

*They joyfully & we.*

# The Royal Society of Medicine

SUPPLEMENT TO OFFICIAL BULLETINS (1920)\*

## COMPLIMENTARY DINNER, AND TESTIMONIAL TO SIR JOHN MACALISTER.

The Dinner; at the Connaught Rooms, March 18, 1920.

Sir HUMPHRY ROLLESTON, President, K.C.B., M.D., in the Chair.

OVER 300 Fellows and Members of the Royal Society of Medicine, and guests assembled at the Connaught Rooms on Thursday, March 18, to do honour to the Society's Secretary, Sir John MacAlister, partly to congratulate him on the knighthood which he had recently received, but chiefly to supplement that honour by an expression of their personal regard for him and of their gratitude for the services which he had rendered to the Society during thirty-three years of office.

The chair was taken by the President, Sir Humphry Rolleston, and among the guests were Lady MacAlister, Mr. and Mrs. Donald MacAlister, and Mr. and Mrs. Ian MacAlister. Sir John's brother, Sir Donald MacAlister, wrote regretting his inability to attend owing to an inexorable engagement.

After the usual loyal toasts, the CHAIRMAN said:—

Ladies and Gentlemen,—We are here, more than 300 of us, partly to do honour to a Secretary which a Society has never seen the like of before, but mainly, I think, to show our affection for a friend whom we regard even more highly than we do the Secretary of the Royal Society of Medicine. We have had a great many letters and telegrams from people who are here in spirit. I may mention that letters have come from as far away as New Zealand, India, North America, and other places across the seas. I may recall that the last time Sir William Osler was in the Society's house I happened to be present when he was congratulating our Secretary upon his knighthood, and he asked

\* At the request and expense of Subscribers to the Testimonial.



him what the initial "Y" meant in his name. When he heard that the name was "Young," he dropped the "John" and at once called him "Sir Young." Sir John's infinite variety cannot be staled even by a title. It is not the title we honour, it is our friend Sir John. Young he is in name and mind. It is difficult to believe that it is thirty-three years since he began to guide the fortunes of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society and transformed it into the successful Royal Society of Medicine. That being so, it has been agreed that to propose this toast properly requires three Past-Presidents, and I will call upon Sir William Church, Sir Rickman Godlee, and Sir Francis Champneys to speak for the three periods of our Secretary's career.

#### THE BERNERS STREET PERIOD.

Sir WILLIAM CHURCH: Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I feel it a very great privilege that my name should have been associated with others in proposing the health of our guest. I and Sir John have, I think I may say, been friends for many, many years. It would occupy me the whole of the evening if I were to say one-tenth of what I know of him. I cannot say that I was officially associated with him in Berners Street, for whilst the Medical and Chirurgical Society was in Berners Street I was not an officer of the Society. Shortly after his appointment he called attention to what he thought was the perilous position of the Society, nearing the end of a short lease at the nominal rent of £14, certain to be raised to £500 or £600, if not more, with heavy costs for reparations, if indeed the lease were renewed at all. He proposed that the Society should at once try to find a bigger and more suitable house, and finance itself by letting off what was not actually needed for the Society's own use. He found No. 20, Hanover Square, which he considered was just what we needed; but Councils cannot act as promptly as individuals, and while the question was being considered No. 20 was sold, and a contract issued for rebuilding. He found that the purchasers, however, were not unwilling to sell their bargain for a moderate profit. It was quite impossible to get together the Council to endorse everything that was done, but Sir John MacAlister had the necessary imagination, initiative, and courage, also a sense for the appropriate moment, and at his own risk secured the property in Hanover Square and opened a new chapter of good fortune in the history of the Society.

#### THE HANOVER SQUARE PERIOD.

Sir RICKMAN GODLEE: Ladies and Gentlemen,—I rise with feelings of sorrow and pity—first for myself because I know so little about the Hanover Square period, the subject on which I am expected to speak: secondly, for you, because you are obliged to listen to me; still, I suppose the speeches of us three old stagers are meant to act as a foil to the brilliant little address of the young Fellow who occupies the chair. Lastly for MacAlister, for I cannot imagine a more deplorable condition than to have your toast cut into four or



five pieces and ostentatiously buttered in your presence (laughter). The reason why I do not know very much about the amalgamation of the Societies is that during the Hanover Square period I was a mere Honorary Librarian, and in those days the Honorary Librarians were not admitted to the secret councils of the Society. But I know quite well that Sir John MacAlister was at the bottom of it all; and I firmly believe that if he had not been there the amalgamation would never have taken place. In other ways I did however come across him very intimately, because he was not only Secretary but also Librarian, and in that capacity during the afternoon he used to come into the library and hand out books, look up references, and attend to the general business of the library; training up a number of young librarians who afterwards left us for more lucrative and more important appointments. At that time I remember he occupied a very elegant office on the ground floor, and a sumptuous suite of rooms at the top of the house, but in the course of time he thought the latter was too valuable for use as a Secretary's residence. These rooms he therefore let for the sum of £750, while he was content to receive a much smaller sum to provide for what he considered adequate accommodation elsewhere. During the Hanover Square period he was, in the Society's behalf, a very active and successful house agent. He let off numbers of rooms for the Society to substantial and respectable tenants, and if it had not been for this, I do not suppose that the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society could have avoided passing into bankruptcy. I used to hear rumours that a considerable part of the occupation of the Council was in limiting the various schemes that arose from the teeming brain of Sir John MacAlister. Some were even called "wild cat" schemes. Sir John would welcome this as a term not of reproach but of praise, for what would appear to be a wild cat to the pundits of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society might well appear to its Secretary a most useful domestic rat-catcher. It is because I know that he has been the inspiring spirit in all the evolutions that have taken place since he came to us, and because he has been prepared on the spur of the moment to act on his own responsibility, that in spite of my preliminary sorrow I feel glad and proud to take my part in proposing the toast of his health.

#### THE WIMPOLE STREET PERIOD.

Sir FRANCIS CHAMPNEYS said: Like my friends, my association with Sir John MacAlister extends beyond my official connexion with the Society. My association began officially in 1910, when I became Treasurer; in 1912 until 1914 I was President, and during this period of time the Society was getting into shape. Its history during that period is a history of the activities of Sir John MacAlister. The record of the Society is largely the record of its Secretary. Presidents come and go; the permanent official remains. During my term of office some of the principal events were as follows: On November 27-30, 1912, the first series of "At Homes" took place, during which 4,000 guests unconnected with the Society were invited,



and this was followed by the accession of nearly 600 Fellows and Members. On October 11, 1912, the new Section of Medical History was established. On May 20, 1913, the first Sub-section, that of Proctology, came into being. During the period of which I am treating various departments of medicine and surgery became more specialized, and this was reflected in the sectional organization. The recognition of new departments has often been a matter of controversy, and each has to be debated as it arises. Then there came along the matter of the building loan. Through Sir John MacAlister's initiative and enterprise, the loan was largely transferred from the bankers to the Fellows by means of his invention—subscription bonds. The ground lease of No. 1, Wimpole Street, was originally eighty years; it was increased afterwards to ninety-nine years, but thanks again to Sir John MacAlister (who secured from friends outside the Society the sum of £1,500 for the required premium) a lease for 999 years was secured, and the house is now practically freehold, subject to a ground rent. Then again, the period of which I am treating saw the inauguration of Special Discussions. Our Secretary also voluntarily undertook (*without salary*) the duties of Editor of the *Proceedings* of the Society in addition to his other duties. And throughout it all he has been full of imagination, full of ideas, unsparing of himself, always cheerful, and, not least in value, blest with a keen sense of humour.

“THE MAN.”

Sir W. ARBUTHNOT LANE said: Ladies and Gentlemen,—We have heard a good deal of the details of Sir John MacAlister's career from Presidents past and present, but I claim that my share of the toast is “*the toast of the evening.*” I speak only of him as the man. I have known him for many years, and have seen him devote every bit of his indomitable energy, his wonderful tact, and his great foresight in building up the Royal Society of Medicine, which he has made the finest medical institution in the world. Besides that, he has claimed the admiration and respect of all who know him by his great devotion to duty and his nobility of character. In order to estimate the value of Sir John MacAlister's work we must look at the effects and results of his labours. These can perhaps best be seen from the audited accounts of the Royal Society of Medicine. These accounts in 1887 showed a balance of assets standing to credit of £3,040. In the last audited balance-sheet the balance of assets as audited by chartered accountants stood at over £70,000. But in that account the value of the Society's new house is merely put down at the actual cost of site and building. Since then the lease has been extended from 80 years to 999 years. The value of this asset alone must therefore be at least £100,000. The real difference between 1887 and 1920 is over £120,000. Sir John has worked, as will be seen, very hard for the Society. What has he done for himself in the same time? While the Society has greatly increased its revenue its Secretary decreased his own by the amalgamation of bodies to several of which he acted as



paid officer. That is a great record of service and of self-denial—a record to which few men, I think, could lay claim. I would ask Sir John MacAlister to look around him at this assembly. The lights of the medical profession are here, and those who have come to do honour to Sir John have brought with them the ladies who control their destinies and add to their happiness. Sir John has got nothing financially out of all this, but he has got that which money cannot buy—the regard, esteem, admiration, and affection of all here. Every Fellow of this Society—the greatest Medical Society in the whole world—holds him in gratitude. We do not owe it all to Sir John MacAlister. The director of his happiness has helped him enormously, and in drinking his health I would ask you to join with it the health of Lady MacAlister.

The toast was then drunk amid a scene of much enthusiasm, the entire company joining in musical honours.

#### SIR JOHN'S REPLY.

SIR JOHN MACALISTER : I am sorry to notice that Sir Arbuthnot Lane is becoming callous as he grows older, for on the last occasion when he operated upon me he made sure first that I was thoroughly anæsthetized, and therefore perfectly happy during the long sitting, and it is he and he alone you have to blame for what is happening this evening, as I was assured on the best possible authority that my life was practically ended ten years ago, and but for Lane's interference you would have been spared all this, and enjoying the services of a smart up-to-date young Secretary.

It is perhaps a curious coincidence that we are gathered here to-night possibly in the same room—certainly under the same roof—as the first meeting of the Society, when the leaders of Medicine of that day, May 22, 1805, met, and, no doubt after an equally good dinner, resolved to form the Society. Among those present were Saunders, the first President of the Society, Abernethy, Matthew Baillie, and others bearing famous names, but the most interesting to me is that of Dr. Marcet, who being dead yet speaketh and helpeth, through his descendant Dr. Pasteur, one of our Honorary Treasurers who is with us to-night.

Every truly sympathetic person here—and the fact of being here proves the sympathy—will understand and feel with me what I am feeling and would like to express, and will make allowances for me, appearing for the first time in the rôle imposed upon me this evening, for it is the simple truth I never could make a speech in public. I try to think of all kinds of good things, but they don't come out when I get on my legs. But I must just try and say something at any rate about the past and present Presidents who have honoured me by their presence here to-night, and first to those who have spoken of me in such kindly terms, for I will not insult them by accusing them of flattery!



*Of Sir William Church* : And first I would like to say how proud I am that Sir William Church is here to-night, and has said such kind things about me. Many of you know, but probably a good many of you don't, that but for him we should have had no amalgamation, or at any rate it would have been deferred probably for years, for it was bound to come. But for Sir Andrew Clark's untimely death it might have come sooner, for it was to him I first took my first amalgamation scheme, and he warmly endorsed it, promised to back me up and see it through. One meeting only was held at his house, and I shall never forget the wonderful way in which he dealt with those whom he had invited, most of them confessedly coming to oppose the scheme, but went away converted. A small Organizing Committee was there and then appointed, and we were to have met again at Sir Andrew's house, when on the morning of that day we received news of his seizure, and in a few hours he was gone, and it was not until the reign of Sir Richard Douglas Powell that I got an opportunity of bringing forward the scheme again. He warmly endorsed it, and when I suggested that in order to avoid the slightest jealousy or suspicion that the old "Medico-Chi." was out for itself, the first meeting should be held at the College, arranged with Sir William Church, who was then President of the College, and the meeting was held, Sir William being in the Chair, and was appointed Chairman of the Organizing Committee.

Having thus secured a leader whose character ensured the respect even of the strongest opponents of amalgamation, Sir Douglas Powell had a brain-wave, and secured the co-operation as Honorary Secretaries of Dr. Arthur Latham and Mr. Pendlebury, and the enthusiasm and hard work they put into the scheme I think is not known or realized by anyone so much as by myself. They knew from the first that the thing could not be done by mere talk, and I have seen them at one o'clock in the morning on their knees—not praying, for they believed in work rather than prayer—collating sheets of figures and returns of all kinds from the various Societies, for which no table was large enough.

*Of Sir Henry Morris* : The gods smiled on the amalgamation, for they so arranged that the early Presidents should each in his way be just the man who was needed. Sir Henry Morris might be called the architect of the Society, and he also proved to be a most efficient clerk-of-works in directing the work of our new building, and you cannot be sufficiently grateful to him for the enormous amount of labour he undertook. He was often on the site before 9 o'clock, and he kept an eye on everything and to his suggestions and care for every detail you are largely indebted for the fine home you now enjoy. And he was as lavish with his money as with his time, but he would never allow me to say how much he gave to help forward the scheme and insure its success.

*Of Sir Francis Champneys* : He was followed by Sir Francis Champneys, who was sent to prove that the amalgamation was an amalgamation in spirit and in truth as well as in form, for he was the first President in one hundred and seven years to represent a speciality, and by his election the Fellows showed



that they were shaking off the traditions of the past, which refused to acknowledge that there was such a thing as a speciality in Medicine.

*Of Sir Rickman Godlee :* Sir Rickman Godlee I find difficulty in placing or in specializing, but he was sent just when such a man was needed to calm the effervescence inevitable after such a change. I don't mean to say that he repressed any useful activities, but his calm and judicious mind saw that these activities were quietly thought out, and he thereby added to their strength rather than weakened them, and in his reign the amalgamation was fully established and running smoothly.

*Of Sir Humphry Rolleston :* In the fullness of time he was sent to introduce the true spirit of sodality and sociability, and the Fellows were taught to understand that No. 1, Wimpole Street, was their spiritual home. It was due to his enthusiastic devotion to his Presidential duties, and (if he will forgive me letting you into a secret) to his lavish personal generosity that *conversazioni* and social evenings have been established at No. 1 which have brought the Fellows and their friends together in a way never attempted before, and incidentally led to large additions to our Fellowship, of guests who for the first time saw our magnificent library and all the amenities of your beautiful house.

A small but significant proof of the close interest he has taken in the Society and its welfare is the fact that he is the only President who to my knowledge has used his official master key, and the caretakers have told me how often they have been startled on Sundays, and sometimes late at night, by finding "Sir Humphry going his rounds."

I cannot, as requested, tell the story of thirty-three years in fifteen minutes (the official limit), and I have kept no record. I can only try to recall things which "stick," and, I hope, may interest you.

The first thing I did when I took up my charge in August, 1887, was to open the front door. Until then the front door had always been kept shut, and even the President had to knock and ring and wait until the porter could find his coat, and open it with due ceremony. I ordered that it should be kept open during official hours, and I shall never forget the shocked face of my first President, Mr. George Pollock, when he came into my room and said, "Do you know the front door is wide open?" I said I knew it and had ordered it, and hoped it would be left open, and that it would save his valuable time. He was very dubious, but said I might continue to leave it open until he had discussed the matter with the Council. It has never been shut since!

53, Berners Street, was a delightful place for a man who wanted to take life easily. We opened at 1.30 and closed at 5.30, and on Saturday opened from 11 to 3, but on looking into things I realized that these peaceful days would before long have a rude shock. Our lease—for which we paid the enormous rent of £14 a year—had only thirteen years to run, and no preparation had been made for what was to happen when we should be called upon to pay a rent of at least £500 a year and spend large sums on reparations, if not on rebuilding, for the house was built in 1768. With a Fellowship of about 800 our subscriptions just barely made ends meet, and a new chimney-pot made



a deficit in our annual accounts. When I mentioned this no one was startled, and I think one revered Fellow said to me, "Well, when the time comes, we must just double the subscription." But I did not see how doubling the subscription, if we lost one-half of our Fellows, would help us much, and thought a better way was to follow the plan of the unprovided widow, who takes a larger house and lives on the lodgers. I found the larger house (which had been derelict for fifteen years) in Hanover Square and prepared a scheme for financing the purchase and alterations, and bethought me to get financial and spiritual support from Sir Andrew Clark. I briefly sketched my plan in a letter, and he asked me to come and talk it over. To my surprise, and somewhat to my consternation, I found he was a keen business man, and asked pertinent questions, which in setting out my somewhat dreamy scheme I had not troubled to ask myself, and it was a great relief when he said he considered the matter so important that he must have another talk before he could commit himself, and asked me when I could come. Knowing his reputation for early habits, I suggested seven the following morning. He seemed startled, and said, "Suppose we say eight?" and I promised to return at eight the next morning, but did not say that I should have to sit up all night working out the problems he had set me. But thanks to my wife, who kept me awake with strong coffee, I was on his doorstep at eight sharp, and was relieved to find that he was not down! He discussed my plan for over an hour, went into every detail, and headed my debenture list with a cheque for £10,000. At the Inaugural Dinner he boasted of the Scottish energy that prompted the appointment for 7 a.m., and I had not the heart to tell him that I had to sit up all night to keep it! And so, after a somewhat exciting year, the funds were secured for buying and altering No. 20, Hanover Square, and I was exonerated and forgiven afterwards, as our lodgers brought us in a rental of over £2,600 per annum; but we had to work for it, and indirectly it all made for the amalgamation scheme, for we were able to offer to other Medical Societies a commodious home ready for their use, and in the meantime we did our best to make No. 20 widely known, and got people accustomed to regard it as a home of Societies.

The house-warming at Hanover Square took the form of a banquet in our own meeting room with an improvised kitchen in the Library, and I remember the next day when one of the Hon. Secretaries after congratulating me, said "But I am sorry for you, MacAlister, for now this is done you will have to settle down to routine, and I know you will hate it." He was quite right; I hate routine, unless it is sufficiently elastic to allow for growth, but routine is just what we make it, and I hope and have faith that each generation of Fellows, whilst sticking to routine as far as it is helpful to good order, will never allow it to stand in the way of progress, and although to-day I like to believe that the Society is recognized as one of the finest and most vigorous bodies of its kind in the world, fully equipped to carry on its great work with distinction and efficiency, yet I believe that it is only beginning much greater developments, and I think that anyone who will study its history will recognize that it is



only the timid who have been wrong, and that if we are to accomplish big things we must not be afraid to risk big things.

Perhaps here I might confess one of the first of my many official sins. Upon my appointment I was handed very solemnly an ancient volume labelled "Acts and Precedents." I took it to bed with me and read it carefully, and it filled me with horror. The book was carefully written throughout, recording what had been done in all sorts of cases, even the most trivial. Even copies of official letters, from the "Sir" to the "Your obedient humble servant" were all faithfully copied out, and I was told that in all cases the book was to be carefully searched for the guidance of the responsible officers. That book somehow disappeared.

I dreamed our new building, and thanks to Lane have lived to see the dream realized, but I am dreaming again, and I hope many here present will see my new dream realized. I want another amalgamation—not such an amalgamation as we have already achieved, but an amalgamation, or rather combination of buildings. As we are now, our leading men are divided between three buildings—miles apart—those of the two Colleges and of the Society, and much valuable time is wasted between them, and meetings clash. I will tell you my new dream—and yet not so very new, for I dared to suggest it before our new building was put up. The two Colleges and our Society possess three of the most valuable sites in London, and in my dream I have seen them united under one roof, under one great central dome with three radiations. In one the Royal College of Physicians, in another the Royal College of Surgeons, and in the third the Royal Society of Medicine, which is the organic link between the two. One domestic service could serve all three, one clerical department could serve all three, while the combined Libraries would provide the finest medical reference library and the finest medical circulating library in the world. It would be a simple matter to organize a joint service, while each of the three bodies could be quite independent and apart in their proper activities, while central halls, meeting rooms and offices would provide an enormous economy of time and money for the Fellows of each who are now doing the work at three different places.

In another dream I dreamt, as a contribution to the Birthday Book for my greatly loved and lost friend Osler, a sketch of what a great medical library might be, and only on Monday received from Professor Keen, of Philadelphia, a letter telling me that there they had begun to realize and carry out the details of my dream. I want to see your Library the greatest medical library in the world, as it ought to be. I want to see it provided with a double staff, so that it can be kept open at least till midnight, and, if I may dare to say so, on Sunday also. I want to see an expert paid staff of searchers, who will be at the disposal of Fellows all over the world, to send them translations and abstracts on any subject upon which they are working. I want to see your *Proceedings* become the greatest medical journal in the world, containing not only the papers read at meetings, but current criticisms, notes and suggestions contributed by the brightest minds in the profession, with a monthly résumé of all the best medical work done throughout the world.



I should be ungrateful if I did not refer to the many kind things that have been said about the honour the King has bestowed upon me, and yet like everything else in this life, it has not been an unalloyed pleasure, and one incident has caused me much worry. I had not been well, and was resting under the strictest medical discipline, when His Majesty thoughtlessly chose that time to work his will. I believe he was in a hurry to get away to Scotland! My physician, not being in the King's confidence, had given strict orders that until he gave the word I was not to be troubled with letters or telegrams, and in my retreat I only received a few congratulatory messages from those who happened to know where I was. Later on when the embargo was raised, a large parcel of letters and telegrams, with my reserve pyjamas, was sent to me by rail, and owing to a mistake in the address, was never delivered, and it was only when I returned to my office that I was told what the parcel had contained. The unpleasant result is that every now and then I meet a reproachful gaze, and sometimes am reproached in words—"I wrote you such a nice letter, and you never took the slightest notice." It is possible that some of these kind friends are present, and if so, I am glad to have this opportunity of assuring them that it was through no carelessness or ingratitude that I did not respond at once to their kind greetings, but simply because I never got them!

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APPENDIX.

Letter from Sir Henry Morris, Past President of the  
Royal Society of Medicine.\*

8, CAVENDISH SQUARE,  
LONDON, W. 1.

*Friday evening, March 19, 1920.*

DEAR SIR JOHN,—

Last night you said very impressively, both in your speech and afterwards, that you hoped I did not mind what you said about my work as President of the Royal Society of Medicine, and I fear I may not have answered you as graciously as I might have done.

I am therefore writing to tell you that I greatly appreciated the very kind references you were good enough to make to me.

And I am now going to reveal to you a great deal more of my subsequent thoughts, and what I wish I had told to the great gathering at the Connaught Rooms last evening. But first let me confess that the prospect of having to make a speech always fills me with anxiety, and I felt a thrill of relief therefore, when on my way to Great Queen Street, that I was not being called upon to speak. But later, in thinking over what I might and would have spoken, I reproached myself for having had this feeling on this occasion. I also reflected on the fact that of the four Past Presidents of the Society who were

\* A letter written, without any thought or anticipation of its being published, on the day after the great Festival Dinner.—H. M.



present I was the only one not given the opportunity of joining in the pæans of praise which were rightly bestowed upon you.

I could have spoken of your services, scarcely touched upon by the other speakers (1) during the "transition" period of the Society, when its temporary home with all its inconveniences was in this Square, and (2) during the first year of settling down in the big new house.

But I do not think I could have restricted myself to any one particular epoch in your career at the Society. I feel sure I should have transgressed, by commenting in a discursive way on events extending over a greater length of time.

I should have said that almost from the cradle your intelligence must have concentrated upon the great and manifold significance of the "principle of association"; that for years you must have been developing the power of foreseeing the social, professional, and economic advantages of amalgamation, as well as the aptitude for bringing persons and groups of persons together for a common purpose while at the same time convincing them that they would retain their separate rights and privileges; and that finally you attained the faculty for fusing small parties into one organized whole so as to construct it somewhat like a cathedral organ, which comprises several departments—each in most respects being a separate instrument with its own mechanism—great organ, choir organ, swell organ, pedal organ, and sometimes solo organ. In the case of the Royal Society of Medicine you did even more than this, for you provided for the formation in the time to come of new and additional sections or departments and their incorporation in a central organization.

We know you had many obstacles to overcome, many difficulties to surmount, vested interests to arrange, inequalities to smooth down and co-ordinate. But you had also the instinct and imagination which enabled you to foresee many of them, and you possess the essential qualification for coping with them—namely: unruffled patience, untiring perseverance, energy, tact, knowledge of human nature and business methods, a keen sense of the tendencies in social progress, tolerance of opposition, and a suave and agreeable manner for meeting and melting opponents.

In addition, your knowledge of events and institutions in other countries as well as your own must, I think, have often encouraged and stimulated you in the pursuit of your object. You saw in the political constitution of the United States, of Switzerland, and of the upstart German Empire, just the sort of combination of a number of weak, independent, confederate states into a strong, powerful, federal Union such as you sought to bring about by the union of a number of small, insignificant medical societies into a strong, influential, organized and representative corporate body. The British Empire also furnished you with another example of the efficacy and authority which result from combining into an Imperial single power for general purposes several self-governing, independent communities. At home you were familiar with many institutions whose high social status and great public influence, or whose power, wealth, and security were acquired and increased by the processes of amalgamation—to wit: the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, and numerous commercial, industrial, and insurance companies.



I instance especially insurance companies because your knowledge of medical biographies has very likely made you acquainted with the name of Nicholas Barbon, a doctor of medicine and an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London in the middle of the seventeenth century. He took an active part in rebuilding London after the Great Fire of 1666, and is credited with having been the initiator of insurance against fire. He is also described as being the son of "Praise God" Barbon, a member of the Leather Sellers' Company, who was summoned by Cromwell to sit for London in what was called, in derision, after him (Barbon's or) Barebone's Parliament. Now what you have done for the profession of Medicine Nicholas Barbon did for insurance business. It was indirectly through his influence that the first fire insurance companies were established in the first years of the eighteenth century, and thus, what had previously been a matter of more or less gambling in the hands of individuals or small coteries, developed into large, rich, safe, and well-managed insurance associations. There is, however, this difference: you have had the satisfaction of seeing the fulfilment of your project, whilst Nicholas Barbon died some years before his was fully matured.

In other directions also you have worked for the benefits that accrue from putting into practice the "principle of association." I feel sure that yours has been largely the spirit which has brought into existence the Federation of the Medical and Allied Societies. My hope is that some day the members of the British House of Commons will be elected by vocational, not territorial, constituencies, so that the interests of every section of the community may be directly represented; and, instead of political parties formed outside the House to catch voters and divide the public, I should like to be able to think there will be only *ad rem* parties formed within the House, as occasion requires, and solely in the interests of the community at large. This will not occur, however, in my time. But whether it occurs at all or not, I do not doubt that the Federation of the Medical and Allied Societies, if it possesses stability, will tend immensely to benefit both the public and the profession.

Again, it is due largely to your ability in fusing the many into the one, that the Fellowship of Medicine and the Post-Graduate Medical Association have become amalgamated.

Now, before I conclude this long account of what I should have said about you at the dinner had I had the chance, let me add this. I sat at table between Mr. Wellecome and Lady Barrett. I talked with the former about his interest in Egyptology and his investigations at Meroe; and with the latter I discussed the relation of the religion of Isis to Christianity, and the death and resurrection of Osiris as being the prototype of the crucifixion and rising again of Christ.

And thus, through our conversation, there came back to my mind the recollection of a saying of the great French Egyptologist, and which, I think, is very applicable to you. Champollion, the keeper of the Egyptian antiquities in the Louvre in the middle of last century, by combining his profound knowledge of the Coptic language and his scientific explorations on the banks of the



Nile, discovered the meaning of the ancient Egyptian inscriptions and compiled a grammar and a dictionary of hieroglyphs. By these means he laid wide open the door to a knowledge of the early history of Egyptian civilization, of the religious history of the Egyptians, of the skill in diplomatic correspondence of the Pharaohs of different dynasties, of documents upon public and civil law, of land tenure and the rights of property from archaic times, of treatises on medicine and mathematics, of popular legends, and of many other subjects. And when he had ended his labours he remarked that he was leaving his grammar, his Egyptian dictionary, and the notes written during his travels "as his visiting card to posterity." In like manner you may feel that you will some day, and may it be a long while off, leave the Supplementary Charter, and the new name of the old Medico-Chirurgical Society, and the new and imposing house of the Royal Society of Medicine, as your "visiting card" to medical posterity in all its several branches.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

SIR JOHN Y. W. MACALISTER.

HENRY MORRIS.

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### The Testimonial.

Sir HUMPHRY ROLLESTON, K.C.B., M.D., President of the Society,  
in the Chair.

*Wednesday, July 7, 1920, at 4.30 p.m.*

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Sir HUMPHRY ROLLESTON: Ladies and Gentlemen,—Some men have got many points at which they touch humanity, and our friend, Sir John MacAlister, is a very human man, and, as a natural result, he has innumerable friends in all parts of the world. Some of them are here to-day to show their affection, for he has a genius for friendship. We are, indeed, a little ashamed that in attempting to show our appreciation of this side of his versatile personality we have been anticipated by the King and the State in the recognition of his services to medicine and humanity by a Knighthood, and by the Royal Society of Medicine in the Complimentary Dinner given to mark their sense of his devotion for thirty-three-odd years. It is hardly possible to think of the Royal Society of Medicine without at once picturing Sir John, but to his friends the converse does not hold good. It is true that the Society is seldom out of his thoughts, and that most of his medical friends are Fellows of this Society; indeed, I fancy he would regard it as an unfriendly act if they were not; but we are here to-day as his friends, and we represent



them from all the quarters of the globe. We know him as the most unselfish and devoted of men, not only great in sympathy but prompt—even impulsive—to help. Sir William Osler, also with an infinite capacity for friendship, described Sir John, who I fancy appreciates this as a compliment of the highest order, as “the man who pokes the fire,” meaning by this, at first sight cryptic saying: that when, in some dreary wayside inn, a number of men are sitting in sullen silence round a fire that won’t burn, Sir John’s prototype jumps up and conjures up a cheerful blaze. A schoolboy’s definition of a friend is said to be “one who knows all about you and still likes you.” Sir John is, as I said, a many-sided man, and it follows that his friends are very wise men, at any rate they are showing the result of their experience to-day. What Sir John is, I shall ask Sir Arbuthnot Lane to explain, for he, if any one, should know if his friend has any “kinks.”

Sir W. ARBUTHNOT LANE, Bt., M.S.: Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,—If I had your eloquence, sir, I could talk for the whole afternoon and evening about our friend Sir John MacAlister and his many good qualities, but, unfortunately, I am not gifted in that way. Everybody knows him, and to know him is to love him. (Hear, hear.) He has the most extraordinary capacity for helping people, and a self-control and a patience which is, to me, marvellous. A few minutes ago I left a lady whose husband held a very important position in India. She went to see Sir John, with her son, to ask him to help her. She said, “He was most patient. Everybody was interrupting him, somebody ringing the telephone, and somebody else coming in, but he listened to me attentively from beginning to end.” My experience is, he is the man who *does*, and never talks. I saw it recently stated in the newspapers that the Cabinet had done something, or “Our Government” had done something in reference to a great public function. “Our Government” is upstairs: it is he who does the thing in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. It is a great pleasure to us to be able to offer him this concrete evidence of our affection. And I would like to say its practical shape is largely due to our friend Mr. Percy Dunn; and to him it has been a labour of love. We all congratulate Sir John MacAlister most heartily, and would like to say how very much we appreciate him, and not only the members of this Society, for this testimonial has been subscribed by other outside friends who have asked permission to join us.

Sir HUMPHRY ROLLESTON: Will Mr. Percy Dunn read us some extracts from letters he has received?

Mr. PERCY DUNN: This sheaf of letters would take half a day to read, but I can summarize them by saying that, almost without exception, they represent a warm-hearted feeling towards Sir John MacAlister which shows how well this testimonial idea has been received among the Fellows of this Society. An interesting detail in respect to this fund is, the variety of districts in which it has been responded to. Here is a brief list of some of the localities from which subscriptions have come: Calcutta, Bombay,



Adelaide, New Zealand, Ottawa, Mombasa, United States, Buenos Aires, even from Pekin, 11,500 miles away, the Chinese cheque having occupied fifty-two days on its journey. I have many letters regretting inability to be present this afternoon, all expressing deep regret. One is from Sir Mayo Robson (formerly of Leeds), another from Mr. Rushton Parker (of Liverpool), each of whom describes himself as a "fellow townsman" of Sir John! (He lived in both these towns!) There are many others, whose names I will not take up your time in reading. It only remains for me to thank Sir Arbuthnot Lane for what he has said about my services in connexion with this fund: also to express our indebtedness to Miss Williamson, for her woman's way and active brain have helped us enormously.

Sir HUMPHRY ROLLESTON: Sir John, it gives me the greatest pleasure to hand you, on behalf of your numerous friends, a cheque for £711. (Applause.)

Sir JOHN MACALISTER: Sir Humphry Rolleston, Ladies, and other Friends,— You all know that I cannot make speeches, and Sir Arbuthnot Lane has just reminded you of it, but I shall compose a beautiful speech on my way home. This is the first time that I have ever received a tip, and I am sure you will make allowances for nervousness and incoherence in anything I say after such an exciting experience. I have never served the Society for money, for I have a feeling somehow that if it was for money I was working I might have done better elsewhere; but as a youth I chose medicine for my future career from sheer love of it, and I always like to think that it was the result of a suggestion of mine that led my elder brother to decide against the law and take to medicine. Unfortunately circumstances foiled my ambition, and when I got the opportunity of becoming Resident Librarian of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society—I believe my appointment was largely due to the strong support of my greatly loved and revered old friend, Sir Clifford Allbutt, then of Leeds, and then, like Sir Mayo Robson, a "fellow townsman"—I jumped at it, partly with a secret hope that in the learned leisure, which I was assured was the happy lot of the Resident Librarian, I might be able to pass my examinations and become qualified, and the contiguity of 53, Berners Street to the Middlesex Hospital encouraged the idea; but, alas! (or otherwise) I had no sooner got between the shafts that I found so much to do—or at any rate that I thought ought to be done—that I never had time even to go round the corner to the Middlesex, and so my name still remains on the Register as a mere medical student, and I am reluctantly being forced to the conclusion that I had better give up the idea of completing the curriculum! Well, I set myself to work according to my own ideas, to make things move, and if I dared I could tell many a tale suggestive of the old problem of contact with an immovable body; but as most of those concerned are dead I won't tell. To me the Society has always been a great entity, capable of vast expansion, and this devotion to a single idea has, I am afraid, sometimes been misunderstood by the individuals with whom I have had to come in contact. I hope no one will feel hurt, but to



me it was the Society and the future of the Society that mattered and not the individual, and I hope when my tale is told and I say *nunc dimittis* that survivors whom I have unwillingly, and perhaps unconsciously, offended will forgive and forget. But, while rejoicing chiefly that the *thing* has prospered, I would not have it thought that I am regardless of human relations, and while I confess that I should rejoice in its prosperity even if every individual connected with it had been alienated, it touches me more deeply than I can express to find so many testifying their kindly feelings towards me, and with the utmost sincerity I desire to thank you all, Mr. President, from the bottom of my heart. But there are others I have to thank (and you have to thank), for I could not have done even the little I have done if I had not been blessed by fortune with long-suffering and devoted helpers. Even in the beginning when my "staff" was limited to one—dear old Coldrey, who when over 70 was still called "the boy" by Jenner and Gull—there were three unpaid members of the staff, who, all unknown, helped me to do the Society's work: I refer to my wife and my two sons, Donald and Ian, who all gave me yeoman help in all sorts of ways, when the office was closed, helping forward my schemes. At one of the most critical moments, when Sir Andrew Clark had given me an unexpected appointment at 8 a.m. the next morning to go into the details of my scheme for buying 20, Hanover Square, and I had not even thought out the details but had only sketched them broadly to him in an airy way. As I found I had a business man to meet I had to sit up all night to get ready for the fateful interview. My wife sat up with me plying me with strong coffee, to make sure I should not fall asleep and that I should start punctually for my appointment. With her help I was able to knock at Sir Andrew's door at 8 sharp, and left after 9 with his cheque for £10,000 in my pocket. Later, in Hanover Square, Providence sent me Mr. Clarke, and the youngest of my staff, Miss Williamson. She might not like it if I were to say how many years she has been my loyal colleague, or how much I owe to her in every way. I have never known her look at the clock, and often at No. 20 she has worked with me till midnight, and it would be no exaggeration to say that probably all my plans would have proved futile but for her constant and zealous help. My old friend and colleague, Mr. Clarke, a model of patience, who has borne with my native ill temper all these years, and faithfully done his part in what we have considered good work. Mr. Powell, whom the Society has been fortunate in securing as their Librarian, was, so to speak, born in the Society's house, that is, born into librarianship; but if I begin to speak of all I have to thank I shall detain you too long, and in a word I will say that no man ever had a more faithful or self-denying staff. But to-day my special thanks are due to you, sir, and to my old friends Sir Arbuthnot Lane and Mr. Percy Dunn, for initiating and carrying out the movement which has brought this meeting together, and I shall never forget the kindness and affection of all concerned, which touches me more deeply than any words of mine can express.