

Extracts from a letter to Sir Robert Peel, Bart., on Schools of Instruction for military and naval surgeons, by Sir George Ballingall, Regius Professor of Military Surgery in the University of Edinburgh

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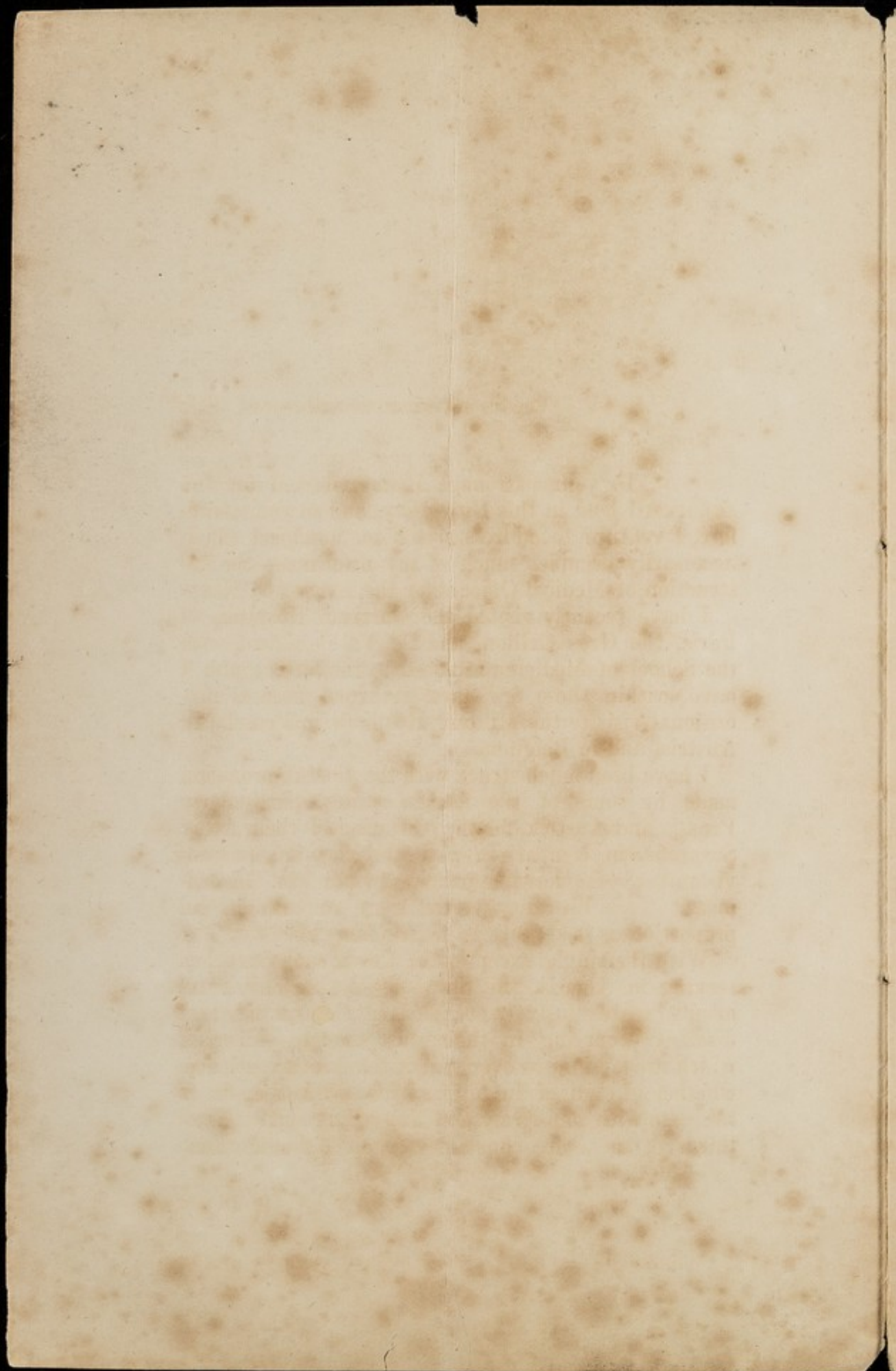
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EXTRACTS FROM
A LETTER TO SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.
ON
SCHOOLS OF INSTRUCTION
FOR
MILITARY AND NAVAL SURGEONS,
BY
SIR GEORGE BALLINGALL,
REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MILITARY SURGERY
IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.



EDINBURGH COLLEGE, 25th September, 1843.

SIR,

To your patronage I am indebted for the situation I hold in this University, and to you, therefore, I venture to address myself on a subject which necessarily occupies much of my attention—the instruction of Medical Officers for the Army and Navy.

I have recently visited the Garrison Hospitals of Paris, the Gros Caillou, and the Val de Grace, with the School of Medicine attached to the latter; and I have, within these few days, returned from a professional visit to the Military Hospitals in Prussia, in Austria, and in Belgium.

I have been much struck with the liberal provision made by some of the foreign states, particularly Prussia and Austria, for the education of their Army Surgeons, in comparison with the very scanty provision made for the same purpose by our own Government. This liberality is the more remarkable, in proportion as it appears to me the less called for.

With the single exception of the French Surgeons serving in Algeria, the Surgeons of the continental armies are exclusively occupied in the treatment of diseases occurring in their own climate,—diseases which are familiar to every practitioner of experience, whether in civil or in military life. What again is the case with our Army and Navy Surgeons? Two-thirds of them are constantly occupied in the treat-

ment of formidable and fatal diseases, incident to soldiers and seamen on foreign stations, and in tropical climates,—diseases with which neither practitioners nor teachers in this country are, of necessity, practically acquainted. While, then, on the continent, where little peculiarity of instruction is required by the Army Surgeon, institutions for his education abound; in this country, where the duties devolving on the Army and Navy Surgeon are of a peculiar and onerous description, little facility is given for his special instruction.

Of the "Hospitals of Instruction" for the Medical Officers of the French army, established at Strasburg, at Metz, and Lille, I am unable to speak from personal observation, but I would briefly notice two establishments which I have recently seen, the institution of Frederick William II. at Berlin, and the Josephinum Academy at Vienna. The former of these was destined by its royal founder, "in the first place to receive the Surgical Staff of the Field Hospitals, which had acquired experience in the war with France, and to preserve it to the country; and in the next place, to provide for the Field Hospitals, in future, a supply of well educated Surgeons." The Josephinum at Vienna is justly said to be "one of the most truly imperial establishments in the city." This institution, said to be supported at an annual expense of nearly £5,000, with its magnificent anatomical collection, its large Hospital and Clinical School, its numerous able and talented professors, was established by the Emperor, whose name it bears, as "a School of Medicine for the special purpose of supplying medical men to the Austrian army." "MUNIFICENTIA ET AUSPICIIIS IMP. CÆS. JOSEPHI II. P.F. SCHOLA MEDICO-CHIRURGICA MILITUM MORBIS ET VULNERIBUS CURANDIS SANANDISQUE

INSTITUTA ÆDE ET OMNI SUPPELECTILE SALUTARIS ARTIS INSTRUCTA."

Let us now compare these institutions with the very limited provision made for similar purposes in Great Britain, namely, the establishments at Chatham, at Haslar, and at Plymouth, and the professorship of Military Surgery in the University of Edinburgh. The Museums attached to the great Military and Naval Hospitals in England, most creditable as they are to the Heads of the Medical Departments, and to the zeal and public spirit of the Medical Officers of the service, are very inadequately patronized by the Government. They are, in fact, more the creations of the departments, than the institutions of the State.

The Hospitals, again, to which these collections are respectively attached, however valuable they may be as Schools of Morbid Anatomy and Pathological inquiry, are but little calculated to instruct young men in the treatment, or, what is of more importance, in the prevention of those diseases for which their best energies are required. A large proportion of the diseases falling to be treated in these Hospitals are not the diseases incident to men in the vigour of life, who, by prompt and efficient treatment, may be preserved to the service; but are, in many instances, the cases of men already lost to the service, in consequence of confirmed and incurable organic diseases.

But even admitting, to the fullest extent, the utility of these Museums and Hospitals, to young men entering the army, I would ask, how far they are available to another and very important class of pupils,—to men returning from a protracted absence on foreign stations, with the double purpose of renovating their health, and renewing their professional knowledge. I know well what it is to have served in the distant

regions of India, secluded for years from the companionship of books, and from all intercourse with the lights of the profession. I have seen, with much pleasure, the facilities so judiciously afforded, by the present distinguished heads of the Medical Departments of the Army and Navy, to gentlemen so situated, to resume their professional studies—a clear index of their opinion of its necessity; and I have witnessed with delight, the avidity with which these gentlemen avail themselves of the opportunities here offered of recovering their lost ground, and qualifying themselves to take their place amongst the well informed members of the profession. But it is not to Chatham, to Portsmouth, or to Plymouth, that such men will resort. It is to the metropolitan cities of the empire to which they will naturally look for the most recent, the most satisfactory, and the most authentic information on the progress of science, and on the improvements in Medicine, which have taken place during their absence.

While much of the information which such men naturally desire, is, I readily admit, to be obtained from the usual courses of Medicine and Surgery as delivered in the schools, it is not too much to expect that there should be in each of the three divisions of the kingdom at least one establishment, under the patronage of Government, to which they may resort as a matter of right, where they will be sure to find at least one Professor conversant with the nature of their duties, who can enter into their wants and wishes, and who is constantly employed in directing their attention to those subjects which constitute the business of their lives; where they will meet with their brethren in the same department of the service from every quarter of the world, and from intercourse with whom, mutual

benefit may be derived. I would ask the numerous gentlemen in the Army, the Navy, and the Honourable East India Company's service, who have frequented the class of Military Surgery during the last twenty years, whether they have not obtained, from such intercourse, great and obvious advantages. I have already given my opinion, "that much valuable information is annually lost to the public, from there not being in each of the metropolitan schools, at least one Professor or Lecturer, whose attention is specially directed to the topics embraced in the course of Military Surgery, and to whom gentlemen returning from foreign service might freely communicate their observations."

The duties of the Professor cannot be more clearly defined, than in the words of the late Mr. John Bell, who says—

"He must deliver a short code of Military Medicine, explaining the fevers, fluxes, spasms, infectious diseases, and all the peculiar duties of the camp and the hospital; he must also explain the scurvy, ulcers, and all the disorders most frequent in ships of war.

"He must teach Medical Geography, the climates, seasons, coasts of various countries, the manner of conducting soldiers on a foreign expedition, the general care of their health, the choice of encampments, the forming of hospitals on shore; how to convert churches, granaries, public buildings, into occasional hospitals; how to attend an army in the field; how to lay the wounded in besieged towns; how to carry them off the field in a retreating army.

"Along with these must be taught Military Economics, diet, exercise, clothing, general medicine, and all methods of preventing disease. Without this knowledge, no man is entitled to serve. How few are thus taught! How few are fit for service! How few

are there who are not conscious of those blurs and blots in their general education, which no diligence of their own can ever do away !”

And here I may appeal to the sentiments of Mr. Guthrie, who, in the preface to his Clinical Lectures, expresses himself thus :—“ On ceasing to lecture, I may venture to say I have done that privately, which ought to be done publicly by the Government ; which is done so in Edinburgh, and by every Sovereign in the great capitals of Europe. Young men, as well as old ones, require, after a few years of absence from home, to renew the knowledge they once possessed, and which perhaps they have in part forgotten, and to keep themselves up to the improvements which have taken place whilst they have been absent. When they come to London—and leave should be given for that purpose, from time to time—this opportunity should be afforded to them by the authorities ; they ought not to be obliged to go about and pay again their education fees, like a parcel of students, if they have not been educated in London.

“ There is a Museum at Chatham of preparations of diseases of foreign climates, many of which are unknown in England, and which, from its situation, is comparatively of little use. These preparations ought to be demonstrated, and the diseases duly taught. The specimens of natural history are many of them unique, whilst others are more splendid than any in the British Museum or elsewhere, but they are comparatively unknown. A Government that shall appropriate a piece of ground in Downing-street, when the old houses between it and George-street are pulled down, for the erection of a Museum, with apartments for the Conservator, will do themselves great honour. Let them attach to this a Professor of Physic and another

of Surgery, and they will render the country an inestimable benefit. The saving would be that of a great number of lives."

For the present, however, I would contemplate the institution of only one Professorship in each of the metropolitan schools, not doubting that many men will be found quite competent to instruct the younger part of a class in all that is essential to the preservation of the health of soldiers and seamen, and, at the same time, able to inform the seniors, who may have fallen behind the progress of surgery, of every solid improvement which takes place in that noble art. I would restrict such appointments exclusively to the metropolitan cities: in the provincial schools they can neither be wanted, nor can they be advantageously conducted.

What then would be the additional expense of all I propose—the endowment of a Professorship of Military Medicine and Surgery in London, and another in Dublin? *Two hundred pounds a-year.* Surely, sir, this were a cheap compliment; surely it were a very becoming attention to the health of that army and navy which have served the nation so faithfully and so efficiently; which have preserved the country from foreign invasion, which have protected its commerce in perilous times, and which have opened up vast empires to the spirit and enterprise of the British merchant.

I have already hinted that the time has gone by when I can have any personal interest in the result of this representation. I make it from a sense of duty to the University, to the chair which I have the honour to fill, and to the patronage which placed me in it. I submit the matter to your consideration, with the fullest confidence that if it shall be found to possess

but one-half of the importance which I attach to it, the subject will not be overlooked; and that the patriotic views which guide your conduct as a statesman, will induce you to look favourably on a proposal, which has for its object the health and efficiency of those engaged in the military and naval service of the country.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your very faithful,

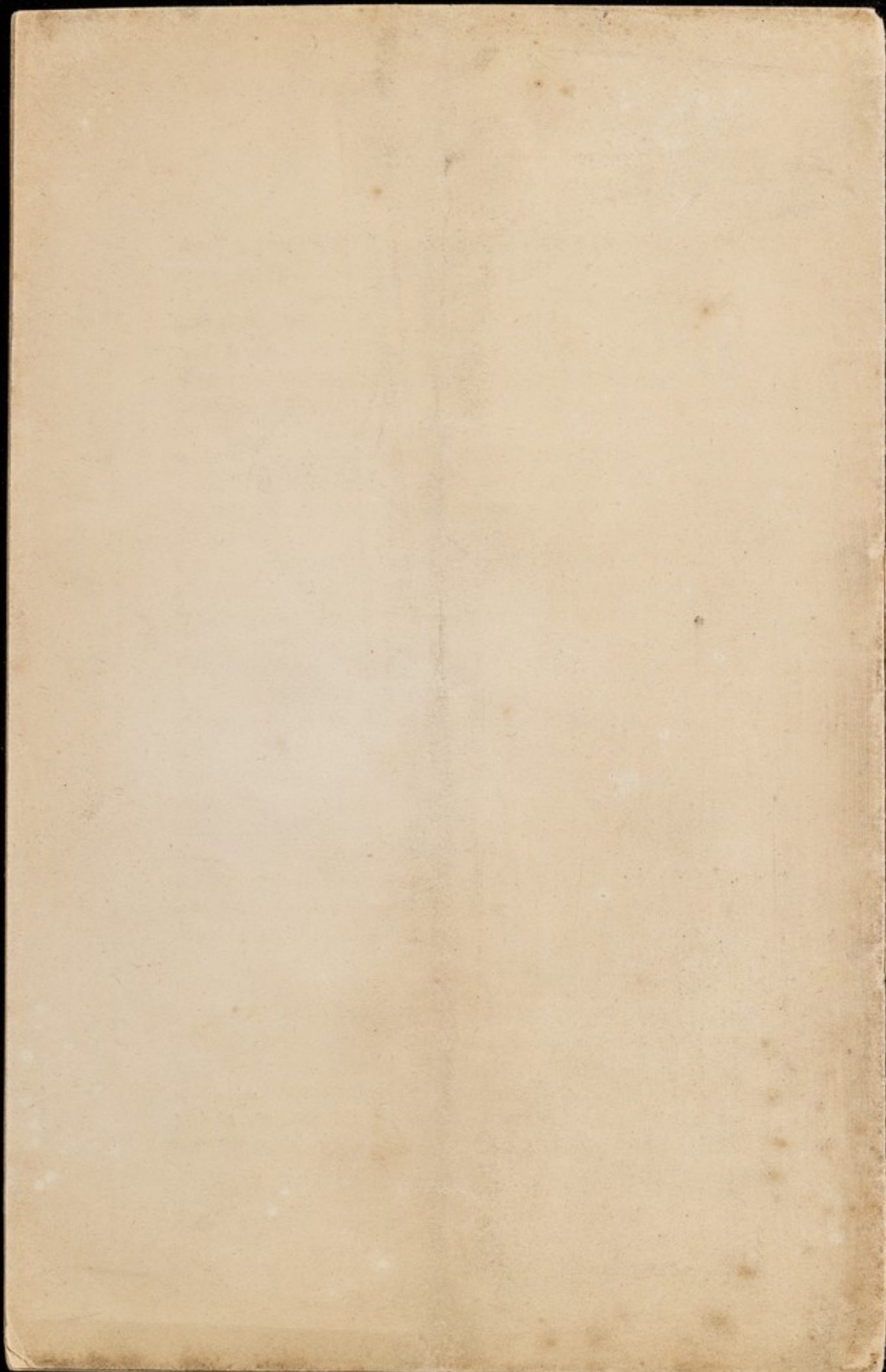
And very obedient humble servant,

GEO. BALLINGALL.

The Right Honourable

SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.,

&c., &c., &c.



Walking past the pillared, classical facade of 29 King Street, Aberdeen, it's easy to miss the unobtrusive nameplate on the door. And even if you do step up between the grey granite columns and read "Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society", you may not be much the wiser, writes FRANCES HORSBURGH who went on to explore:—

The history behind the nameplate

THE ABERDEEN Medico-Chirurgical Society began in 1789 when a number of medical students formed the Aberdeen Medical Society to further their undergraduate education, for which facilities hardly existed at that time in Aberdeen. Among them was James McGrigor, later Sir James and founder of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

The society met regularly wherever they could until 1820 when enough funds were raised to build premises, designed by Archibald Simpson, at 29 King Street.

There it has remained ever since but not for much longer. Soon the society will move to a new building which is part of the medical centre at Foresterhill.

Bound up with the move is the desire of members that the society become more outward-looking. Although originally a students' organisation, undergraduate members were excluded in 1865.

Today, with membership numbering over 350, meetings are again open to senior medical students.

"We see our future role as being closely concerned with post-graduate education," says Dr James Henderson, secretary of the Medico-Chirurgical Society. "We also want to try to make a bridge between the medical profession and the general public." They hope to extend their interest to the community by public lectures and make contact with bodies interested in the problems of health.

To assist in financing the move to Foresterhill the society's valuable collection of medical books were auctioned three years ago.

Dr Ian Porter, the society's librarian, explains: "We have retained a nucleus

of books dealing with the North-east and with well-known medical people. With those we hope to build up a new library at Foresterhill."

The society also plans to make a collection of photographs of its King Street home to carry to Foresterhill.

Pictures of the hall itself will show a blue-carpeted room under constant scrutiny from the painted eyes of past members, whose heavily-framed portraits line the walls.

As well as the World War I memorial, there are plaques commemorating Louis Pasteur and William Harvey, the man who discovered the circulation of the blood and who was an eminent physician when Charles I. and Oliver Cromwell were tearing the country apart in civil war. In 1841 he was made an honorary burgess of Aberdeen.

On the end wall of the hall in the place of honour, from which it rightfully dominates the room, is the huge portrait of Sir James McGrigor. The most prominent of the society's 18 founder members, he was born in Strathspey in 1771 and educated at Aberdeen Grammar School.



The Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society's present home at 29 King Street, which was designed by Archibald Simpson.

No real medical school existed in Aberdeen at the end of the 18th century and in 1789 James McGrigor was one of a band of students, determined to acquire a medical education, who banded together to form the society.

At first it was a kind of debating club and members took it in turn to offer the hospitality of their homes for meetings. Anatomical demonstrations were carried out and inevitably the impecunious students became involved in some macabre body-snatching episodes. Each member had to take his turn in this risky enterprise and had to abide by the strict rules drawn up to ensure secrecy.

In this way The Aberdeen Medical Society—as it was then styled—supplied almost all the systematic teaching in medicine then available in Aberdeen in addition to practical instruction at hospitals or by doctors with whom the students worked.

Soon after helping to found the society James McGrigor joined the Army as a surgeon. In 1815 he was appointed to the Army Medical Board and he was the Chief of the Medical Department of the

Army under the Duke of Wellington during the Peninsular War.

In 1806 he was in fact the first to suggest the erection of a hall to which he then subscribed 50 guineas. The King Street building was erected eight years later at a cost of £3000. McGrigor's journals and casebooks have been in the possession of the society since 1847.

It is in no way extraordinary for the society to innovate new policies or ideas. In the past the society has urged both hospital and local authorities to provide facilities which have been lacking in the community. For example the formation of the City Hospital for the control of infectious diseases was promoted by the society.

In the 1920s plans for the formation of the Joint Hospital Scheme were laid before the society by Professor Matthew Hay. This far-seeing policy has resulted in Aberdeen having one of the finest medical complexes in the country.

Now it is a time to look ahead again. Although there are regrets at leaving their historic home members will carry a sense of continuing tradition with them as they face a future of renewed vigour at Foresterhill.

KEITH TO 'PUSH' ON THREAT TO RATES

"UNLESS we 'create' about it, nothing will be done," declared Baillie Ian Robertson, when he spoke at Keith Town Council's monthly meeting of the need for drastic changes in the rating system.

He was commenting on a warning given at the Convention of Royal Burghs last month that rates in Scotland would go up by an average of more than 10% this coming year.

Perth and Kinross want drug report

PERTH AND Kinross Education Committee are to call for a report from the director of education, medical officer of health and chief constable in an attempt to establish if there is a drugs problem in the combined county.

Councillor W. Scott-Davidson, Kinross Landward Area, wrote urging that the authorities should investigate this "major menace," and in his letter referred to the anti-drugs campaign being run in Aberdeenshire and Kincardine.

EDINBURGH medical officer of health Dr J. L. Gilloran said yesterday that schoolchildren should receive regular lessons about drugs and the dangers of addiction.

Shop cash allegation - Perth not proven verdict

A VERDICT of not proven was returned by a jury of eight men and seven women at Perth Sheriff Court yesterday after a two-day trial.

Former shop manager Gordon Millar was acquitted by Sheriff Alexander Prain of an indictment which alleged that he had embezzled over £3000 from a fish, fruit and florist business at Scott Street, Perth, known as Betty White's.

The jury considered the evidence for almost an hour before reaching their majority verdict.

The shop owner, Mrs Betty White (58), 14 Neville Street, Dundee, was a key Crown witness.

The court heard that Millar, who formerly lived at Duppelin Road, Perth, had been manager of the shop for about six years—responsible for paying all wages, insurance stamps, PAYE and depositing money at the bank.

'SUSPICIOUS'

Mr James Forbes White (35), Seaforth Crescent, Dundee, son of the owner and supervisor of her businesses, told the court that in March of this year he obtained a bank statement which showed that no money had been paid in from the previous month's takings.

When police were summoned, Millar told them he felt the money was safer with him than in the bank.

EYE-CATCHING ARRIVAL

THE distinctive lines of the month-old Banff-registered stern trawler Avenger created a lot of interest when the vessel landed at Aberdeen for the first time yesterday.

Her arrival also caused a flutter of excitement — because of the continuing boycott of Aberdeen by the Scottish seine-net fleet.

But Skipper Albert Wiseman, Macduff, who commands the Sandhaven-built Avenger, said: "I don't consider we're breaking the boycott. This is not a seine-netter. She's built to trawl — and that's what we're doing, using the same sort of gear as the Aberdeen 'scratcher' fleet."

He added: "As I see it we're in the same category as other inshore trawlers who have continued to work out of Aberdeen."

DISTINCTIVE

The 73ft-long Avenger incorporates a number of design features to the skipper's specification.

A whaleback extending almost half the vessel's length gives her a distinctive line. It provides at deck level a mess-room, skipper's cabin and store locker, greatly increasing the accommodation for a vessel of her class.

The ship's layout and gear-handling equipment attracted a lot of professional interest and a number of Aberdeen skippers boarded the Avenger for a closer inspection.

'SORTED OUT'

The gear-handling equipment is designed to reduce manual labour and improve safety. The steel trawl doors slot into special cradles aft as the trawl is winched on board.

Since she commissioned about a month ago, the Avenger has been operating a series of working-up trials out of Fraserburgh.

"We've had some teething troubles and worked out of Fraserburgh so that we could have the builders at hand," said Skipper Wiseman. "Now that we're getting the problems sorted out, we hope to get down to steady fishing."

The Avenger's first catch at Aberdeen—100 boxes—fetched £340.



Skye fishers oppose plan

SKYE small-boat fishermen have banded together to fight the controversial Cameron Committee Report, which proposes radical changes in the governing inshore fishing.

In particular, they will fight for the retention of the three-mile limit, which the committee propose should be abolished.

The issue has united the Skye men as nothing before. They have decided to form Skye Fishermen's Association to steer their campaign.

And the association's first Mr C. Mackenzie, Mr D. Montgomery and Mr J. MacSwan. Also backing the fishermen are the North Skye branch of the British Legion, whose representative on the committee is Mr R. Bruce.

The legion branch's interest is in securing protection for sea-angling as a valuable tourist attraction for Skye.

FESTIVAL

They promote a successful and increasingly popular annual sea-angling festival in September and are to make representations for retention of the three-mile limit to the Sea Angling Federation, the Scottish Tourist Board and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

The small-boat fishermen and legionnaires together are convinced that the opening of the present restricted waters to trawlers will denude fishing grounds on which a sizeable proportion of the island's economy depends.

LEVY

The association have decided to finance their campaign by a quarterly levy on all boats of £1 for every crew member. There are about 150 fishermen involved.

They also propose to try to enlist the support of Wester Ross small-boat fishermen who, they feel, will face a similar plight if the Cameron proposals go through.

BOAT LANDS MAN FOR FUNERAL

THE Aberdeen trawler Eredene interrupted fishing off Eddin yesterday to land a

Isles shipping meeting today

SCOTTISH Office official representatives of the of Scotland Shipping pany and Shetland's authorities will meet Andrew's House, Edinburgh today to discuss the frequency of shipping services calling Aberdeen and Shetland when the company with the St Ninian next spring.

The meeting is being at the request of the Shetland authorities, who are satisfied with the present summer services intimate the company.

Said county convener Edward Thomason: "We have one extra sailing week least during the month of July and August, other our tourist trade will badly hit."

ST OLA BACK SATURDAY THE PENTLAND Firth ship St Ola, after refuelling and relieving the Earl Zetland in Shetland, return to the Orkney-Cornwall run on Saturday.

BOARD LETTER ON FACTORY

STORNOWAY Town Council who have expressed about the future of Gas the Highlands and Islands Development Board's fish processing factory at Stornoway have been told by the that "consideration is

★ Man with endless job...

LATEST news of the Rev. Dr William G. Morrice is that he is off to Nairobi for six months next year to learn one of the African tongues.

Dr Morrice, recently appointed New Testament Adviser in the translation department of the British and Foreign Bible Society, has been recruited to an international team of Scripture experts, whose job is to translate the Bible into the languages of modern times. He describes his work as "arduous".

Andrew McKay

Old sweats up in arms again!

OLD SOLDIERS never die... and in Aberdeenshire at least they hardly even fade away!

★ Young

Very impressed by the durable qualities of Northeast

★ SHEENA'S

★ 'A.B.' gets a degree

McKAY is delighted to report today of an honour to be bestowed on an old friend and journalistic colleague—Andrew Paterson, of St Andrews.

Andrew, who is also a noted playwright, has been nominated for the Honorary Degree of Master of Arts, by the University of St Andrews, for his services to the intellectual life of the community and to the good name of St Andrews.

The degree will be conferred at a graduation ceremony in the Buchanan Arts Building, St Andrews, on

RAMC 752

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Personal.

TELEPHONE 22242
THE LABORATORY
CITY HOSPITAL
P.O. BOX 42
ABERDEEN
SCOTLAND

17th Dec. 1970.

Dear Mr. Davies,

I thought that you might like to have for your library the enclosed newspaper article concerning the Aberdeen Medico-Biological Society.

The M'Guffin Journals are in the process of being micro-filmed - 6 volumes have already been to the photographic department & the rest will go early in the New Year.

We are progressing slowly with our New Library & I have every hope that in 1971 we will make some progress which will be significant. I am trying to get going in the Aberdeen Post graduate Medical Bulletin ~~as~~ a series "A Book for the Library" - dealing with a book gifted to the Library & showing its relevance to Aberdeen Medical History! The editors of the Bulletin have been most co-operative & the first article is due to appear in the January issue. I shall send you a reprint.

I have been asked to meet with a

representative of the Scottish Military Collectors
Society - they are making a collection of
material dealing with all aspects of Scottish
military history. & they have detailed some one
to consider military medicine. Thus I have
been approached locally. Certainly Aberdeen
medical graduates as you know have largely
been involved in military medicine & this is
a good centre. If you are interested I shall
keep in touch with you on this matter.

Best wishes for a Happy Christmas
and a good New Year

Yours sincerely
Ian A Porter.