

## Letters

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Any further communication on this subject should be addressed to—

The Secretary,  
War Office,  
London, S.W.,

and the following number quoted.

**War Office,  
London, S.W.**

26th February, 1915.

My dear Bowlby,

I have no more intention of sending out surgical teams to France than I have of sending out baked potatoes.

Moynihan put~~s~~ his views before me as to defects in the system under which operations were being performed in France, and committed his views to paper for me.

I had heard much criticism on the subject from young and senior men coming here on leave. I thought it our duty to give to the officer and man in France the very best surgery that the country can find, and that we should pay no regard to what I will call the opportunities for gaining surgical experience which the campaign may offer to young and inexperienced men. In other words, we should neglect the educational advantages, which the hospitals in France afford.

Moynihan suggests that the operative work in each hospital should be organized; the operators should be selected with great care; and that no one should be permitted to perform operations -- in fact, beyond, or likely to be beyond, his experience and his skill. To realise this ideal Moynihan suggests the team system. He is, of course, a man with the artistic temperament as well as a good surgeon. I thought the idea was a good one, and as it undoubtedly would lead to careful and precise methods, I jumped at the idea. But in conveying my views to Sloggett,

with

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with whom of course all these questions rest, I asked him particularly to guard the interests of our young good surgeons, by which I meant that the teams should consist of regular R.A.M.C. officers as heads, as well as the more capable of the officers with temporary commissions.

Leaving the consultants out, I am quite convinced that selected R.A.M.C. officers are as good as anything that the civil profession can produce in France, and certainly I would be the last to sit down calmly under any insinuation to the contrary.

I am not sure that Moynihan shared this view; that, of course, he did not say or even suggest in manner or in word.

I think every R.A.M.C. surgeon would gladly and willingly stand aside for any of the senior consultants whom we have in France. You must know that as well as I do; but they would certainly not stand aside for anybody else.

I am not quite sure that the surgical operators of the R.A.M.C. in France throughout fully represent everywhere all that is best in R.A.M.C. surgery, because at the beginning of the war some of the best were in the field, where I do not for a moment suggest they were not of the greatest use, but the display of R.A.M.C. surgery in the hospitals must have, in consequence, suffered. I don't know how things are now since, with Sloggett's arrival in France, the details do not concern me, and I have a huge task in endeavouring to send out an efficient Medical

Service



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Service with the New Armies. I hope to accomplish this, but I can only do it by paying attention to it almost to the exclusion of everything else. I want to give all that we have here to the Army in France, to carry on as best I can and risk failure with what remains.

I give you this wordy explanation, because I would not have you think that I, of all people, would be found undoing all that I spent many years of my life in putting together. If anybody has been putting ideas into your head to this effect, you know me well enough to be able to flatly contradict any assertions of this kind. I care for nothing but the honour and good name of the Corps, and I want you and Makins to realize that my position with regard to affairs of this description is the same as it always has been.

Yours very sincerely,

*Arthur Creech*

*P.S. — Of course the responsibility for food success rests with the Commissariat. He must be in their hands in this matter. I think they should stop incompetent operators. There certainly have been some of these —*  
Colonel  
Sir Anthony Bowlby, C.M.G., etc.,



Ranc 365/3

SIR BERKELEY MOYNIHAN'S HOURS.  
11 TO 1.

33, PARK SQUARE,  
LEEDS.

TELEPHONE { PARK SQUARE 2251.  
CLARENDON ROAD 1466.

3rd April 1915

My dear Bowlby,

We did not have many head cases in Rouen, Most of them were, as you know, taken off the train at Boulogne because Sargent was there, and was anxious to have all the cases he could secure, under his own eye. We had, however, a sufficient number to warrant a general statement with regard to them. The majority of the cases were examples of compound depressed fracture of the skull in which no operation had been done. In these a small local trephining at the seat of fracture (which indicated the entrance of the bullet, or its point of impact if the blow were a "glancing" one) was performed, the depressed bone raised, and possibly the bullet, or a fragment of shell or shrapnel removed. In a few cases, not I believe more than three, a second "decompression" operation was necessary. The results were good. Some cases came down after an operation had been done. In some of these, a trephine opening had been made at the point of entrance of the bullet, and the cases treated on the lines of civil practice; in others a trephine opening had been made for the purpose of extracting a bullet which had traversed the brain, the point of entrance being merely "cleaned up" and fragments of bone removed. Many of these cases had already done well. You may remember that I told you this, and I chose for special commendation some cases that had been done at Bailleul by Lieutenant Charles. In his cases, as I saw them, the operative results were good, and the notes were concise, accurate and most helpful. We had only one case where notes were necessary and were not forthcoming. This concerned a patient who had been trephined, who was lethargic and bereft of memory, either of the injury or of the operation. He had an optic neuritis which slowly increased and we therefore did a decompression operation, and a good recovery followed.

The "talk" as to head cases has reached England also. Of course I cannot judge of what happened at the front or elsewhere, but of the cases that reached Rouen I held the opinion that the operations that had been done, had been well done, and had clearly been necessary. When an operation had not been done, the decision to allow the patient to reach a Base Hospital had involved no increased damage to him.

I do not know if this information is what you want. But to write this letter gives me again the pleasure of telling you how much I appreciated your kindness and courtesy when I was at Estaire. It was what I expected of you, but it is nice to feel sure of ones friends.

With very kind regards.  
Yours truly,

*Berkeley Moynihan*