

Letter from G.E. Dobson to Sir William Aitken, Professor of Pathology at the Army Medical School, re preparation of a catalogue of the specimens of natural history in the Museum at Netley

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Colyford Villa

Exeter.

10th June 1886.

My dear Dr. Aitken

I am glad to find that you have finished the memoir on the life and work of my poor friend and I look forward with pleasure to reading it in the medical journals.

With respect to the Catalogue of the Specimens of Natural History in the Museum of the Army Medical Staff at Netley it is necessary to bring to the notice of the Professors the fact, that, of the period granted to me at their instance by the Director General to complete that Catalogue, amounting to two years, only

Eight months or so were really available, for, in February last year, owing to the Sudan Campaign, most of the Officers of the Medical Staff were withdrawn from Hertsy, and, in addition to being in charge of the ~~Division~~ ^{Commandment} Division, and President of the Mess, I was called upon to perform all the Invaliding work of the Hospital at the busiest time of the year (except the very small invaliding work of the Surgical Division) which not only absorbed all my time from February to July but destroyed my health, I fear, permanently. In July I suffered from serivener's jaundice and this was succeeded by fainting attacks, so that in August, as soon as I was relieved from the invaliding work I was obliged to apply for six weeks leave of absence and

go for change to Malvern where I returned in September in no respect benefited, but managed to struggle on till November, unable, even for an hour, to concentrate attention on my work, and then, under the advice of Sir Joseph Fayrer and by recommendation of a Medical Board, was granted six months leave which I spent chiefly in the South of Europe, with, as you know, little benefit. Thus the whole time since Feb^r. 1885 to the present has been lost for the purposes of completing the Catalogue. Nevertheless, in the ^{autumn} ~~summer~~ winter of 1884 a great deal of work in running the specimens had been got through previously, but only the beginning of putting it into shape for printing had been attempted, for, I actually considered in Feb^r. 1885 that I had abundance of time before till Sept. 1886 to do this. I have by me the MS enough

Catalogues which I will endeavour, if my health, still very precarious, permits, to add to and send to you by 20th week in July. For, so anxious was I to complete the work, that, on leaving Netley for six months, hoping I would be well long before my leave wd. terminate, I took my work and materials away with me in the full expectation of being able to cast them into shape to some extent before my return.

Believe me, Dear Dr. Aitken,

Yours very truly

J. E. Dolison.

Prof. Aitken M.D. F.R.S.

Secretary to the Senate

Army Medical School.