LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The late Mr H. F. LONGMORE

SIR—Rarely, if ever, can our Journal have found room to publish a tribute to one who was neither a doctor nor a soldier; yet the late Mr H. F. Longmore certainly deserves to be numbered among our benefactors.

He was the son of the famous Sir Thomas Longmore who, spurred on by Florence Nightingale, played a leading part in building up a properly organised medical service. He was our first professor of surgery in 1860, wrote an early training manual and an authoritative book on ambulance transport, was British representative at the Geneva Convention, and helped to form the St. John Ambulance Brigade: all this after taking his F.R.C.S. in 1856, following twelve years service as surgeon to the 19th Foot (the Green Howards) which included two years in the Crimea.

Mr Longmore visited our museum at Crookham and we made preparations for the reception of an old gentleman bordering on the nineties, and his chauffeur. Judge of our surprise when a large car roared up the drive and a sprightly figure stepped out having driven himself from Lymington.

He was especially interested in a picture on our walls shewing Queen Victoria in her donkey cart visiting Netley. She was attended by her dour Highland ghillie, John Brown, who in a hoarse whisper asked her where he might obtain a “drapee”. Young Longmore conducted him to a neighbouring laboratory where he knew that Aitken used to keep a bottle as an aid to pathology.

A visit to his house at Lymington was a revelation; the whole place was full of his father’s books, letters, relics, and documents of all kinds, the value of which must run into many thousands of pounds. It was all being classified and catalogued by the National Society of Archives.

Early in 1965 he visited Millbank in connection with the part played by Florence Nightingale in the formation of the College. These documents have been valued at £1,000 and Mr Longmore had been advised that, for the time being, they should be retained as part of the general collection. He therefore transcribed them in his own handwriting and they formed the basis of the article “Miss Nightingale and the College” which appeared in your pages (Vol. 111, No. 1, 1965).

Some idea of the debt which the museum owes to Mr Longmore can be obtained by referring to the catalogue of the Muniment Room. The “Longmore Pamphlets” are contained in eight beautifully bound volumes. The authors include Florence Nightingale, Henry Dunant, Paré, Baron Larrey and many other famous names, while the subjects range from the medical organisation of the Roman Army, all forms of transport of casualties, to every aspect of army medicine and surgery.

His last appearance was, appropriately enough, at the final ceremony of raising the Netley foundation stone. He was in excellent form and had no sentimental regrets at the destruction of his boyhood home. He wrote “I think it will be better when the old Netley Hospital goes as it is pretty awful now. The old Netley pier has gone where, as a boy, Queen Victoria stopped and talked to myself and my brother; in fact nearly all the landmarks of my early days have gone, which is not surprising.”

His nephew, Mr T. R. W. Longmore, tells us that he passed peacefully away, in full possession of all his faculties, after less than two days illness.
Letter to the Editor

It was very fitting that our Corps was represented at the funeral by Lieutenant-General Sir Neil Cantlie, who is at present engaged in writing a monumental history of the Army Medical Services in which Sir Thomas Longmore played so great a part.

I am, etc.,

R. E. BARNESLEY

R.A.M.C. Historial Museum,
Keogh Barracks,
Ash Vale,
Nr. Aldershot, Hants.
19th February, 1968.

BOOK REVIEWS


In the early days of any recent wars military psychiatrists have been regarded by some of their compatriots, in or out of the fighting forces, as less obvious agents of the enemy fifth column. That this in an uninformed and prejudiced viewpoint is amply demonstrated in this first volume of the history of the neuropsychiatric services in the Army of the United States during World War II.

Dealing with the administration and development of a professional speciality, it is unexpectedly readable and of considerable interest to every service doctor and most staff officers. The text is characterised by the good sense born of practical experience, and is the combined effort of several distinguished contributors, a few of whom are admittedly controversial in their opinions.

Lavishly supplied with illustrations and tables, this work's main significance lies not in its statistics but in its general conclusions. These are almost identical with those reached by British war-time psychiatrists and later regretfully ignored or forgotten by newer generations of specialists initially consumed by a crusading humanitarian zeal and a sense of moral obligation to discover evidence of psychological abnormality in every serviceman referred to them.

Two findings repeatedly emphasised are that the efficacy and practical value of the psychiatric screening, even though recognised as inadequate in scope, of war-time recruits at induction centres were over-rated, and that the wastage in man-power due to the markedly high percentage of medical discharges on psychiatric grounds was due primarily not to the gullibility of civilian-orientated psychiatrists in uniform but to the pressures exerted upon them by responsible combatant officers.

One of the most telling sentences in the whole volume is that quoted from a report by the Inspector General in December 1944:

"Actually, the majority of these cases (hospitalised psychiatric patients) are not psychoneurotic conditions because medical officers wish to make patients of them but because line officers have been unable to make soldiers of them."

This comment illustrates the tendency to increase the incidence of discharge on 'psychiatric' grounds as an easy alternative to raising the standards of leadership, personnel administration and motivation. Preventive military psychiatry is here regarded as a specialised form of social management, and the onus for initiating appropriate measures to reduce the possible incidence of psychiatric wastage is placed squarely on the shoulders of the unit commanding officers.

Interesting chapters are devoted to public relations, the counselling role of the chaplain, malingering, the morale of troops in transit and replacement camps, forensic military psychiatry, the Mental Hygiene Consultation Service, occupational therapy, rehabilitation of the veteran, and the functions of the psychiatric social welfare worker. No undue emphasis is placed on the problems of enuresis and homosexuality. However, in view of the current British military preoccupation with the menace of homosexual activity in servicewomen it is of relevance that an experienced woman consultant observes that sexual misbehaviour in servicewomen is of less import than the malicious whispering campaign against their morals, the false rumours, and the inevitable witch hunts.

A section on 'Lessons Learned' by Colonel Albert Glass, a dynamic and eloquent lecturer known to many R.A.M.C. officers, makes it clear that on the outbreak of war the military command fails to make the most effective use of its militarily indoctrinated regular psychiatrists and is invariably inadequate in its preparations to deal with subsequent psychiatric casualties.

This is a book which merits examination by every aspiring service psychiatrist. Too little credit has been given to the part played by military psychiatry in laying the foundations of research into the emotional problems of the individual in the context of the group and a specialised environment, and to the impetus it has given to the broader education of the psychiatric trainee living in the cloistered atmosphere of the civil mental hospital and examination hall.

H. POZNER
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