The student of the early history of the Army Medical Service cannot fail to have noted that during the piping times of peace there is little record of medical officers of our Army outside the Army Lists, whereas a period of war of any long duration has always been followed by the recognition of eminent army physicians and surgeons who by their writings and practice have contributed very greatly to the progress of medicine and surgery. The "Hundred Years War," the Tudor wars, the Great Civil War, The "Seven Years War," and the Peninsular War were all followed in this way by the appearance of works on military medicine, surgery, and hygiene, many of the writers of which attained to great professional eminence after they had left the army and entered into the civil practice of their profession. To quote the names of Gale, Clowes, Woodal, Sydenham, Wiseman, Ranby, Donald Monro, Pringle, Brocklesby, Cleghorn, Home, Hunter, and Guthrie will be sufficient to prove this contention, although these names by no means exhaust the long list which a moment’s thought brings to the mind.

It is with an army physician who, with Pringle, Monro, Cleghorn, and Home, took part in the great revival of, and progress in, military medical science which was associated with the wars of the middle period of the eighteenth century that this memoir deals.
Richard Brocklesby, the only son of Richard Brocklesby, Esq., of the City of Cork, by Mary Alloway, of Minehead, Somersetshire, was born at Minehead, where his mother was on a visit to her parents, on 11th August, 1722. Both families belonged to the Society of Friends. He remained at Minehead until he was three years of age, when he was taken to Ireland, and was for some years privately instructed in his father's house at Cork. Towards the end of March, 1734, he was sent to Ballytore School in Kildare, at which school Edmund Burke was also educated. Although contemporaries at school for less than a year, the circumstance led to a long and devoted friendship which lasted through life.

Brocklesby having finished his classical education at Ballytore, his father decided that he should become a physician, and, with this object in view, sent him to Edinburgh, where he commenced the study of medicine on 3rd March, 1742, and he was admitted a member of the Medical Society there. He did not stay long in Scotland, but continued his studies at Leyden, where "he was entered on the physic line" on 22nd November, 1743. Here he attended the lectures of Albinus, Gaubius, Oosterdijk, Schacht, and Van Royen, and graduated Doctor of Medicine on 28th June, 1745, his thesis being "De Saliva Sana et Morbosa." Brocklesby corresponded with his old teacher Gaubius for many years after he left Leyden. Soon after taking his degree he settled in London, and started practice in Broad Street. His father assisted him with £150 a year, a liberal allowance at that time, and diligence, integrity and economy soon enabled him to surmount the difficulties which a young physician beginning practice has to encounter. In 1746 he published "An Essay concerning the Mortality among Horned Cattle." In this he advocated the burial of the infected bodies of the animals in deep graves.

Brocklesby was admitted Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians on 1st April, 1751. He had by this time become acquainted with the leading men of his profession, particularly the celebrated Dr. Mead, Dr. Leatherhead, Dr. Heberden, and Sir George Baker. Judicious flattery of Mead had helped him not a little and in later years he was fond of relating anecdotes of that extraordinary man. A favourite anecdote was his description of a dinner which Mead gave to the impostor Psalmanazar. Psalmanazar pretended to be a native of Formosa, and his fabulous account of that island and the customs of its people created a great sensation in England at that time. He had stated that the Formosans constantly fed on raw human flesh. Mead, to test the
truth of this, had provided at the dinner a pound of flesh (from the gluteal region of a body in the dissecting room) as a dish for his guest. Psamanazar did not flinch from the ordeal.

On 28th September, 1754, Brocklesby obtained the honorary degree of M.D. from the University of Dublin, and was admitted ad eundem at Cambridge on 16th December of the same year. In virtue of his Cambridge degree he was admitted a Candidate of the Royal College of Physicians, 25th June, 1755, and a Fellow on 25th June, 1756. He was Gulstonian Lecturer in 1758, Censor in 1758, 1763, and 1765; Harveian Orator in 1760, Croonian Lecturer in 1763, and was finally named an Elect in 1778, in place of Dr. James Hawley, deceased.

On 7th October, 1757, on the recommendation of Dr. Shaw, and through the patronage of Lord Barrington, Brocklesby was appointed a Physician to the Army. In this capacity he served for some time in Germany during the Seven Years’ War, and distinguishing himself by his zeal, knowledge, and humanity, he attracted to himself the friendship of the Duke of Richmond, Lord Pembroke, and others. He returned to England some time before the peace of 1763, for a time was in charge of the Military Hospital at Pimlico, and was soon after placed on the half-pay list, on which he continued until his death.

On his return from the Continent, Brocklesby settled in Norfolk Street, Strand, where he was regarded as a physician of extensive experience, especially in all diseases incident to life in the Army. An estate of about £600 a year had come to him on the death of his father, and he had, in addition, his half-pay as an Army Physician. His practice increasing in proportion to his reputation, he was soon able to live in a very handsome manner, maintaining a good table, at which he entertained frequently the most distinguished persons of rank, learning, and ability of his day.

Brocklesby was a man of most generous spirit, his purse, as well as his medical advice, being always at the service of the poor. Many persons of merit, when in financial difficulties, were helped by him. To Dr. Johnson he offered £100 a year for life, and, upon Dr. Johnson declining it, he offered him apartments in his own house. Boswell tells us Johnson referred to this incident as “an instance of extraordinary liberality of friendship,” and that “a grateful tear started in his eye as he spoke this in a faltering tone.”

Another instance of Brocklesby’s generosity and thoughtfulness is mentioned in Burke’s Correspondence. On 2nd July, 1788, he wrote to Burke to make him “an instant present of £1,000, which,”
he continued, "for years past, by will, I had destined as a testimony of my regard on my decease." Burke, in accepting the gift, said, "I shall never be ashamed to have it known that I am obliged to one who never can be capable of converting his kindness into a burthen."

Brocklesby had always upon his list two or three poor widows, to whom he granted annuities. The ladies attended on quarter day to receive their stipends, were received by their host with the greatest courtesy, and partook of the hospitalities of his table. He was equally liberal to his poorer relatives.

Although an ardent Whig, Brocklesby's political opinions did not prevent him from being the sincere friend of many prominent Tories. His close friendship with that great Tory, Dr. Johnson, is an instance of this. Boswell's "Life of Johnson" contains many references to their intimacy. On Sunday, 31st March, 1783, Boswell found Johnson at home with Dr. Brocklesby, "whose reading, and knowledge of life, and good spirits, supply him with a never-failing source of conversation." Johnson founded an evening club in Essex Street, Strand, which, from the place of meeting was called the Essex Head Club. Brocklesby was a member. It met three times a week and absentees were fined threepence. The rules were drawn up by Johnson.

When Johnson lost his faculty of speech in June, 1783, he was attended by Brocklesby, who met Dr. Heberden in consultation on the case. In February, 1784, he again attended Johnson and consulted Cullen, Munro, and Sir Alexander Dick by letter through Boswell. In December of the same year, Brocklesby attended Johnson in his last illness until his death.

Hannah More says that Johnson was very anxious about Brocklesby's religious opinions, and, on one occasion, having put up a fervent prayer that Brocklesby might become a sincere Christian, "caught hold of his hand and cried, 'Doctor, you do not say 'Amen.'" The doctor looked foolishly, but, after a pause, said 'Amen.'" Dr. Johnson, in his will, left Brocklesby and some others "each a book at their election, to keep as a token of remembrance."

Reference has already been made to Brocklesby's ardent friendship for Edmund Burke. Burke's ingenious pun on Brocklesby's name is worth recalling. At that time there flourished a most blatant advertising quack, one Dr. Rock. Brocklesby must have been somewhat annoyed, therefore, when Burke accosted him as Dr. Rock. "Don't be offended. Your name is Rock," said Burke, with a laugh, "I'll prove it algebraically: Brock - b = Rock, or Brock less b makes Rock."
We have spoken of his friends, but Brocklesby also had at least one enemy, and their quarrel ended in an amusing duel. The other principal was Dr. (afterwards Sir John) Elliot. It is related that the combatants met on the field but never exchanged shots, because their seconds could not agree on the right number of paces at which to place their men.

On attaining the age of 73 Brocklesby was obliged, owing to the infirmities of old age, to give up a good deal of his practice, but continued his benevolent custom of gratuitously attending on the poor. On 13th of March, 1794, his old friend and patron the Duke of Richmond, then Master-General of Ordnance, appointed him Physician-General to the Ordnance. This appointment, which carried with it an allowance of twenty shillings a day, necessitated occasional visits to the Ordnance Hospital at Woolwich. The Professorship of Chemistry at the College at Woolwich was instituted at Brocklesby’s suggestion.

“Though debilitated beyond his years, particularly for a man of his constant exercise and abstemious and regular manner of living, he kept up his acquaintances and friendships to the last, and in a degree partook of the pleasuries and convivialities of the table. The friends who knew his habits sometimes indulged him with a nap in his armchair after dinner, which greatly refreshed him; he would then turn to the company and pay his club of the conversation, either by anecdote or observation, entirely free from the laws and severities of old age.” We gather that he was a clever conversationalist and very happy in his frequent quotations from Shakespeare.

In December, 1797, Brocklesby went on a visit to Mrs. Burke at Beaconsfield. On the 11th, remembering that his nephew, the celebrated Dr. Thomas Young, Foreign Secretary to the Royal Society, was coming from Cambridge to London next day, he returned to London. After dinner with his friends, at 9 p.m. he desired to go to bed, but was so fatigued that he was unable to mount the stairs and was obliged to sit in his chair until he felt stronger. In a little time he recovered, and, as he was being undressed, said to his elder nephew, “What an idle piece of ceremony this buttoning and unbuttoning is to me now!” He seemed perfectly composed when he got to bed, but about five minutes later he quietly expired. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Clement Danes, privately, on 18th December, 1797.

With the exception of a few legacies to his servants and distant relations, he left his fortune of £30,000 to his nephews.
Richard Brocklesby

estates, which were considerable, were bequeathed to his nephew, Mr. Beeby, while the house and furniture in Norfolk Street, his library, prints, a choice collection of paintings (chiefly selected by his friend, Sir Joshua Reynolds), and about £10,000 in money were left to his other nephew, Dr. Thomas Young. Dr. Brocklesby's portrait was painted by Copley, and afterwards engraved by Ridley.

In addition to the published writings of Brocklesby already mentioned he published in 1760 his "Eulogium Medicum, sive Oratio Anniversaria Harveiana habita in Theatris Collegii Regalis Medicorum, Londinensium, Die xviii. Octobris, 1760." He also contributed papers to the Philosophical Transactions and to the Medical Observations and Inquiries. These included papers on "An Account of the Poisonous Root lately found mixed with Gentian," "Experiments on the Sensibility and Irritability of the several parts of Animals," "Case of a Lady labouring under a Diabetes," "Experiments relative to the Analysis and Virtues of Seltzer Water," and "Case of an Encysted Tumour in the Orbit of the Eye, cured by Messrs. Bromfield and Ingram." He also published, in 1749, "Reflections on Antient and Modern Musick." This was written early in life and refers to the use of music in calming the minds of sick people.

But Brocklesby's chief claim to remembrance as an Army medical officer is his great work entitled "Oeconomical and Medical Observations, in two parts, from 1758 to 1763, inclusive, tending to the improvement of Military Hospitals and to the care of camp diseases incident to soldiers," which was published in 1764. It has been described as "The first book in which sound principles of hygiene were laid down for the Army." It is an extremely interesting book and, in the experience of the writer, a rare one. The copy in the library of the Royal College of Physicians contains corrections and annotations in Brocklesby's handwriting.

A long and interesting article could be written on this book, but a few indications of its scope and teaching may be given here. He was anxious to improve the class of men who then entered the Army as surgeons, and suggested that the price of their commissions should be raised in value and fairly and openly sold for £600 to £700, and that, in addition, all candidates should undergo a strict examination as to their professional attainments. He pointed out the relative frequency of surgical and medical affections in a regiment, showing the proportion was something about one to twenty, and that, therefore, it was necessary that an Army medical officer should be a good physician, and considered further that the
College of Physicians should conduct the examination instead of “Surgeons' Hall,” as was then the custom. He also insisted that the medical officer should be in absolute command of his hospital. Although a few barracks existed in England—they were first built in 1739, and earlier in Ireland—Brocklesby found it necessary to impress upon the public the necessity for barracks for soldiers, asking “How is it possible without barracks to make a private soldier always wholesome and cleanly, further than at a stated hour on the Parade for momentary shew?” He condemned some of those barracks just built; erected, as he says, with salt water bricks, with low ceilings, and without any ventilation. He strongly advocated the observance of cleanliness, good ventilation, good diet, and regular exercise in the Army. He noted that men ill from typhus did better in ill-constructed temporary sheds where they had plenty of fresh air than in houses, and, in 1760, treated many men of the 30th Regiment suffering from this disease in wattle huts with thatched roofs, on an elevated site with straw screens on the weather side. Each hut had a fire-place. He had only one or two deaths and considered that the pure, bracing air favoured the recovery of his patients. We may note that he had the walls and ceilings frequently scraped and cleaned. He also considered that the frequent removal of the sick from hospital to hospital, with the poor means of transport then available, led to great and unnecessary loss of life. Brocklesby was the advocate of small hospitals. His book also contains some interesting “Regulations for Hospital Management.” In camps we find him impressing upon us the necessity of avoiding the fouling of camp sites, and of shifting and covering in latrines as soon as they became offensive. He thought the straw on which the men lay in their tents should be turned and aired twice a week.

Brocklesby recognised the responsibility of regimental officers in matters affecting the health of their men. He says: “A faithful and judicious discharge of the duties of the Field Officers in any Regiment may obviate many diseases incidental to soldiers.”

He advocated the issue of “charge pay” to medical officers in time of war.

Brocklesby’s observations on the diseases incident to soldiers are clear and original. He refers to coughs, rheumatism, erysipelas, sore throats, pleurisy, gaol fever, bilious fevers, dysentery, smallpox, meases, jaundice, dropsy, vermes, psora, lues venerea, scurvy, tertian fevers and ague cake. Brocklesby had great faith in wine in the treatment of fevers, often giving as much as three pints daily to his patients.
Richard Brocklesby

He drew up some remarkably sound regulations for the preservation of the health of the soldiers embarking on the expedition against Manila. He recommended larger ship's tonnage in summer than in winter, in hot climates than in cold; in short voyages $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons per man, long voyages $2$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons. Between decks should be kept scrupulously clean and well aired with ventilators or airsails. Hammocks were to be brought on deck daily and exposed all day long if weather permitted. Ships should be fumigated frequently by plunging a heated iron into receptacles containing pitch or tar. No place between decks should be wetted after sunset. The troops were to be mustered on deck three or four times a day, and kept employed for an hour at a time. The quantity and quality of the salt meat should be looked to and fresh meat and vegetables given when in port. In hotter climates the ration should include more vegetables and sub-acid fruits and less meat. Excess in spirituous liquors was to be prohibited and sobriety enforced. According to Brigadier-General Draper, who commanded the expedition, Brocklesby's regulations "answered exceedingly well."

Brocklesby (as well as Pringle, Home, Monro and Cleghorn) was in the habit of performing post-mortem examinations on his patients, a practice not at that time common in civil hospitals.

The length of this memoir does not permit further reference to Brocklesby's work; the writer's aim will, however, have been gained if it arouses the interest of the army medical officers of to-day, so that when they pass the church of St. Clement Danes in the Strand, where he lies buried, they may give a tender thought to the memory of this great army physician and gentleman of the olden time.