Address delivered at prize-giving at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, by Sir Henry W. Acland, outlining the history of the Army Medical School

THE ARMY MEDICAL SCHOOL.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

NETLEY HOSPITAL

AT THE

DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES ON JULY 29, 1887

BY

SIR HENRY W. ACLAND, K.C.B., F.R.S.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
AND HON. PHYSICIAN TO H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

LONDON:

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1887

To the Army Med. School,
Library

May 7 1885

My dear Mr Thomas.

I gladly send
on your desire two copies
of my last Address. And
I venture to add three
others on different points
of the same Genus of
Disease. If the Library
cares to have them please
kindly give them
room

Yours

S Weir Mitchell

From the Author.

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NOTE.

I comply with the request that I should publish this brief Address because of an opinion recently expressed before a Committee of the House of Commons by the Accountant-General of the Army, that the Army Medical School might be advantageously dispensed with. It is to be hoped that the Accountant-General of the Army may revise his opinion, and propose hereafter to increase the Grant and to enlarge the scope and means of the School.

H. W. A.

ADDRESS.

It is my first duty and privilege to congratulate all who have passed, with credit, the course of Study and the Examinations in this world-renowned School.

Especially do I wish happiness and well-being to those who have obtained prizes which bear the honoured names of Sidney Herbert, Martin, Montefiore, and Parkes. Happy they who as prizemen bear their names. It is my earnest desire that you may all obtain in after-life that further earthly prize, the conviction that in your chosen path you may feel as Gordon bravely and tenderly wrote in his last letter: 'I have, like Lawrence, tried to do my duty.' The duty in your case is a duty of beneficence and a duty to science.

May I be allowed next to express the deep sense I entertain of the honour conferred upon me by being called on to meet you; and to-day especially, when we witness a ceremony of the deepest interest—the recognition by his grateful and admiring friends of the lifelong services of Professor Longmore. I am

aware that this distinction, which I value at least as highly as any distinction that could have been bestowed towards the close of a long working life, has come from my connection for nearly thirty years with the General Medical Council, a connection which, from the exigencies of health alone, is now alas! ended.

This connection has been one, though only one, of several causes which have given me a deep and practical interest in the Army Medical School at Netley. I shall venture to say a few words on the nature and the grounds of that interest.

And first, it is a pleasant thing to aid in anything which tends to unite for good the members of our common profession, whether belonging officially to Her Majesty's services, or engaged in the civil duties of our calling. The interests of science and of medical progress, and a just sense of what the country owes to the Army and the Navy, alike suggest and foster this feeling of unity, though our paths be in many ways divergent.

There is probably no spot and no institution in which so many sentiments of interest of this description are centred as at Netley. The foundation of Netley Hospital and of the Army Medical School was one of the many results of the Crimean War. The Army Medical School, first placed at Chatham and then transferred hither, helped to constitute a

new era in medical education, not only directly for the Army, but indirectly for the nation at large. The sufferings endured during that mighty strife, in which sickness destroyed far more than were slain by the sword or the projectile, were such as to shock the most thoughtless. Even now the recital cannot be read without a shudder. Three names will, while history lasts, be specially connected with the changes in the English conceptions of Army medical organisation in the years that have followed 1857, viz. those of Sidney Herbert, Parkes, and Florence Nightingale. More, many more, may be added, but I think if three be named, they must in their several ways be these.

As regards the Hospital to which this new organisation was attached it would be wrong that I should omit to record the deep interest which was taken therein by one, whose premature death we as a nation have good reason every year more and more to mourn. The Prince Consort expressed to me in 1858, at great length, his solicitude concerning the success and perfection of this Institution. He spoke earnestly of the deep gratification it gave him that the sick and wounded of our soldiers returning from foreign service should be here cared for near to that home which he, with Her Majesty, loved so well, and from which the tower now above us is clearly seen.

It would not be well for me to dwell further

on this subject. I touch on it only because you will, I am sure, allow a civilian to acknowledge the deep debt the whole nation owes to the Army Medical Service, and specially to those who have taught and to those who have studied at this place.

For this sentiment of gratitude the reasons are obvious. They may be briefly stated. We need not now go back to the honoured names of Pringle, Jackson, or John Hunter, for names bright in the history of philosophical surgery and medicine in relation to armies. I must confine myself to a brief reference to the immense work you have shared and witnessed in the last thirty years. I am well aware that it has been from time to time the fashion of the hour to hint at defects in a growing organisation, and to note supposed deficiencies in professional work. For my own part, not having the vantage-ground occupied by irresponsible critics, I marvel at what has been done, and at the extent to which even civilians are indebted to the Army Medical Service. The names I mentioned just now have been to me for twenty-five years names of which I can speak only with admiration, reverence, and gratitude, and, as I have known them all, with affection. By caring for the British soldier as Sidney Herbert did, in respect of his moral and physical well-being while in health, and of his comfort and complete treatment while sick or wounded in the field, he has earned the

esteem of his country and the praise of mankind. Parkes, who was elected as teacher to carry out the great idea of the prevention of disease, so carried it out as to influence to all time the medical thought of the Anglo-Saxon race. The noble woman, who showed to the refined and cultivated ladies of England that there was place for them in ministering to the sick and the dying soldier at the front in foreign wars, still lives and works, though in her own sick room, blessing and blessed.

In the spirit of these great examples you began here to work and have long worked. Civil England has been largely aided in looking into the principles by which masses of sick persons, and each individual patient in detail, are to be best cared for, through Army Hospital construction, through Hospital administration, through the principle and practice shown therein, and by means of the skilled and gentle care of trained and educated Nurses. Army Commissions, Army Reports, and Reports on India have taught the world much as to the prevention and treatment of disease, under every sun, in every possible disadvantage of commissariat, and under every sanitary difficulty. I have only to allude to the names of Galton, Sutherland, Rawlinson, Martin, Cunningham, Lewis, and Hewlett, with a host of honoured men well known to you, in order to justify what is now said.

You may be tempted to ask whether these few words are but the outcome of courtesy belonging to my office to-day. It is far otherwise. About the time of the Crimean War the third Cholera Epidemic that visited England finally awoke the whole country to its internal sanitary defects, and to its miserable sanitary organisation, though both had been brought before it by serious men at a much earlier date. The sufferings at the Alma and before Sebastopol helped to force on a revision of all State Medical Administration, civil as well as military. The General Medical Council and the Army Medical School were instituted about the same time. Parkes was appointed as Crown nominee on the Medical Council. There he made grave revelations as to the education of some of the Candidates for Army appointments, who were already licensed to practise.[1] The Examinations for these Army appointments became thus a touch-stone of Examining Boards. The Medical Council was, in this and in other ways, strengthened by the ready courtesy of the Director-General, both of the Army and of the Naval Medical Service.

One of the chief objects that Sidney Herbert had in view in establishing the Army Medical School, viz. the prevention of disease, was not the result of the cold calculations which made the first

[1] See Parkes' observations, reported in Lancet, May 7, 1861, p. 532.

Napoleon pay much attention to the health of the healthy rather than to the sickness of the sick. It was the outcome of a conscientious and patriotic sense of justice in a kindly and gentle nature.

His chief objects were stated to be,

(1) To raise the standard of attainment among those to whom the care of the health of the army is chiefly intrusted, and to direct their attention to the study of that sanitary science, on the proper application of which the prevention of sickness and the preservation of life in armies mainly depend.

(2) To place the medical officer in the position to which the dignity of his profession and the great services he renders justly entitle him, and to insure to his advice and opinion that weight and influence in the administration of the army which are necessary to secure the health and to maintain the efficiency of the troops.

(3) To lay down rules for the future government of military hospitals, which may simplify their organisation, shorten the processes of business, and provide a more efficient check upon expenditure, while they improve the quality and insure the regularity of the supplies, and relieve the medical officers of all non-professional duty, enabling them to devote the whole of their time and skill to the treatment of the sick.

(4) To secure the adoption of the measures necessary to place the barracks and hospitals in that sanitary state which is indispensable to the health of the sound and the recovery of the sick; as well as the precautionary measures which it is necessary to adopt at the outbreak of war, in order to guard against the recurrence of those gigantic evils from insanitary conditions in camp and field and base hospitals which destroyed so much life in the Crimean war.[1]

Since the foundation of this School no one has been able to enter the Army Medical Service without going through a careful course of general and Military Hygiene, the admiration of every capable judge at home and abroad. This great step was made in the Army many years before the Legislature considered it necessary that qualifications in State Medicine, or Diplomas in Public Health should be placed upon the Medical Register. The text-book of your first Professor of Hygiene, now edited by De Chaumont, thus early became the key-note for raising into highest importance a neglected subject which has now become a fashion for the popular platform, and runs a certain risk from this very cause.

It would not become me now, or perhaps at any

[1] See an article on this whole subject by Sir Douglas Galton in the Fortnightly Review, 1883, p. 120. From this article the above four paragraphs are taken.

time, to discuss at length what are the proper qualifications for Sanitary Officers of the first class, whether at home or in India and other distant portions of the Empire. By the recent Medical Act of 1886 the Licensing Bodies can enter whatever diplomas in Public Health they confer on the Medical Register. Candidates who appear here will probably in future often possess these diplomas. Presumably your Examination will nevertheless apply to these diplomas, the test which you applied thirty years ago to the Medical and Surgical qualifications. An attempt was made some time since to unite the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and London for the purpose of granting these diplomas, as a first-class National qualification. I deeply regret that, from causes which cannot be gone into now, this plan failed. But I take the opportunity of gratefully recording, that Professor de Chaumont and Sir Douglas Galton have generously aided each of the Universities I have named in establishing the character of their Public Health Examinations. Inasmuch as by the recent Army Medical Regulations any University Diplomas of Public Health are accepted in lieu of your own Examinations for Surgeons, you have to scrutinize with much caution their respective scientific and practical fitness for the special requirements of armies at home, abroad, and in the field.

I have dwelt on this subject partly because of its importance to every part of the public service, but especially to the Indian Department. There is hardly any question relating to Public Health which any Indian Medical Officer may not be called upon to decide, and probably he has no coadjutor for any subject within a great distance.

Whatever therefore of time or appliance the Army Medical School requires, whether for the sake of teaching or examining purposes in this and other directions, the Government may be reasonably expected to supply in the completest manner.

It is in my personal knowledge that several years ago it was pointed out to successive Governments that the Laboratories and arrangements for teaching were inadequate; and it is an open secret that your present much-honoured Director-General, Sir Thomas Crawford, has long pressed this subject on the attention of the War Office, but as yet without success.

The fact is, there has been so much progress during the last few years both in civil and in army Medical education and organisation, that they who have not followed it know neither the difficulties that have been overcome nor those that are yet to be surmounted, nor the astonishing advance that has been made in knowledge and education in these directions. It is sometimes forgotten that the com-

pulsory registration of Births and Deaths in this country was only begun during Her Majesty's reign; that your own present valuable series of Army Medical Reports have not existed thirty years; that the splendid publications bearing on the sanitary condition of India—I speak in the widest sense of Education, of public Institutions, and of Surveys,—are all of more recent origin; that Sir William Aitken first, I believe, introduced Farr's classification, followed in due time by the nomenclature of the College of Physicians, into his important and popular work; that Sir Thomas Longmore, with your valuable museum at his command, has maintained the special work of Military Surgery single-handed; and, as I said, that Parkes practically made Hygiene in the truest and best sense a popular as well as a scientific study. Thus Sir Thomas Longmore's hopeful expectations of progress, first put forward in the Army Reports in 1859, have in many ways been in a great measure fulfilled.[1] Yet much has to be done. Younger men have opportunities never exceeded—never equalled. They must not however suppose that, any more than formerly, there is a royal road to attainment. There are now, without doubt, greater facilities for learning, but there is much more

[1] See Army Medical Reports, 1859, p. 344 et sqq., for a valuable sketch of the past and future of Medical Education for the Army.

to learn. Sir James Paget lately set before your predecessors in his graphic way that we all undergo fresh examinations to the end. We who are advanced in years know well that in some competitions with you we should probably entirely fail.

In the instructive and elaborate Regulations for the Army Medical Department a pregnant remark is made, that in the practical professional Report which is part of the Examination for Surgeons, considerable importance will be attached to the literary and scientific merits of the paper. This requirement is in exact accordance with the most deliberate conclusion of the Medical Council, arrived at after a careful and comprehensive survey of all the conditions of Medical Education. The Council became satisfied that one of the drawbacks to the esteem justly due to the Medical Profession, as well as one of the hindrances to their professional knowledge, lies in the faulty general education of many of the youths who entered it.

This was formerly remarkably true of otherwise well qualified young Surgeons. It is becoming much less, though still too, frequent. There is now a further reason for attention by the younger members of the Medical Profession to scientific and literary culture, viz. that through the influence of the higher serial journals the public are becoming well informed in many difficult biological questions. In

our Universities persons not destined for Medicine often take high honours in the several departments of Natural Science. But a stronger argument remains—viz. that various subjects in purely scientific biology, as now taught, form not only a real mental discipline, but are essential to the understanding of many morbid and therapeutical processes. Allusion need be made only to the present condition of Comparative Anatomy and Physiology, of Embryology, of the modern enquiries into the nature of infective processes and their relation to Antiseptic Surgery, and to methods of prevention and treatment that have resulted in the hands of Pasteur and others in our own and other countries. I hazard the perhaps indiscreet, because in some quarters unpopular remark, that it is satisfactory to note that your Professors examine their own pupils—that is, that they see, first, that they are taught what they ought to know; secondly, that they do not waste precious days upon an ill-selected topic, where some selection must be made; and, thirdly, that being thus judiciously taught, if they do not know, they fail. It is not out of place to say that, much as this age owes to Specialists, they may be a danger to the young—distracting them from the commoner but necessary practical everyday work. Error sometimes arises from our not discerning that much minute science

necessary for the advancement on the whole line of human knowledge is not necessary for, nor attainable by, every person who may one day reap the benefit of the detailed research by others.

But I must now draw these general observations to a close.

You have all now completed your education, or rather you have put on your armour for the battle of life. The night before Sir Bartle Frere left for Africa his last words to me were, 'Remember, life is a contest to the end.' Truly that gentle and heroic soul, trained from youth in diverse and many contests, fulfilled his creed of life. Most of you are beginning—and what a beginning, under what auspices! I speak as an observer only, like a spectator of a march past of battalions. You set forth, it is true, on a journey trodden by thousands before you, but to each in his turn the journey must ever be one of expectation and of wonder. You will go, it may be, to India, having never before left the English shores. Embarking on that triumph of human Art, an Indian troop-ship, you enter at once a new world. You are attracted by the discipline and complexity of the ship. Since your school-days you may not have reflected on any details of the astronomical science which guides you on your way; or if you have, the cloudless nights through which you look up to the stars recall to you all you

have heard or read of the eternal laws of the Infinite Universe. You realise more than you ever did the significance of modern revelations as to the origin, composition, and evolution of the uncounted millions of incandescent orbs, bound by the same everlasting laws, as the minute yet lovely planet on which we live and move and have our being. And you reflect that some of the very means used in your own hygienic laboratory have given the key to open the details of these distant suns.

You reach the romantic coasts of that ancient people who have been committed by Providence in these latter days to a younger Western Race, but who were advanced in language, philosophy, and arts centuries before we began here to think or lisp articulate speech.

You may, by happy lot, visit ere long the unparalleled scene viewed from the rough heights of Darjeeling across the deep recesses far away to Kanchinginga; or, more fortunate still, you may behold, from the crimson-flowered slopes of Simla, the stupendous sunlit-crescent of half the Himalayan range. You see from thence the most majestic proof of those vast forces which made this planet, which you were tempted just now to despise for its littleness, a fit habitation for man. Your interest is excited, perhaps for the first time, in the labours of Hooker and Falconer, in the romantic story of the debt the

world owes to the Countess of Chinchon[1], and two centuries later to Markham her biographer; and you appreciate the noble work of geodesic and geological survey which our Government is energetically carrying on.

Yet with none of these things does your immediate duty lie. To you is assigned a higher task than even the soul-stirring thoughts of the Kosmos and its constituent worlds inspire. You have to labour for and among the last and highest tenants of this material world—and to help their bodily frames fitly to discharge their appointed task of Mind.

You find yourself in relation, on the one hand, to your practical, sturdy, and sometimes, alas! overbearing countrymen; and on the other to the subtle, mysterious races who have languages more ancient, customs more long-lived, and instincts often more refined than any you have known before.

Even if I could worthily paint in words the thoughts that will rise within you I should forbear lest the picture should distract you from the splendid task which is to come to your hands. The organisation of India under modern guidance is become the most precious jewel in the history of the English

[1] See 'Peruvian Bark, a popular account of the introduction of Chinchona cultivation into British India,' by Clements Markham, C.B., F.R.S., 1880.

race. As the minute organic cell either plays its healthy part in the mightiest organic frame, or by its maleficent action lays the seeds of mischief incalculable, so each of you will do your share in making or marring the name and the fame of the British Empire. You will enter India at a time of momentous activity and strain. You will find education spreading; new questions raised; religions discussed; the care of the people by us or by themselves in everyone's mouth. You will have to study the medical charge of millions of women by cultivated English ladies, fostered by the noble and powerful lady who in the home of the Viceroy now helps and guides them; and lastly circumstances will certainly call on most of you to mar or to make good the claims of the Christian Faith to be the harbinger of peace and goodwill to all the children of men.

The observations which I have ventured thus tersely to make have been made with the desire to tender my testimony to the national importance of the Army Medical School. It is no secret that the very existence of the School has been lately threatened, on the feeblest of grounds, the financial.[1] On the score of national economy I entertain no doubt its work should be strengthened. If weak places can

[1] See replies 2111, 2113, in First Report on Army and Navy Estimates, 1887.

be shown in it, the remedy would be to strengthen them; if a better place for it can be found than at Netley, to find it; if more extended organisation, to organise it. If I were a politician addressing a meeting I should be disposed to ask whether you wish the soldier and the seaman to be cared for worse than heretofore or better? But I am addressing serious men engaged in their several ways on the great work of maintaining and improving the physique of the defenders of the Empire, not for aggression nor for pride, but for self-preservation, and for peace.

And lastly, I venture to commend, to the consideration of Statesmen and others, who have their attention drawn to the Army Medical School, 1st, to study the writings of Sidney Herbert and weigh the evidence and testimony of the Army Commission which Lord Panmure appointed,[1] and 2nd, to bear in mind that no improvement in the

[1] Cf. especially a Review of the Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the Regulations affecting the Sanitary condition of the Army, the organisation of Military Hospitals and the treatment of the sick and wounded, 1858, by Mr. Sidney Herbert, in the Westminster Review for January 1859. Also 'Sanitary Contrasts of the British and French Armies during the Crimean War,' by Surgeon-General Longmore, 1883, pp. 19–21, etc.; and 'Army Sanitary Administration, under Lord Herbert,' by Florence Nightingale, 1862, with other papers by her; and for a more recent summary, the Report of the Army Hospital Services Inquiry Committee, 1883. The literature of this subject is voluminous.

education at our Civil Hospitals, great as it is, can ever do away with the need of special training in a Military School for the particular medical and surgical requirements of the Army and the Navy of England.