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May 24, 1919

MEETING of the EDITORIAL COMMITTEE for the OFFICIAL MEDICAL
HISTORY of the WAR - Room 322, Adastral House, 29.5.19.

Chairman :- Major-General Sir W.C. Macpherson.

Members present :-

- Major-General Sir A. Bowlby,
- Lt.Colonel F.S. Brereton,
- Dr. J. Brownlee,
- Colonel T.R. Elliott,
- Colonel Sir T. Crisp English,
- Sir W.M. Fletcher,
- Major W.R. Galwey,
- Major-General Sir Wilmot Herringham,
- Colonel Sir W. Horrocks,
- X Sir William Galer, Bart.
- Major-General Guthbert Wallace.

Major-General Sir W. Leishman was unavoidably absent.

The Chairman opened the Meeting by referring to a letter sent by him to the Members of the Committee prior to his leaving for France in March last, asking the representatives of professional and scientific subjects to consult together with a view to arranging the subjects which should be dealt with under each of the headings of Surgery, Medicine, Pathology, Hygiene and Statistics, so as to prevent overlapping, and, when the subjects had been thus arranged to form a small Committee to select individual writers of special chapters on the subject which they represent. The object of this was to have as much as possible cut and dry in anticipation of financial sanction, and not with a view to asking writers to take up their subjects at the present stage.

This has been carried out, so far, in connexion with Medical subjects by a sub-committee composed of :-

- Sir Wilmot Herringham,
- Sir Walter Fletcher,
- Dr. Elliott, and
- Dr. A. Balfour.

Copies of their report have been circulated to members of the Editorial Committee.

Up to the present, financial authority had not been asked for from the Treasury, but it is understood today that a letter is going from the War Office to the Treasury on the lines suggested at the Conference in the Director-General's room on the 16th April last.

The Committee is asked now to consider the best way of dividing up the work of apportioning out material for the different subjects; to prepare lists of suitable writers, and to arrange for collaboration between the writers on the scientific subjects.

The Chairman said that it is for the consideration of the Committee whether the treatment of each subject should be of the nature of a textbook on the subject, or whether it should consist of an account of the extent to which each subject involved research and fresh knowledge, a bibliography of the work already published, and a statement of the manner in which the results of additional knowledge and research were applied in connexion with the control and treatment of the diseases and wounds of the Armies.

Sir Wilmot Herringham suggested that before going further, Lt. Colonel A. Balfour be co-opted to the sub-committee on Medicine, to advise on tropical diseases and Campaigns in the East. This was agreed to, and the Chairman pointed out that it was already understood that sub-committees could co-opt others whose assistance might be of value to them.

Sir Wilmot Herringham then referred to the writing of the different subjects, and asked whether the treatment should be in the nature of a historical account of the various diseases that were treated during the War, or of a textbook or useful guide for the purpose of future work. For instance, in the case of Trench Fever, the article on that disease would be of great length, and a great many details would be included which are unimportant for the general study of the subject; the result would be not only a very laborious work, but a very unreadable one. The same thing applies to any other subject. The other proposal was that the chapters on particular diseases should be a lesson and nothing else, and all details and history, so far as they are unimportant, should be left out. What we should have in mind is, that men coming fresh into another War should be able to refer to the problems which were before us. Therefore, the question as to the scope of these volumes ought to be considered and decided by this Committee.

In this connexion the Chairman read out a resolution passed at the Meeting of 6th March last, i.e. "That the various scientific subjects to be included in the history should be written up with a view to the production of a record which would be an analysis and summary of all essential investigations, events and experiences and their bearing upon practical problems."

Sir William Osler urged the necessity of placing each group of subjects in charge of a responsible Editor, and thereby saving an enormous amount of trouble and time in production of the volumes.

The Chairman stated that the question of suitable Editors of different subjects was practically settled, as he understood that the members representing particular subjects on the Committees were the Editors of those subjects.

After discussion it was definitely agreed that the following Editorial sub-committees should be formed with power to add to their numbers as may be necessary :-

Medicine :- Sir Wilmot Herringham
Sir William Osler
Colonel Elliott.

Surgery :- Sir Anthony Bowlby
Colonel Sir T. Crisp English
Major-General Cuthbert Wallace.

Pathology :- Major-General Sir Wm. Leishman
Colonel Curmins.

Hygiene :- Colonel Sir W. Horrocks
Colonel Beveridge.

Statistics :- Dr. Brownlee
Major W.R. Galwey.

The members of these sub-committees to act as Editors of the subjects with which they deal.

Sir Wilmet Herringham then dealt with the proceedings of the sub-committee representing Medicine, copies of which had been forwarded to all members.

The Meeting agreed to the subjects and writers proposed in this report, with the following comments :-

The Medical aspects of G.S.W. of the Central and Peripheral Nervous System, and of G.S.W. Chest should be written entirely in the volumes on Surgery.

The articles on gas poisoning, mines, tanks, etc. and the Aviation subjects should form a complete volume by themselves.

Colonel James was accepted as the writer on the clinical aspects of Malaria, and Sir Ronald Ross would be asked to contribute matters relating to prevention.

It was agreed that in the volumes on Diseases of the War, the subjects should be treated mainly on clinical lines with brief references to preventive and administrative measures, as these latter would be dealt with under other headings. This will enable some of the volumes to be produced by an early date, since the collection of administrative details can only proceed slowly when files and documents have been examined, whereas most of the clinical and research records are already available.

It was agreed to omit "Easiritis and Gingivitis" from the subjects connected with the Diseases of the War, the former being omitted altogether as a special subject, and the latter dealt with under Dental Surgery in the volumes on Surgery. Eye diseases will be dealt with as a general subject in chapters which would also include injuries to the eye.

Sir Anthony Bowlby suggested that the sub-committees on the different subjects should meet and prepare for discussion at the next meeting reports similar to that placed before the present Committee by the sub-committee on Medicine.

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that information must not be confined to material collected from one theatre of war only, but from all, and that the selection of writers should be carefully considered with a view to eliminating any personal bias in dealing with the subjects.

Handwritten notes:
Disease of War
Central and Peripheral Nervous System
Chest
Gas poisoning, mines, tanks, etc.
Aviation
Malaria
Ronald Ross
James
Easiritis and Gingivitis