SOME FIGURES IN MEDICAL HISTORY.

SIR JAMES McGRIGOR, BART.

SOMETIME DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE ARMY.

IN the list of men who have been at the head of the medical service of the army there is none whose name shines with a brighter lustre than that of James McGrigor. He served his country for more than half a century with rare distinction and efficiency. The early years of his service were passed in a period of almost unceasing war; he had to wage battle against death in every form in the most various climes, to suffer the attacks of dangerous disease in his own person and to face danger on the sea and in the field. Tried by every kind of difficulty and

emergency, he was never found wanting, and he won the esteem and warm personal regard of Wellington, Marshal Beresford, Sir David Baird, and the other generals under whom he served, the respect and devotion of the officers of his own department, and the affection of the fighting men among whom his lot was cast. He did much to increase the efficiency of the medical service of the army and to improve the position of medical officers. He died in the fullness of years, with the record before his mind of a life spent in the unflinching fulfilment of duty, and having about him—

That which should accompany old age
... honour, love,
obedience, troops of
friends.

James McGrigor was born in 1771 at Lethendrey in Strathspey, Inverness-shire, and was educated at the Grammar School of Aberdeen. Entering at Marischal College, he in due course took the degree of M.A. "which was then," he says, "obtained after an examination not the most severe and searching."

Having no inclination to follow the occupation of his father, who was a merchant, he hesitated for some time as to the choice of a profession. Of his early associates and friends a large proportion had entered on the study of medicine. With these young men he spent much of his time. He accompanied them to the Royal Infirmary and read their books; this aroused in him a strong interest in medicine, and he determined to take it up as a profession. He admits that he was also attracted by the cockade and cocked hat of a senior student who got an appointment as assistant surgeon to a regiment in Jamaica, and the impression was not entirely effaced from his mind after he joined the army. He attended the few lectures then given on the different branches at Aberdeen, and after three years' attendance at the infirmary and dispensary he proceeded to Edinburgh, where he attended Munro's class

of anatomy, Gregory's course of practice of physic, and some other classes. He studied so hard that his constitution gave way and several months elapsed before he recovered his health. On his return from Edinburgh he took a leading part in founding the Medical Society of Aberdeen. This society was formed in 1789, and McGrigor continued throughout his life to take a keen interest in it, watching its advancement and success, as he says, with the anxiety of a parent. Becoming united with Marischal College, though never forfeiting its independence, the Medical Society of Aberdeen attracted, in addition to the youths who were its first members, an increasing number of doctors, and became a potent educational influence in the profession.

In 1793 McGrigor purchased a surgeoncy in the 88th

Regiment, or Connaught Rangers, then just formed, and joined the corps at Chatham. In 1794 the regiment was sent to Jersey, which was then full of French exiles. Typhus was raging in the regiment and in the army. He himself was attacked by the disease in its severest form. His popularity with the men is shown by the fact that when it was considered necessary to move him from St. Helier's into the country soldiers volunteered to carry him in a framework made to hold his bedding, as they thought this would be easier for him than being drawn in a wagon. Before his convalescence was complete the regiment was ordered to Flanders where there was much fighting. He shared the hardship of the winter retreat in 1794-95. The hospitals were filled to overflowing and the mortality among medical officers in particular was very heavy. At Norwich, where the regiment was stationed after its

SIR JAMES McGRIGOR.

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return to England, fever again made terrible havoc, and the situation was made worse by the prevalence of a strong republican feeling among the inhabitants, who insulted the officers and encouraged the soldiers to desert. The regiment, which was to form part of an expedition for the capture of the French West India Islands, was sent to Southampton to join the force which was to embark there. The hospital was full and there were many sick in barracks. The commanding officer, Colonel (afterwards Field Marshal) Beresford, was very angry and told McGrigor that he was being deceived by malingerers. McGrigor on his part attributed the sickness to the filthy state of the barracks in which they were quartered. After the colonel had visited the barracks, abusing most of the officers, McGrigor begged that he would accompany him to the hospital. With this he could find no fault, but relations continued strained, and McGrigor negotiated for an exchange. Beresford.

however, apologized, and explained that he had been dissatisfied with the state in which he found the corps, and that the only department of it of which he could say anything favourable was the hospital, and that he had so reported to the Horse Guards. They became warm friends, and continued so throughout life. Owing to a mistake in signals McGrigor sailed for the West Indies in a ship to which he had been sent to select some recruits for his regiment; he had only the clothes he stood up in, but the officers of the 48th on the *Betsy* between them made up a kit for him. The *Betsy* reached the West Indies a fortnight before the rest of the fleet. When the fleet did arrive McGrigor learnt that one of the transports with his regiment on board had been obliged to put in at Gibraltar, and that the *Jamaica*, in which he was to have sailed and in which he had left all his baggage and clothes, had been captured a few days after putting to sea by a French frigate and carried into Brest. He was thought to be dead, as on the day when the fleet was getting under way at Portsmouth an officer in attempting to pass from one transport to another, had been crushed to death. From the description the officer was supposed to be McGrigor and another surgeon was appointed in his place. This chapter of accidents was really a blessing in disguise, for it caused him to escape a French prison. The island of Grenada had been seized by the blacks some time before, and the governor and twenty of the principal inhabitants had been shot in cold blood. The whole island except Georgetown and Richmond Hill was in their possession. A transport with a number of men of his own regiment arrived and McGrigor was hailed with cheers by the soldiers and carried forward in triumph. He was placed at the head of the medical staff. There was some heavy fighting. When the island was recaptured and quiet was restored yellow fever appeared and caused frightful mortality. The deaths from disease were four times as many as those due to bullet and bayonet. McGrigor was severely attacked by dysentery, and in the autumn of 1796 was sent home with dispatches for England. The voyage was marked by adventures which make this part of the *Autobiography* read like one of Marryat's novels.

On Christmas Day, 1798, McGrigor went with his regiment to Bombay. The Connaught Rangers were soon ordered to Ceylon, the objective of the expedition being Batavia and ultimately the Isle of France. But its destination was changed to the Red Sea, and great was the joy of the soldiers at the prospect of helping to drive the French out of Egypt. McGrigor was appointed head of the medical staff by the Medical Board of Bombay, being the first King's Medical Officer employed by the Company, and was presented to Colonel Wellesley, who was to command the expedition. McGrigor was to see much of that officer later, but the future Lord Wellington was prevented by illness from going to Egypt, and the expedition was commanded by Sir David Baird. It landed at Cosseir in the early summer of 1801 and, crossing the desert, went down the Nile to Rosetta. McGrigor, who had been attacked by fever, which was at first thought to be plague, was carried on board by the soldiers, and he bears testimony to the kindness always shown to the doctor by men who were among the wildest of a wild regiment. To mend his diet they stole sheep and fowls for him, and when he insisted on paying the owners, the Rangers thought this a very unnecessary proceeding. The Indian Army was encamped at El Hamed, about two miles from Rosetta; the King's troops whom they found there gazed at the luxury with which they had crossed the desert, likening them to the army of Darius. And, indeed, the Indian contingent made itself very comfortable, if we may judge from McGrigor's account of his own quarters:

I had upwards of a dozen Indian servants, with their wives, besides my English soldier servant, and for my stock three camels, two horses, twenty-four sheep, three goats, several dozen of fowls, with a good many pigeons, rabbits, etc. My own large Indian marquee was in the centre, and around were the small Arab tents which my Indian servants had raised for themselves. In another quarter were found all my animals and a store tent, in which some of the servants nightly kept watch, and made rounds to see that no marauders made incursions upon us; which, however, they did occasionally, carrying off fowls, sheep, etc. Outside the whole I had a high mound thrown up, made from the vegetation on the bank of the river, having only one large gate to my premises. El Hamed was on the border of the desert and a sandy plain, but my animals were fed with the grasses from the bank of the river and the grain

which my blacks, with two Arab servants, could collect. I can never forget the astonishment of some officers of the English army, old friends who had visited me, on my showing them the extent of my premises. They told me that I brought to their mind the age of the patriarchs of old, with their herds and their flocks, their man-servants and their maid-servants.

Soon McGrigor was called upon to move into Rosetta to assume the medical superintendence of the army from India. He was then stationed at head quarters in Alexandria. There plague broke out but was quickly subdued.

On the cessation of hostilities McGrigor returned with Sir David Baird to Bombay, where he was appointed superintendent of quarantine. On the return journey to England he and his companions learnt from an American privateer that England and France were again at war. They were dogged for a time by a suspicious looking vessel, but frightened her off by "bluff"; the captain had wooden guns made, and these, with the outside of the ship, were painted so as to make her look like a frigate. Every one on board paraded in uniform, and the sailors, some of them invalided men, ran up and down the rigging so as to create the appearance of a strong crew.

In February, 1804, McGrigor left the Connaught Rangers, in which he had served eleven years, and became surgeon of the Horse Guards Blue, then stationed at Canterbury. A few months after he joined, gangrene ran rapidly through the hospital. In every case, even the slightest, of wound or contusion, where venesection had been performed or a blister applied, hospital gangrene appeared. When the regiment moved to Windsor, where the hospital was large and roomy, the disease was checked.

At Windsor McGrigor came under the notice of George III, whom he found fully acquainted with his services. The Queen did him the honour of prescribing for him when he was afflicted with whooping-cough; she advised him to have oil of amber rubbed on his spine. McGrigor, like other patients prescribed for by less august physicians, did not follow the royal counsel.

McGrigor, who in 1804 had proceeded M.D. at Marischal College, was in 1805 gazetted deputy inspector, an advance of three steps, which was first announced to him in a curious manner. The adjutant of the regiment came to his room one morning and said the King while being shaved said to the non-commissioned officer in attendance: "You are about to lose your surgeon in the Blues; I have this morning signed a new commission for him on his promotion." McGrigor's new sphere of duty was very congenial to him, for from his first entrance into the service he had a turn for the collection of statistics. The Medical Board had, he says, till then, in the reports and returns required from the medical officers, looked solely to fiscal concerns, to the neglect of professional matters.

The most minute and scrupulous attention was not only exacted in the number of ounces of soap, salt, oatmeal, etc., given to each patient, but an error even in the fractional parts brought down the animadversion of the board, and was frequently the subject of protracted correspondence; while no notice was taken of any new or extraordinary feature of prevailing diseases, no proposition for the trial of new remedies and for the return of reports thereon, nor any injunctions issued to notice *post-mortem* appearances. In short, nothing with regard to professional duty in the interests of science was noticed, unless there happened to be an extraordinary mortality in a corps. About this time, and for some time afterwards, the duties of regimental surgeon and assistant-surgeon were chiefly those of clerks, as accounts to the public for their expenditure on each sick man.

McGrigor was appointed to the Northern District, the head quarters of which were at Beverley. He cautiously introduced his new system, first impressing on the medical officers what a fine field for experience and observation lay before them. He showed that a military hospital was the best for trying the effects of all new remedies or methods of treatment, because there the patient was more under the control and observation than anywhere else. His plan in the inspection of hospitals was to examine each patient's history, the medical officer reading the particulars of the case at the bedside and the treatment adopted. McGrigor then questioned the patient, generally approving of what had been done, but suggesting anything that occurred to him in the way of further treatment. In the evening he had the hospital books sent to him, and made notes on the reports. These remarks he embodied in a letter to the surgeon, referring to the different authors on the diseases

which were prevalent or on those in which the surgeon appeared not to have been successful. These letters, which were always expressed in a friendly manner, had, he says, with only few exceptions, the best effect, and he seldom had occasion to report any of his officers to the general in command of the district. The reports of his inspections were communicated confidentially to the inspector-general, who generally approved of what he did. Nevertheless, he slyly remarks, he found that he had not satisfactorily accomplished all that was expected of him, for he had not scrutinized so minutely as was desired the expenditure on each article of hospital consumption!

Soon afterwards McGrigor was transferred to the larger sphere of the South-west District, which included Hampshire, Dorset, Wilts, Somersetshire, and South Wales. To this area Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, which had previously formed a separate district, were soon added. This added largely to the work of the deputy-inspector, for all the great embarkations took place at Portsmouth; almost all the great expeditions were equipped at that port; there was a very large dépôt of prisoners of war afloat as well as ashore, while in the town and its neighbourhood there was a garrison of nine or ten regiments. In the Isle of Wight was the dépôt of the recruiting for all the regiments of the service; there was also a large general hospital. At Portsmouth McGrigor received the sick and wounded after the battle of Corunna. After occupying all the ordinary hospital accommodation in and about Portsmouth, and converting some barracks into hospitals, and getting leave from the Admiralty to use the unoccupied part of Haslar, the number of typhus cases continued to increase, and McGrigor was compelled to have recourse to floating hospitals, such as transports, prison ships, and so forth.

It was the Peninsular war which gave McGrigor the great opportunity of his life. At first his old friend, Marshal Beresford, asked that he should be sent to Portugal as chief of the Portuguese medical staff with the rank of inspector of hospitals. Before he could start for Lisbon, however, he was ordered to Walcheren to take the place of Sir John Webb as head of the medical department. The ship in which he sailed was wrecked, and the people she carried had to be taken off in boats from Flushing. McGrigor says the amount of sickness at Walcheren was beyond all comparison greater than anything he had seen elsewhere. The troops were surrounded by the French force, and orders came that they were to return to England. It was acknowledged on all hands that he had done his work well, and the parliamentary inquiry which followed did him no harm. He returned to his old duties at Portsmouth.

In June, 1810, McGrigor married Miss Grant, a sister of Wellington's famous scout, Colonel (afterwards General) Colquhoun Grant. In due course his wife presented him with a son, but he was not allowed long to enjoy family life, for in 1811 he was ordered to the Peninsula to be chief of the medical staff under Wellington. On January 10th, 1812, he reached Lisbon where he found a great accumulation of sick. To relieve the congestion he proposed that each corps should have a temporary hospital of its own where all slight cases should be dealt with, only serious cases being sent to the rear. When he joined Wellington at head quarters, he found the general much pleased with what had been done.

McGrigor remained throughout the campaign in close touch with Wellington, who evidently recognized the value of the man. Though it was inevitable that differences of opinion should arise between two men of such strong character, there seems to have been only one serious quarrel, and that was soon over. This occurred at Madrid soon after the battle of Salamanca. McGrigor when he called found Wellington sitting for his portrait to a Spanish artist. This was probably Goya, to whom we owe the most living, if not the most attractive, likeness of the great commander. Asked to give an account of the wounded at Salamanca, McGrigor told him of the number of sick he had found at so many places, and described their miserable state. But when he reported that for their relief he had ordered up purveying and commissariat officers, Wellington started up, and in a violent manner reprobated what he had done, exclaiming:

I shall be glad to know who is to command the army? I or you? I establish one route, one line of communication for the

army; you establish another, and order the commissariat and the supplies by that line. As long as you live, sir, never do so again; never do anything without my orders.

It was in vain that McGrigor pleaded that there was no time to consult the general to save life; he was told peremptorily never again to act without his orders. Wellington's sudden passion soon died out, however, for he asked McGrigor to dine with him that day, and at dinner he showed him marked attention, making him sit next to him on his left, the Prince of Orange always sitting on his right hand.

The influence McGrigor had with Wellington is shown by the fact that after the siege of Badajoz he induced the general to mention the services of the medical officers in dispatches. This was the first time their merits were thus publicly acknowledged. When, after the passage of the Bridge of Salamanca, McGrigor was severely kicked by a horse, Wellington, as soon as he heard of the accident, sent his own carriage, the only one in the army, for him. The most masterful of men, Wellington, on one occasion when he dissented from an opinion expressed by McGrigor, took the trouble afterwards to set forth his reasons in a letter written with his own hand on two sheets of foolscap paper. This is all the more remarkable, as at the time Wellington's mind must have been fully occupied with the manifold and complicated preparations for moving his whole army against the enemy.

McGrigor was present at every battle from the time he joined up to the last engagement at Toulouse. Striking witness to the efficiency of his medical administration is given by Napier in his *Peninsular War*:

During the ten months from the siege of Burgos to the battle of Vittoria the total number of sick and wounded which passed through the hospitals was 95,348. By the unremitting attention of Sir James McGrigor and the medical staff under his orders, the army took the field preparatory to the battle with a sick list under five thousand. For twenty successive days it marched towards the enemy, and, in less than one month after it had defeated him, mustered, within thirty men, as strong as before; and this, too, without reinforcements from England, the ranks having been recruited by convalescents.

In London McGrigor continued to pay his usual visit to Wellington, who one day, after winding up the usual business, said:

Mac, we are now winding up all arrears with the Government; I have asked them how you are to be disposed of, and I am told you are to be placed on half-pay; but I consider your peculiar services will entitle you to a specific retirement.

The end of this little negotiation was that near the end of 1814 McGrigor retired with an allowance of £3 a day, and received a knighthood.

It is characteristic of the man that he used his new-found leisure in attending lectures on anatomy and chemistry. But he was not long left unemployed. On June 13th, 1815, he was appointed Director-General of the Medical Department with a salary of £2,000 a year and the relative rank of major-general. That position he continued to hold till 1851. In 1848 he expressed a wish to retire, but Wellington, then Commander-in-Chief, said, "No, no, McGrigor; there is plenty of work in you yet." The financial head of the army, in bringing forward his estimates in the year 1851, said:

In the army medical department the service has lost by the retirement—not, I am happy to say, by the death—of Sir James McGrigor, an officer to whom the public is much indebted.

Wellington, in his *Dispatches* (vol. xii, p. 79), had written of him:

I have every reason to be satisfied with the manner in which he conducted the department under his direction, and I consider him one of the most industrious, able, and successful public servants I have ever met with.

How popular McGrigor was with the officers who served under him is shown by the fact that on his return to England after the Peninsular war he was presented by them with a service of plate of the value of one thousand guineas. When he finally retired from the army it was proposed to present him with another costly testimonial, but this he would not accept. An address signed by more than five hundred officers of the medical department was, however, presented to him.

McGrigor's services were rewarded with many honours. In 1831 he was created a baronet, and in 1850 he was made a Knight Commander of the Bath. For his services in the Peninsula he was made a Knight Commander of the

Tower and Sword of Portugal, and for the part he played in the Egyptian campaign the Turkish Order of the Crescent was bestowed upon him. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society and of many other learned bodies, British and foreign. Marischal College, Aberdeen, thrice elected him Lord Rector—in 1826, 1827, and 1841. The students presented him with his portrait, painted by William Dyce, R.A., now in the hall of Marischal College. Another, painted by Sir David Wilkie, is in the officers' mess at the Army Medical College, Millbank, where there is also a statue of him. The portrait here reproduced was painted by J. Jackson, R.A., and presented by his brother officers to Lady McGrigor. After his death an obelisk of polished granite, seventy-two feet high, was placed in the quadrangle of Marischal College. It now stands in the Duthie park, Aberdeen, by the side of the Dee.

McGrigor wrote little. His principal contribution to medical literature is a book entitled, *Medical Sketches of the Expedition from India to Egypt*. He was also the author of a *Memoir on the Health of the 88th and other Regiments, from June, 1800, to May, 1801*, presented to the Bombay Medical Society in 1801; *Medical Sketches of the Expedition to Egypt from India*, London, 1804; *A Letter to the Commissioners of Military Enquiry*, London, 1805—this was a reply to animadversions on the fifth Report of the Commissioners of Military Enquiry, which had been published by Dr. E. N. Bancroft. McGrigor instituted a system of medical reports and returns intended to advance the interests of science and the improvement of medical officers of the army. During his long tenure of office as director-general he collected a vast number of records which he had bound up in folio volumes, each duly lettered with the name of the colony or district to which it related and indexed. This formed the basis of the *Statistical Returns of the Health of the Army* now published yearly as a Blue Book. His *Autobiography*, published in 1861, is a fascinating volume which throws a vivid and often amusing light on the conditions of the service of which he was so conspicuous an ornament.

Among other things which he did for the benefit of the medical officer, McGrigor founded a museum of anatomy and natural history bearing on military surgery. To this he attached a library to which he himself gave a number of books. To him was due the establishment of the Army Medical Friendly Society, in 1816, and of the Army Medical Benevolent Society, in 1820. He also presented some prizes to be competed for by the students of Marischal College.

Sir James McGrigor spent nearly fifty-seven years of his life in the active service of his country. Few men had seen more of disease and suffering; he had passed through many dangers of shipwreck, siege and battle, but the end of his strenuous life was peaceful. He died in London on April 2nd, 1858, within a week of the completion of his eighty-eighth year, "without pain and almost without disease."

In addition to his great ability as an administrator, McGrigor had the qualities of character that command success. Ever straightforward in his dealings, he combined tact and courtesy with firmness in a most unusual degree. From the time of his joining the Connaught Rangers to the very end of his career he was recognized as an officer who could be trusted to do his duty at whatever cost to himself. The confidence of the soldiers in him reminds one of the story of Ambroise Paré's reception by the garrison of Metz, "Our Ambroise is with us; we shall not die." From first to last he was on the best of terms with the officers of his own department, and also with those of the combatant branches. He was always treated by them as one of themselves, dining with generals and royal dukes, being present at Court balls at Windsor and sharing fully in the social life of the army. In the Peninsula he was a frequent guest at Wellington's table. The man, as well as the officer, was evidently held in the highest respect. In his personality he combined the best qualities of the doctor and the soldier.

AN illustrated handbook to medical Bern has been issued by the general inquiry office in that city. It gives particulars about Bern and its medical institutions, and among the pictures is a portrait of Professor Kocher, the grand old man of surgery. Copies can be obtained on application to the Verkehrsverein, Bern.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON VENEREAL DISEASES.

THE following is the official report issued to the press by the Secretary of the Commission:

The Danish System.

At the forty-sixth meeting of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases evidence was given by Dr. Svend Lomholt, Surgeon at the Municipal Hospital at Copenhagen, regarding the methods adopted for dealing with venereal diseases in Denmark. The principle has been to provide free treatment and to render it as easily accessible as possible. As early as 1773 a rescript provided for free treatment of all poor persons suffering from venereal diseases in one of the provinces of Denmark, and similar regulations were made from time to time, until by an Act of 1874 it was laid down that every person should be entitled to free treatment for venereal disease without regard to his ability to pay. In reality little was done to make this right to free treatment of practical value until 1906, when an Act was passed which contained a provision compelling the municipalities to arrange easy access for free consultation and treatment for all persons suffering from venereal disease. Since that date, especially in Copenhagen, in which town probably 80 per cent. of the disease occurring in the country was to be found, a great deal had been done. Very complete hospital facilities had been provided, and in addition there were three public consulting-rooms for contagious and venereal diseases, at one of which evening consultations were held.

Twelve municipal doctors (two of whom were women) had been appointed for the purpose of giving free treatment of venereal diseases.

The experience had been that patients had shown themselves very ready to take advantage of these facilities. In some directions compulsory measures had been adopted. A doctor treating a case of venereal disease was required to point out all the consequences of the disease, and there was also provision for securing that persons suffering from venereal disease should continue their treatment. Dr. Lomholt thought that this latter provision had been very useful. A system of confidential notification of venereal diseases was in force. The names and addresses of the patients were not notified and the cases were identified only by numbers; the notification was consequently only of use for statistical purposes. Dr. Lomholt had made a critical examination of the published figures and showed that they could only be accepted with a good deal of reserve.

Facilities for Treatment: Notification.

Mr. Charters Symonds, consulting surgeon to Guy's Hospital, giving evidence, laid stress on the need for largely increasing the means available for treating venereal diseases. He thought that existing institutions should be utilized as far as possible, and that these, together with any additional provision which might be made, should be linked up with Insurance Committee areas and with panel doctors. Evening clinics should be provided at every centre. It would be necessary that a scheme of this kind should receive adequate subsidies from the State. Mr. Symonds advocated the formation of a National Society which should supervise the selection of lecturers, the scope of teaching, and the publication of books and pamphlets, with a view to the education of the public respecting venereal disease. Such a society, he thought, should be voluntary and should be ready to assist the Government in any measure of which the Government approved. He would propose that the Royal Society of Medicine should nominate persons to serve as a committee of this National Society, and that a definite sum of public money should be placed in the hands of that committee.

With regard to the question of notification, Mr. Symonds said that the experience of other countries showed that in the present state of mind of the people notification was ineffective. It led to greater concealment of disease and tended to drive sufferers to quack treatment. He thought there could be little doubt that notification would help towards suppression of disease, but it was necessary to wait until people had become educated in the matter, the demand for notification and international action might then come from the great mass of the population of this and other countries.