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An Address

ON

THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION IN AUSTRALASIA.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE WEST SOMERSET BRANCH OF
THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

BY

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As you have done me the honour to ask me to address you on the visit I made recently to Australasia at the request of the Council of the British Medical Association, I will do my best to give a cursory account of a tour which I can assure you has done me good, mentally as well as physically. It has done me good mentally because it has broadened my view of things. I am only sorry that more members at home do not go out and see their brethren in the Colonies. Those who made the journey would find that their medical brethren at the far side of the world are men it is well worth while to keep within the Association. They are an honour to any profession. They are quite as good in their professional practice as at home, and possibly some are better in some respects. They have more initiative, and more independence of thought and work. That, to some extent, arises from the fact that the individual practitioner is commonly more isolated. He has not at hand another man every time he feels some doubt and wants a second opinion. They have to act on their own initiative.

I started from London on December 19th last, and I may sum up the sea trip in a few words. With the exception of one day, curiously enough in the Mediterranean in the Gulf of Lyons, I had not a rough day at sea from the time I left till I got back, so that the whole of the time at sea was a pleasure. There were some interesting people on board the boat, including Sir Newton Moore, the Agent-General for West Australia, with whom I had many interesting conversations, from which I learnt a great deal about Australia. On the way out the boat called at Gibraltar, Naples, Port Said, and Colombo. The bay of Naples is the most beautiful scene I have ever looked on, and I have now seen many famous bays, including Auckland and Sydney. Colombo, where we spent only a short time, is a beautiful place. At Fremantle, the first port touched in Australia, I had a lovely sail up the river to Perth; the temperature was 104° F. in the shade, but it was not disagreeable, for the climate is very dry. Perth is a very beautiful place, with fine roads and one of the nicest parks I saw, consisting in part of the natural bush. Here I met Mr. Scaddan, the Premier of Australia, a very interesting man and a typical instance of how a man may rise to an important position in Australia, for a few years ago he was driving an engine on the Coolgardie goldfields. In the course of conversation Mr. Scaddan mentioned that a new railway was being developed from Fremantle to Adelaide, which will open up some wheat country and a good deal of grazing land for cattle and sheep. I did not meet any of the medical men there because no arrangements could be made owing to the shortness of my stay.

On the voyage round to Adelaide, some time before we were due to arrive, I was told, before I had left my cabin in the morning, that certain gentlemen wanted to see me. When I got on deck I found that three of the medical men and three reporters had taken the trouble to charter a boat and come out some considerable distance—twenty-five to thirty miles—to meet me. This struck me as very energetic, and I took it as a very great compliment. Adelaide is the most beautifully laid out city I have ever seen. It is arranged on the American plan of square blocks, and the streets are very wide, with trees on each side. The only drawback is that the city is very subject to sand-storms or dust-storms. When I got there the temperature was 103° in the shade, and this, combined with a dust-storm, detracted from the pleasure of my short visit. I had only an afternoon in Adelaide, but I met Dr. Poulton, President of the South Australian Branch, and some other members of the Association, and visited the hospitals and found them most up to date and thoroughly well equipped; they were, in fact, quite equal to the best we have at home, and the same may be said of practically every hospital I visited in Australia and New Zealand. I lunched with the members of the Branch Council in Adelaide, and had a pleasant chat on medical things in general.

The next place touched at was Melbourne, which I reached on a Wednesday. I had intended to go on to Sydney on the Friday, and to New Zealand on the following day; but at Melbourne I learnt that there was to be a meeting at Sydney on the Monday of the Federal Committee of the British Medical Association in Australia. This Federal Committee represents all the provinces of Australia, and I decided to attend its meeting in Sydney, as its members were anxious I should. I was very much delighted to have the opportunity of staying in Melbourne a few days longer, for it is beautifully situated and a very fine city. It has some 700,000 inhabitants, and the neighbourhood is very interesting and pleasant. I met several friends I knew at home, and cannot say anything too good of the hospitality shown to me and of all that was done for me. We had a very fine meeting of the medical profession, which I was asked to address. The profession in Australia is very interested in the British Insurance Act, for there is a proposal to introduce similar legislation in Australia. If I may judge from what was said, my address was of use; very many questions regarding the position of medical men in reference to the Insurance Act in England were asked and answered by me. At the end of the meeting a vote of thanks to me was proposed; I had been looking at a man in the room I thought I knew, and after the vote had been proposed and seconded, this gentleman rose to support it on the ground that he had known me longer than anyone else there, and he proceeded to tell a story. He said that I had been a master at the school he attended, and that I had then already earned a reputation for promptness of action and quickness of decision. He had been misbehaving himself in the class; he was standing on a desk, and would not come down when told to do so. The next thing that happened was, he said, that I caught him by the scruff of the neck and slung him out of the room. I had forgotten the incident, but it was quite true. As an example of the energy with which men do things in Australia I may relate how a member resident at Geelong, forty miles from Melbourne, when he learnt at the dinner

at which I was entertained that I was staying a few days longer than I had intended, went down to Geelong that night and gave notice to the men in the district; next day he returned to Melbourne and took me down to a luncheon at Geelong at which every medical man in the district was present. He drove me back again in the afternoon and then went back to Geelong that night. For a part of the way there was no road at all, and we were driving across open fields. I had a very pleasant time at Melbourne, where I was most hospitably entertained, and I should like in particular to acknowledge Sir Harry Allen's kindness in conducting me over the university.

The train journey from Melbourne to Sydney was an interesting progress, for the doctors had been informed beforehand of my visit, and at every station some turned up to have a chat. At Albury, on the border between New South Wales and Victoria, where a change had to be made into another train—for a very inconvenient arrangement exists in Australia, the railways being of different gauges in the various provinces—there was a meeting of medical men, and we had a chat about the Insurance Act—as usual. Many different points of view were advanced by various men, and I learnt much from their remarks. I should say that before I left Melbourne I had an interesting interview with the Minister of the Interior, an Irishman and a very able man. I was asked to meet him and the chief statistician of the Government on the question of the British Insurance Act, in view of the proposal to introduce an Insurance Act into Australia. The interview lasted three hours, the British Insurance Act, its weaknesses and advantages, were discussed, and I got an idea of the form of the bill to be proposed in Australia. I expressed a very strong opinion that one thing that had caused great difficulty with regard to the Act in England was the fact that the medical profession had not been consulted before it was drafted; I have heard since that the Federal Committee of Australia has received a promise from the Government that if a bill be introduced for Australia the British Medical Association would be consulted before it is drafted. After leaving Albury, while in another station, there was an explosion, and the whole carriage seemed to be in a blaze. It turned out that a gas pipe below the carriage had exploded. The train was shifted along the platform and the incident seemed over, but some fifty miles further on we found the carriage actually on fire. In running the air had fanned a charred piece of woodwork into a blaze. The train was stopped and the fire put out, but we had a rather disturbed night, for a gentleman in the sleeping car would insist on getting up every quarter of an hour to see if the car was safe. We got to Sydney at 6 in the morning. We found that a deputation had arranged to meet the train at 10 a.m., having forgotten that the Monday morning train arrived four or five hours earlier than on other days of the week.

I saw very little of Sydney at this visit, for I spent my two days there at the meeting of the Federal Committee, and I was very glad to do so, because I think my visit was fortunately timed. The Committee was discussing the possibility of the institution of State insurance. The position is interesting. The club work of medical men in Australia is far more extensive than in this country, but they are in a better position to command reasonable terms owing to the fact that they are more united, as about 94 per cent. of the medical men in active work in Australia are members of the British Medical Association. There were, of course, disagreements in regard to details, as in this country, but the medical profession in Australia has the wisdom to realize that small disagreements do not matter much. They all move together to win their main principles and form no new bodies as is being done at home. I dined with the Federal Committee and with the Branch of the Association before starting for New Zealand.

We had a splendid journey to Auckland. The boat was carrying about eighty medical men and women to the Congress, and we had many discussions, some of them all the more interesting because they were individual. I rather got at loggerheads with the women members of the profession on board. We had been discussing the question of women doctors, and, in reply to a question as to the position of women in the profession in this

country, I hazarded the suggestion that women were not physically well fitted for the medical profession. Next day I was surrounded by five or six medical women, who tackled me on this point. Among them was a lady—a young woman who looked like a girl. She lived in a corner of New South Wales on the border of Queensland, and the nearest doctor to her was 150 miles away. She managed the whole of the medical work of the district herself, riding a bicycle, or a horse, or a camel to reach her patients, some of whom were sixty or seventy miles away. When she operated she had to give the anaesthetic herself, and, while operating, to get some common-sense individual to keep dripping the anaesthetic on the towel. On the boat from Sydney to Hong Kong on my way home I came across a family from the district who knew her; they said that she was absolutely adored by everybody. So I found that my opinion on the matter of female practitioners could not be sustained. Many women are employed in the Government service in Australia, especially in the inspection of school children.

I arrived at Auckland on Sunday evening, and during my stay there was the guest of Dr. and Mrs. H. Carrick Robertson, who were kindness itself, and made me feel quite at home. The Congress was opened on Monday by Lord Liverpool, the Governor of New Zealand, and was conducted on the same lines as our meetings here. After Dr. Purchas, the President, had delivered his address to the Congress in the evening, I had the honour of proposing a vote of thanks to the Governor, Lord Liverpool.

During the week I was present at various meetings of the sections, which were very well attended. While not presuming to judge of the value of the papers, I was much struck by the keenness of the discussions which followed. Many men took part in them, and the criticisms struck me as being very trenchant, showing great originality of thought and independence of judgement. This I concluded was due to the fact that the men were bound to be more dependent on their own judgement than we are at home.

The Congress at Auckland was one of the medical profession of Australasia; but at the last meeting a resolution was passed that the next Congress would be one of the British Medical Association in Australasia, though, of course, not confined to its members. It will be held at Brisbane in the autumn of 1916.

There were the usual social functions at Auckland; one very interesting one was the dedication of a new park, a part of the native bush some distance out of town, and a very lovely spot. The members were entertained by the Mayor of Auckland, Mr. Parr, who, I see, has received the honour of knighthood from the King.

The dinner was a great success; there was a very large attendance and some brilliant speaking. Among the speeches was a very important and statesmanlike utterance by Mr. Holman, the Premier of New South Wales. I responded to the toast of "The British Medical Association."

I was called on to address a general meeting of the profession on Monday afternoon on the subject of the Insurance Act. The audience showed an extraordinary interest in the subject, and after my address I had quite a lively half-hour or so answering many pertinent questions, which tested fully my knowledge of the Act. I think my address was probably of some use, as the profession in New Zealand is not so well organized as in Australia. However, they are going the right way about correcting this, as they are now employing paid organizers, and I have no doubt will soon be equal to Australia in their organization.

After the congress week we went to Rotorua in a special train provided by the Government. The party was in charge of Dr. Valentine, Principal M.O.H., New Zealand. We reached our destination in the evening, and the Resident Medical Superintendent asked me to visit the Baths at Rotorua about a mile and a half from where I was staying at Whakarewarewa. We found that arrangements had been made not only for inspecting the baths, but also for a display of the Maori dances—the Haka, danced by the men, and the Poi, the love dance, by the women.

The Thermal District is one any one who goes to New Zealand should certainly visit. Titiriki (Hell's Gate) is the name of a part of it. It is a terrible place; there is a little path, our guide got his stick down a crevice—

we were then in the middle of boiling mud—and were told that a portion had fallen in a day or two before. The Maoris in this district do not think of making a fire for cooking purposes. They dig a hole in the ground and cook their food in the natural boiling water which runs quite close under the surface of the ground. While looking out of the breakfast-room window at the Geyser Hotel I was rewarded by seeing the remarkable phenomenon of a geyser spring up within 150 yards of the window to the height of approximately 150 ft. After spending four days in the Thermal District I started with Dr. Sydney Jamieson, of Sydney, for Wellington, in the south of the Northern Island. At Tamaranui we embarked for the trip down the river Wanganui through a gorge with cliffs rising from 500 to 700 feet in height. They rose sheer like the wall of a house, and were clothed all the way up with ferns, tree ferns, and pines. The trip itself was rather exciting, because part of the time the steamer, which was specially constructed with a flat bottom made of steel, was travelling over rocks at the bottom of the river. It was a stream of rapids with intervening shelves. The journey took two days. We stayed the night at Pipiriki, a small place in the bush, where there is a beautiful hotel, quite up to date, and lit by electricity. We started next morning at 4.30 down the next part of the river, which is not so interesting, and arrived at Wanganui, where I took a day's rest with a friend. I got to Wellington on Saturday and sailed that night for the South Island to visit Christchurch. We had a very good meeting of the Christchurch Division, though it was summoned at short notice, and Dr. Jamieson and I addressed those present on contract practice and the Insurance Act.

In every place I went to see the hospitals, which are admirably arranged, fully up to date, and quite in keeping with anything we have here. Every hospital is subsidized by the Government to the extent of 24s. to the pound. I had a very pleasant time at Wellington on my return; I dined with the medical men at the Wellington Club, and there was a good meeting afterwards, which was addressed by Dr. Jamieson and myself. I stayed three days in Wellington, which were spent in visiting the hospitals and some of the interesting places around, and then went to Sydney, where I took matters easy, visiting the interesting places in the neighbourhood, in particular the beautiful harbour. I also went to Manly beach, where I enjoyed the surf bathing. I started for Hong Kong in the North German Lloyd liner *Prinz Sigismund*. I had extraordinarily good luck here; I had met the German Consul-General of the Pacific in New Zealand. When I met him again in Sydney and told him I was going by the North German Lloyd steamer he wrote and telegraphed to the captain of the ships and to the officials of the places I was going to call at, so that wherever I went somebody came to meet me, and things were made very pleasant for me. I should like here to acknowledge the courtesy that was shown to me by the various German officials, and particularly the Governor at Rabaul.

I was unfortunate at Brisbane. The steamer was due at 11 a.m., and the medical men had arranged to meet me at lunch; but we did not arrive until 5.30 p.m. Dr. Butler told me that about eighty men had come into the town to meet me, some from distances up to 100 miles; a certain number, however, had waited, and I had dinner with them, and spent a very pleasant few hours.

My journey from Brisbane to Hong Kong took me by German New Guinea and various islands in the Pacific which are now under German sway—for example, New Britain, the Caroline and Pillar Islands; I also visited the Philippine Islands, and spent a Sunday in Manila.

Hong Kong is a beautiful place, and at the season I visited it has a fine climate. I had intended staying only two days there, but owing to the late arrival of the steamer I missed the connexion and stayed a week. I was very glad this happened, as it is a most interesting place, and the people very gay and hospitable. I stayed with Dr. Sanders at the Matilda Hospital, and he and Mrs. Sanders saw that I had a very good time. I was made a member of the Hong Kong Club, which is a distinctly cheery place. I dined with the Governor, Sir P. May, and with the principal medical officer of the Navy Department, I attended the final of a senior tennis tournament and the

final of a football cup competition among the soldiers stationed at Hong Kong. I played golf over two courses, and altogether enjoyed myself. But my whole time was not given up to frivolity. I attended a meeting of the members of the Hong Kong Branch, and they entertained me to dinner. We had a most interesting meeting, as, though the Insurance Act does not affect them, there were many other points to be discussed.

A new university has been established for the training of Chinese medical men, and the curriculum, I understand, will be recognized by the General Medical Council for registration. I was shown over the university, and had lunch with the Principal. I visited some of the hospitals; the most interesting was the Tungwa, which is for Chinese patients, and there I saw some plague patients. This hospital is divided into two parts; in one the treatment is on the old Chinese lines, in the other on modern lines by Chinese doctors trained in Europe or America. The patients are given the choice of which they will have. The plague was fairly prevalent while I was in Hong Kong, and the doctor at the Tungwa told me that the mortality was about 98 per cent.

I paid a visit to Canton, which I understand is a typically Chinese city. It is filthy, and the population teeming, yet in spite of the filth they seem healthy and happy. The most interesting thing about Canton is the life on the river, where I believe about a million people live in the sampans and junks; they are a people apart, living their whole lives on the river. After leaving Hong Kong I called at Shanghai, but my visit there was of the shortest.

I landed in Japan at Moji, sailed through the famous Inland Sea, visited Kyoto, Nyanoshita, Tokyo, Nikko, and Yokohama. I was not very much impressed with Japan, but there are some charming places and Fujiyama is very beautiful. Nikko I was lucky enough to see when the cherry blossom was in full bloom. We had a very uninteresting run across the Pacific from Yokohama to Vancouver; it is a very lonely sea; we only saw one ship during the ten days. We had the curious experience of a week with an extra day in it to make up for the time gained in travelling east. The days were arranged, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, meridian day, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The run through Canada was very interesting to me, but has been so often described that I need say nothing about it. I visited the hospital in Toronto, which is the newest and most thoroughly equipped I visited. I returned from New York in the *Adriatic* and landed in England on May 21st, and found England the most beautiful place I had seen.

The question may be asked whether this journey has been of any use; judging from expressions used to me I have no doubt that the visit has done good. The members in Australasia are an honour to any association, and it is the duty of the Council of the Association to bind them closer to us. They are a well organized body, and I think at the present time there is not a symptom of anything like breaking away, but with a well organized body, so self-contained as the British Medical Association in Australasia, there is always that danger, and it is the duty of the Association at home to do what it can to hold them to us. They ought to be accorded the fullest measure of autonomy consistent with the Memorandum of the Association, as the conditions of life and practice are so different from ours. An occasional visit of some member of the Council would, as one prominent member of the Association in Australia said to me, do a great deal to hold the Association together. If I may express the opinion, I think that my visit was perfectly justified. Personally I have to thank the Council for giving me the opportunity of enjoying five months' good time; the colonial men want me to go out again. I may say this much: I would not advise any man to undertake the journey under the same conditions as I did unless he is physically strong.

In conclusion, I regret that I had not arranged to take a longer time, as I was compelled to refrain from visiting several places, such as Dunedin and other Divisions in New Zealand and Tasmania, and several places in Australia, such as Ballarat. However, I hope the members of the Association in these places will understand that it was not the desire to visit them which was wanting, but the time in which to do it.