

Indian Medical Gazette

JULY

THE PASSING OF THE I.M.S.

Before these lines appear in print, in a delayed issue of this journal, a great service will have passed away.

THE BEGINNING

THE beginning of the Indian Medical Service can be traced to the 'Surgeons and Barbars' engaged by the East India Company for their ships, warehouses and factories in India and in the Far East. It was then a service as much for the Far East as for India.

The Company's first fleet sailed from England for the East in December 1600. It consisted of four ships. To each ship were appointed 'Surgeons two and a Barbar' (this journal, vol. XXXV, 1900; Crawford, D. G., *History of the Indian Medical Service, 1600-1913*, Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1914).

For shore duties the surgeons were allotted to the various establishments: Bombay, including Surat and the West Coast up to Persia; Madras, including the East Coast; and Bengal, including the Bay.

Associated with this period there are several well-known names. The first one deserving mention is that of

Surgeon-General John Woodall

who in 1614 was 'sworn to provide competent surgeons and to fit up their chest properly'. He was practising in Wood Street, London, had made a name for himself in curing plague, had a secret remedy of his own called *aurum vite*, was a member of the London Company of Barbar Surgeons and was Surgeon to St. Bartholomew Hospital.

In the following year he was charged with gross abuses:

'Mr. Woodall's great abuses in the Chirgeon's chest, putting divers boxes of one simple, whereas he writeth in their superscriptions to be diverse; drugs rotten, unguents made of kitchen stuff. Boys that have no skill thrust into places of chirurgeons. He is to be accounted guilty of the death of so many men as perish through his default'.

Obviously the complaint was not well founded. The Surgeon-General remained. In 1618 his salary was increased from £20 to £30 a year.

The second name is that of

Dr. Gabriel Boughton

of the Bombay establishment. His professional skill and loyalty to the Honourable Company are well known to several generations of school teachers and their pupils in India. He was stationed at Surat and was

sent for by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan to treat his daughter Jahan Ara who had been badly burnt. He cured her and refusing all personal favours asked for and obtained concessions in trade for his masters of the Honourable Company. Later he cured a lady of Prince Shuja's harem at Rajmahal and obtained further concessions in Bengal.

(As a matter of fact the stories are myths. Dr. Boughton was nowhere near Agra or any other royal residence near Surat when the Princess got burnt. Nor was he anywhere near Rajmahal when further concessions were obtained.—Crawford, *loc. cit.*)

The Princess had been burnt while attempting to help a dancing girl of the palace, whose clothes had caught fire, and was treated and cured by *Hakim* Anitulla of Lahore. The dancing girl died. This happened in 1643-44. Boughton's mission went to Agra in 1645.

The factory at Balasore made possible by the supposed further concessions had been established in 1633, 12 years before Boughton went to Agra.

The fact that these stories gained currency within 20 years of Boughton's death points to a widespread belief in Boughton's professional skill which must have been of a high order.)

The third name is that of

William Hamilton

who came out to India as Surgeon of the frigate *Sherborne*. He deserted on arrival in Madras, reached Calcutta and found employment in the establishment there.

The famous Embassy to Delhi started from Calcutta in 1714 with Hamilton as medical officer. Its object was to obtain concessions from the Mughal Emperor Farakh Siyar who had been in Bengal as a Deputy Governor of the Emperor. It was hoped that he would be influenced through his courtiers and officers of the household.

Hamilton cured the Emperor of 'swellings in the groin' which were preventing a marriage. The Emperor was so pleased that he wanted to keep Hamilton at Delhi for good. The latter however obtained leave to go to England. He died before leaving Calcutta and Farakh Siyar sent down a special messenger with an inscription for the tombstone and, incidentally, to confirm the death. The inscription, in Persian, is translated as follows:—

'William Hamilton, Physician, Servant of the English Company, who had gone along with the English Ambassador to the Illustrious Presence and had raised his name high in the four quarters by reason of the cure of the King of Kings, the Asylum of the world, Muhammad Farakh Siyar, the Victorious, with a thousand difficulties having obtained, from the Court of the Asylum of the world, leave of absence to his native land, by the decree of God on the

4th December, 1717, died in Calcutta, and in this place was buried'.

The English inscription on the tombstone is: 'Under this stone lyes the Body of William Hamilton Surgeon who departed this life the 4th December, 1717. His Memory ought to be dear to his nation, for the credit he gained ye English in curing Ferrukseer, the present King of Indostan of a malignant distemper by which he made his own name famous at the Court of that Great Monarch; and without doubt will perpetuate his Memory, as well in Great Brittain as all other Nations in Europe'.

Hamilton was buried in Calcutta in the old churchyard in which later was built St. John's Church. At the time of clearing the ground the forgotten tombstone, fallen and buried under earth with the passage of some 70 years, came to light. It was, then, set up in the tomb of Job Charnock, the founder of Calcutta. This tomb is situated in the north-west corner of the ground of St. John's Church, Calcutta.

William Hamilton was a bold medical man and the distemper he cured was probably a hydrocele which prevented a marriage.

A writer of a comparatively recent period has made a 'Scotch Surgeon Gabrail Hamilton' cure the Mughal Emperor. Such can be the general information on matters Indian, of even recent British writers. (*The Seven Cities of Delhi* by Gordon Risley Hurn, R.E., London, Thacker & Co., Calcutta, Simla, Thacker, Spink & Co., Bombay, Thacker & Co., 1906.)

The fourth name is that of

John Holwell

an Irish born son of a London merchant and grandson of John Holwell, Royal Astronomer, a noted mathematician.

He was eighth on the list of 11 members of the Council of Fort William in 1756. When Calcutta was attacked by Seraj Uddola, of these 11 members, 4 were not in Calcutta at the time, 4 including Drake, the Governor, fled to the ships and 3, Pearkes, Holwell and Eyre, remained at their posts till the fall of the fort. Pearkes made his escape after the surrender. Holwell and Eyre were among those who were confined for the night in the Black Hole. During the night Eyre died. Holwell only remained.

He had been elected Governor as soon as the flight of Drake had become known. The gate towards the river, then, had been closed to prevent further desertion and a council hastily summoned. Pearkes the senior-most member had waived his right in favour of Holwell who thus had become the Governor and the Commander-in-Chief.

Prior to being a member of the Council Holwell had been an ordinary member of the service and had effected noteworthy improvements in sanitation and suggested reformation in the Collector's Court in Calcutta, while on leave in England. On the acceptance of the

suggestion by the Court of Directors he himself had been nominated to be the Collector in Calcutta. He had then returned to Calcutta in 1752, as a covenanted civilian, twelfth in the Council.

Not counting Holwell, there were 6 medical officers stationed in Calcutta at the time of its capture. Of these only one was not in the Fort. He,

William Fullerton,

fifth on our list, was on duty with the women, children and others on board the ships.

He had been Second Surgeon in succession to Holwell for over 10 years when Calcutta fell.

He made money in Calcutta in business 'speculating heavily and successfully in salt-petre in Bihar'.

He was in Bihar when the 'English *sipahis*' siding with the Emperor's Governor who had revolted were completely defeated on 9th February, 1760, at Mohsinpur near Patna, by the Emperor's army. All the English officers with the *sipahis* were killed. Fullerton then assumed command and the remnant of the party succeeded in making good their retreat to Patna. At Patna they were besieged. Fullerton made the besiegers retreat with considerable loss to them.

Fullerton knew the vernacular well and 'associated with native gentlemen much more than was usual among the English in Bengal'. He seems to have got mixed up a good deal 'in native intrigue' also. When he went on leave the Governor of Bengal wrote:—

'Mr. Fullerton is a great Bane to Society, and the Company's service; so much is said of him that he may not on any account be suffered to return . . .'

In spite of the Governor's displeasure Fullerton returned and played a lucky rôle in the Patna massacre on 5th October, 1763, in which all other Britishers captured in a previous battle were murdered.

Later, in 1764 he was the interpreter in an enquiry into the conduct of Nanda Kumar whom the Commander-in-Chief wished to remove from the Nawab's service, on a charge of disaffection. He did not press home certain evidence with the result that the enquiry ended inconclusively. He was censured. '. . . however as the Board do not suppose that his conduct could have proceeded from bad design but from inattention, they pass over with censure what must otherwise have called for the most exemplary severity'. Fullerton resigned and left.

(How an interpreter could press evidence home is not understood in the light of the present legal procedure.

Incidentally, later, Nanda Kumar was tried and hanged. Probably the interpreter then employed knew how to press the evidence home.)

Fullerton was a clever man of affairs with plenty of initiative. Besides, he was the first

member of the regularly constituted Indian Medical Service. In associating with 'native gentlemen' he was nearly two centuries ahead of his countrymen.

REGULAR CONSTITUTION

On 20th October, 1763, by orders passed in *Fort William*, individual medical officers serving in the Bengal Presidency were combined with effect from 1st January, 1764, into the Bengal Medical Service, with fixed grades and rules for promotion. Madras and Bombay medical services appear to have come into existence about the same time.

Some officers held double lower ranks simultaneously for several years, one for medical work and another for general military duties. Ultimately they made their choice for the promotion to higher ranks.

The military rank, however, did not count much those days. It was 'but the guinea's stamp'. The pay too was little more than pocket money. The real gain to most came from private trade and to some from private practice.

The real rank was the position amongst the Company's officers, which was pretty high. The relative precedence was as follows: (1) the Agent of the Area; (2) the Accountant; (3) the Storekeeper; (4) the Purser Marine; (5) the Secretary; (6) the Surgeon; (7) the Steward; (8) the General Body of (i) merchants, (ii) factors, (iii) writers, and (iv) apprentices. (The Chaplain when present ranked third.) From the last category, the general body, rose, at a later period, the steel framework of the Indian administration, the I.C.S.

DUTIES, ETC.

Before 1788 medical officers with the troops were hardly considered officers. They started as Assistant Surgeons and were 'appointed to be officers', later.

The Company's army had by now greatly increased. It defended the property and privileges of the Company and also aided neighbouring chiefs and princes for a consideration.

The civil and military branches of the I.M.S. were united and separated again several times. The military duties were those performed in India at the present moment by the newly constituted I.A.M.C. (Indian Army Medical Corps).

The civil duties once upon a time included everything falling under Medical Relief, Public Health, Prisons, Forensic Medicine, Medical Education, Medical Research and Research on allied subjects. The numerical strength of the civil branch at this time was greater than that of the military branch. All civilians, however, had to start as soldiers.

The civil branch ultimately was placed under the D.G., I.M.S. and the military under the D.M.S. (Director of Medical Services). The latter director for a long time belonged to the R.A.M.C. (Royal Army Medical Corps), the

British Service for duty with the British Troops. Later he was selected from the R.A.M.C. and the I.M.S. (military branch) alternately.

In addition to the ordinary duties which fall within the scope of medical men, the Service has also supplied Post Masters, Cotton Agents, Mint Masters, Superintendents of Schools of Arts, Political Agents and Conservators of Forests. Chemists, Botanists and Zoologists there have been many. The Service played an important part in the organization of Forest and Veterinary Departments.

The versatility within the limits of medical duties, efficiency and physical fitness of the early I.M.S. officers cannot be illustrated better than by giving a brief account of

Frederic John Mouat.

Born 1816. Educated in London, Edinburgh and Paris. M.R.C.S. in 1838. M.D. Edin. in 1839. One of the Original Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, in 1844.

Entered I.M.S. as Assistant Surgeon in 1840. Surgeon in 1853. Surgeon Major in 1860.

Professor of *Materia Medica* in the Calcutta Medical College in 1841; also Secretary from 1841 to 1851. Professor of Medicine in 1849. First Physician ex-officio of the Calcutta Medical College Hospital in 1853.

I.G. of Jails in Bengal, 1855 to 1870. Deputed to visit the Andaman Islands to choose a site for a convict settlement which later became Port Blair. Wounded in the mouth and had two ribs broken in a fight with the Andamanese.

Retired from the I.M.S. and was appointed one of the Medical Inspectors of the Local Government Board in England in 1874. Held this office until 1887, for 13 years.

As a Medical Inspector, in connection with the restoration of the Church of St. Peter in the Tower of London, with other officials of the State, was present at the removal of the pavement, and identified the skeletons of the following:—

1. Queen Anne Boleyn, once the beloved Queen of King Henry VIII and beheaded by his orders, mother of Queen Elizabeth the Great in whose reign the East India Company and the I.M.S. began life.

2. Lady Rochford, Companion to Queen Katharine Howard, beheaded by the orders of the same King.

3. Duke of Somerset beheaded in the reign of Edward VI.

4. Duke of Northumberland, father-in-law of Lady Jane Grey, executed in the reign of Queen Mary.

5. Duke of Monmouth, natural son of Charles II, executed by the orders of James II.

The skeleton of Katharine Howard, also executed by Henry VIII, was not found.

(After all, what was going on in England under the Tudors and the Stuarts was not different from the intrigues of the then Imperial,

Royal and Princely India : only occurring in a vaster area, in contiguous territories and in the midst of a larger population it created more confusion at times.

The confusion would have been worse if the masses, the peasantry which is India, had taken part in it. The peasantry did not and could not take part because it did not become aware of the political changes until after the events, thanks to the system of payment of land revenue in India.

The land revenue in India has been paid, since times immemorial, by the villagers at the same central offices, the *Tahsils* of Northern India—from *hasil* = gain—to the same local officials who have stamped the receipts with the same official stamp. The villagers did not become aware of a change of power until many years after the change had taken place. Of the impending changes they knew nothing.)

Died in London in 1897. A life well lived indeed.

These accounts of the lives of Service men culled from the monumental work of

Colonel D. G. Crawford, I.M.S.
(Bengal Service, Retired List),

the historian of the Indian Medical Service, are not likely to be well known to the younger generations of the members of the Service. Much less are they likely to be so known to non-Service men who now have been handed the torch of medical knowledge lit over three centuries ago and kept alight nearly all this time by the I.M.S.

The latter day accomplishments of the Service are matters of international fame in medicine. A few of the many names so known to fame are :—

1. Ross, R.
2. Rogers, L.
3. Harvey, W. F.
4. Cunningham, J.
5. Christophers, R.
6. Knowles, R.
7. McCarrison, R.
8. Sinton, J. A.
9. Sutherland, W. D.
10. Megaw, J. W. D.
11. Anderson, L. A. P.
12. Tarapore, P. K.
13. Chopra, R. N.
14. Iyengar, K. R. K.
15. Sokhey, S. S.
16. Bhatia, S. L.

Most of them are alive and well, and two are still serving as non-I.M.S. officers.

Indians were admitted to the Service a long time ago but numerically and in advancement they failed to attain equality with the Britishers up to the last. Even their emoluments decreased during the last 27 years or so, through two revisions of pay and allowances. The military traditions, however, established a comradeship

which worked very well indeed in matters of duty and even of social intercourse.

THE END

After the military branch had been absorbed completely into the I.A.M.C. during the last few months a very much thinned civil branch remained until the 15th August, 1947. Many of those who before this date had signed their own deed of abdication were not really sad. They would not have desired a great service to have survived its greatness.

The Service was great partly from definition, partly from exclusion, partly from martial merit and partly from professional merit. The first two privileges wore out during the two World Wars, against the onslaughts of increasing forces of democratization. The third privilege has been inherited intact by the youthful offspring of the Service, the I.A.M.C. The last privilege was born to flourish, to mature, to go to seed and, thus, to multiply 'an hundred fold' on ground made good by human evolution. The sower came out to sow and he has sown. He has now departed. The I.M.S. has not died : it has been fulfilled.

The end was not unexpected, though not all who came to this prognosis looked upon it as a fulfilment. Long before the World War II, during the Annual Service Dinners in London, a swan of ice-cream, representing the last swan song of the Service, and an elephant of ice, representing the melting Indian Empire, taken round on trolleys, had saddened the hearts of the diners, rendered naturally heavy at the stage of nuts and wine.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

When the prejudices and preferences of to-day have ceased effervescing the service which will ultimately take the place of the I.M.S. will not be much different from it. After all, professional efficiency, organizing capacity and administrative ability of higher order are more likely to be found amongst disciplined medical men who are physically fit, who travel and who enjoy a certain measure of leisure. The future is only the past entering through another door.

I.M.S. FAREWELLS AND RETROSPECTS

ON p. 438 in this issue will be found a letter of retrospect and farewell which Lieut.-General R. Hay, C.I.E., K.H.P., I.M.S., Director-General, Indian Medical Service, has addressed to all officers of the Indian Medical Service on the eve of its dissolution on 15th August, 1947. We wish him also farewell.

As the General is leaving India as a perfectly fit soldier of Category A, we further wish him success in his future undertakings and hope that he will be on the list of the 'Distinguished Contributors' to the *Indian Medical Gazette* for a long time to come.