AMBULANCE ANGLAISE

Alphonse BRUNET guéri.—Pris le 10 avril 1872.

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

"A Forgotten Case"

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IN browsing through old copies of the Corps Journal one is struck by the excellent series of "Echoes from the Past" contributed by such Corps historians as Howells, Evatt and others. I suggest the time is opportune to start the series going again, and with this in mind, have written this article.

In November last, thanks to the generosity of Major A. F. Flatow, T.D., a most interesting photograph came into my possession (Fig. 1). The sole information, which the donor had, was that the photograph was known to have come from an album containing photographs of Edinburgh professors.

The most cursory of glances showed that the photograph was that of a patient who had received an injury to his right shoulder and was grasping in his hand the upper part of the shaft of his right humerus which had, presumably, been excised by the top-hatted individual standing behind him holding a mirror so that the posterior aspect of the patient's shoulder was visible. It was further evident from the inscription on the photograph that the patient was a Frenchman—Alphonse Brunet—and was in the care of the "Ambulance Anglaise". The date of the photograph—April 1872—indicated that the patient must have been wounded in 1871 either during or after the Franco-German War, as such extensive wounds could not have healed by April 1872 if they had been inflicted during that year. Also in view of the history of the photograph and the title "Ambulance Anglaise" it was highly probable that the surgeon was an Edinburgh graduate.

The stage was now set for the identification of the Surgeon and for finding out the details of the patient. As an Aberdeen graduate I had no contacts with Edinburgh and I turned for help to Major-General John Matheson, Commandant, Royal Army Medical College. Thanks to him I was put in touch with Mr. J. R. Cameron, F.R.C.S., the President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh. Mr. Cameron identified the surgeon as Sir John Rose Cormack (1815-1882) and thanks to the efforts of Miss Wardle, the Librarian of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, notes on Brunet's case were found.

The patient was a National Guards-man who had been wounded at Neuilly on the 12th April 1871. The bullet had entered from behind at the shoulder and had made its exit in the upper third of the arm externally smashing the upper end of the humerus to fragments. Sir John Cormack decided to remove the bone and, without relation to the entry or exit wounds which from their situation could not be used, made a single longitudinal incision at the outer side of the shoulder through the deltoid and exposed the bone. Two or three arteries had to be tied but there was no bleeding to prevent a good view into the wound which was a deep one owing to the muscularity of the patient. Sir John dislocated the head of the humerus, dissected out the smashed pieces of bone and sawed off the end of the shaft. The patient was three-quarters of an hour under chloroform. He had suffered intense pain before the operation, but when he came out of the anaesthetic half an hour later, felt no pain. He was able to move his

fingers and hand and there was no loss of sensation. The case notes continue "He eats, sleeps and drinks well, the wound is healthy and closing with abundant discharge of laudable pus (sic). There is a large abscess at the anterior aspect of the chest, below the wound entry".

On the 31st May 1871 Sir John writes—"As to Brunet he has gone on to a wish. Today he walked round the garden without help; and for the last five days he has been nine hours daily out of bed. The introduction of drainage-tubes has nearly enabled me to get rid of the abscesses in the front of the chest. This case may now be considered as very nearly certain to be a complete success". The photograph of Brunet some ten months later amply bears out this prognosis.

This case is of special interest to us as early photographs of war-wounds are very hard to come by and we are especially fortunate to have such full details of the patient and his surgeon. Also, we have many examples in our museum of the effects of soft lead bullets striking bones, including those from French Chassepôt rifles which were presumably responsible for Brunet's injuries.

My first reactions on looking at Sir John's photograph—which I imagine will be shared by others—was regret that I had not been born a hundred years earlier so that I could have tipped his "Lum hat" over his nose as a more insufferably pompous or arrogant pose would be hard to find! However, on reflection, I felt such a partisan attitude ill became a would be historian and without further comment I offer the following brief notes on Sir John Cormack:—

He was born at Stow, Midlothian on 1st March 1815, his father, the Reverend John Cormack being Minister of the parish. He studied medicine at Edinburgh, graduating in 1837 and receiving a gold medal for his thesis on the presence of air in the organs of circulation. In the same year he was senior president of the Edinburgh Royal Medical Society, and presided at its centenary festival. After study in Paris he commenced practice in Edinburgh, and was appointed physician to the Royal Infirmary and the Fever Hospital. His 'Observations on the Relapsing Fever epidemic in 1843' increased his reputation, and he sought permission to give clinical lectures at the infirmary. This being refused, he resigned in 1845, and removed to London in 1847, where he practised until ill-health compelled him to settle in Orleans in 1866. In 1869, on the death of Sir Joseph Oliffe, physician to the British Embassy, he removed to Paris, graduating M.D. in the University of France in 1870. With his wife, one son (a doctor who died in 1867) and one daughter, he remained in Paris during the siege and the Commune, and rendered conspicuous services to British residents, and to the wounded of both sides. He was made Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in 1871, and Knighted in 1872. He was afterwards appointed physician to the Hertford British Hospital, established by Sir R. Wallace, and had a considerable practice in Paris. He was a skilful physician, characterised by great sympathy and devotion to duty. He died on 13 May 1882 at his house in the Rue St. Honore; his widow survived him by three months; he had a son and four daughters.

Cormack was much occupied in medical literature. In 1841 he started the "Edinburgh Monthly Journal of Medical Science", and conducted it ably until 1847. He established the "London Journal of Medicine" in 1849, carrying it on till the end of 1852, when he was appointed Editor of the "Association Medical Journal" (now known as the British Medical Journal). He resigned his post in September 1855. He translated four volumes

of Trousseau's 'Clinical Lectures' (Vols ii to v) for the New Sydenham Society. In 1876 he published in two volumes a collection of his principal writings, including some valuable papers on cholera, diphtheria, and paralysis, under the title of 'Clinical Studies'.

Finally, the Army's recent responsibility for the Hertford Hospital, Paris provides another interesting link in this case.

In conclusion I would once more express my thanks to the donor of the photograph—Major Flatow—to Mr. J. R. Cameron, F.R.C.S., President, Royal College of Surgeons (Edinburgh) and to Miss Wardle the College Librarian. I would also thank Mr. Davies, Librarian, Royal Army Medical College Library for obtaining biographical details of Sir John Cormack for me.

EDITORIAL NOTE: *This excellent suggestion to revive the series "Echoes from the Past" is agreed and arrangements are in hand to include articles in some future issues.*

SIXTY YEARS AGO

It is planned to include extracts from past issues of the Journal under the title '60 YEARS AGO' as a regular feature.

When reading the early numbers of our Corps journal two points are obvious—firstly what a high standard the papers show and secondly, despite all the advances in medical science during the past 60 years, how many of the problems dealt with in the journal are still with us. Although the paper which we reprint below first appeared in our journal (60 years ago) it will have an all too familiar ring in the ears of those, who like the Editor, 'still have intact hearing'.

(May 1910)

A PLEA FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF AURISTS IN CONNECTION WITH RECRUITING

By Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Cottell

Royal Army Medical Corps

Having the opportunity of seeing the medical documents of invalids that pass through the hands of the Chelsea Commissioners at the Royal Hospital, I have been struck by the frequency with which "deafness" has been a cause of invaliding, and also by the very short service of the invalids with this disability. I therefore thought it would be instructive to take the fresh cases of invaliding for all diseases that came before the Commissioners during the first three months of 1909 and note the comparative frequency of invaliding for "deafness" for that period.

I give a summary of my results:—

Between January 1, 1909, and March 31, 1909, 743 fresh cases of men invalided from the service came before the Chelsea Commissioners. Of this number sixty-two were invalids for "deafness". Two of them were long service men of sixteen and eighteen years respectively.