled, 'On Personal Care of Health,' which is now published under the auspices of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and it will, no doubt, do an immense amount of good if attention be paid to the simple rules laid down in the plain and easy language of its lamented and gifted author. He was one of those unobtrusive men who does good, as it were, by stealth, and who makes his services subservient to the advantages of others. His life of usefulness, devoted to the improvement of mankind, and especially his services to his country, called loudly for some recognition during his lifetime; but he has passed away without a state reward or distinction, happy in having done his duty to his fellow-man, and in having earned the affectionate love of his numerous friends, and of all those who ever knew him.

We are glad, however, to learn that it is intended, by his former colleagues at University College, to establish a permanent record to his memory, and of such a character as to aid in the scientific investigation and practical study of the subjects in which his life was chiefly spent. We also know that a



movement has commenced at Netley, having for its object, amongst other things, testifying to the esteem in which he was held, the foundation of a Parkes' Scholarship or Prize, to be competed for in the Army Medical School.

At Netley, the scene of his principal labours, his loss will be severely felt; both in the laboratory, where his earnest, practical, gentle manner of teaching always commanded the attention, admiration, and respect of the students, and in the Senate, where his wisdom and experience were so useful in conducting the business of the school. We hear nothing but lamentation since his death, and we have listened to more than one of his distinguished Colleagues who have paid his memory the highest tribute that could be accorded to any man, and one of whom very beautifully expressed himself regarding his scientific attainments, that "his name runs like a golden thread through the woof and web of modern medicine."

Dr. Parkes was no theorist—he died without a theory; he was practical, minute, and accurate in all his investigations; he had an abhorrence of oppression and wrong; he was, in fact, judging from his public and private life, the nearest approach to perfection in a man and a Christian that it is possible to attain; and of him it may be truly said that he had "a soul exalted above earth—a mind skilled in the arts that form mankind."



