

ART. XXIV.—*Sir John Hall*. By Major-General R. E. BARNESLEY, C.B., M.C.

Read at Carlisle, April 3rd, 1965.

SIR JOHN HALL (1795-1866) was born at Littlebeck,¹ King's Meaburn, in the parish of Morland, and educated at Appleby Grammar School. He became a hospital assistant on 24 June 1815 at the age of 20 and was soon in Belgium looking after the wounded from the battle of Waterloo.

A vast collection in the R.A.M.C. Historical Museum muniments room in the R.A.M. College, Millbank, London, of his early letters and reports testify to his efficiency as a regular officer, his meticulous attention to detail, and his deep interest in the care and welfare of the troops. He served in the West Indies from 1841 until 1843 and in South Africa during the Kaffir Wars from 1846 until 1851, when he was appointed Principal Medical Officer of the Bombay Presidency.

In a letter to his wife dated 13 March 1854, he writes: "I wonder what it (the English Mail) will bring, and whether it will be peace or war with Russia." Little did he know how soon he was to be involved! By 2 May he had received his orders to leave India. By this time, at the age of fifty-nine, after a long and distinguished career in the army, he must have been looking forward to years of retirement with his beloved wife (whom he always addressed as "My dearest love") and family. It is not surprising that he left India with a heavy heart, and in a farewell letter to his wife he wrote of

¹ Miss Sheila J. MacPherson of Westmorland Record Office, Kendal, tells me that he was christened at Crosby Ravensworth on 30 December 1795. He was one of the large family born to John Hall and Isabella (née Fothergill) his wife.

“the gloomy train of thought that has been engendered by taking leave of you and the dear children, poor girls! God only knows when I shall see you all again and these dear creatures will perhaps have entirely forgotten me. It is very painful to think of and I may say to you what I would not say to any other soul breathing, I go on this service with a heavy heart and without the least expectation of reward of any kind. God bless you and my dear children, love, kiss the girls for me and believe me to be your fond and affectionate husband.

John Hall.”

Peace was declared in the Crimea in 1856 but the war, on paper, has been going on ever since! Ever since Kinglake wrote his massive history in nine volumes in 1877 until a year or so ago, when Mrs Woodham Smith and others returned to the attack with the best sellers, *Florence Nightingale*, *The Reason Why* and *The Destruction of Lord Raglan*, the Crimean campaign has been the subject of fierce controversy. All authorities agree that this was probably the most unnecessary and the most tragically muddled and mismanaged war in our history, and the reason is not far to seek.

After the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815 the country had been at peace for nearly forty years; all the Crimean divisional commanders except the Duke of Cambridge were over sixty. The Commander-in-Chief, Lord Raglan, who had lost an arm at Waterloo, was sixty-eight and had spent his time on an office chair as Military Secretary. The outlook of the junior officers is well told in the memoirs of William Cattell, medical officer to the V Dragoon Guards, who recalls that many of the young cavalry officers looked upon a few years in the army as a pleasant way of idling away a few years before they inherited their estates and began to take life seriously. They appeared in flamboyant and uncomfortable uniforms on three parades a week and, for the rest, all discussion on military subjects was taboo in the mess. The domestic chores of the regiment, feeding, clothing, housing and medical care were left to what were officially

known as "Civil Departments", which were looked upon as an inferior grade. Did not Wellington declare that he wished he could hang a few of his commissaries?

One must be careful, however, not to follow the example of too many amateur historians of today who seem to take an unholy delight in concentrating on everything that was bad and inefficient to the exclusion of much that was good. There is certainly another side to the picture; for example, when the regiment panicked during the cholera epidemic, General Scarlett, commanding the Heavy Brigade, insisted on remaining behind in the cholera camp with the medical officer. These officers shared to the full the hardships and dangers of the rank and file, many shewing great gallantry and powers of leadership.

The medical organization consisted largely of regimental hospitals. The medical officer, though he wore the regimental uniform, had no rank and his staff was made up of soldiers from the unit, with only such training as he was able to give them.

Cattell tells us that when his commanding officer saw his medical equipment being unloaded at Varna he stigmatized it as a "useless encumbrance in war" and relegated it into the stores at the base. When the regiment moved North a few weeks later and men were dying in leaking bell-tents during a devastating epidemic of cholera, the medical officer was reduced to treating them with brandy from the officers' mess which he mixed with cayenne pepper! It is, perhaps, fair to say that the doctors might well be compared with the trainers and first-aid men we see on the touch-line at Twickenham and Wembley today, men who have no part to play in the game, whose sole function is to render first aid and to clear the field of casualties. For hundreds of years few of our generals have realized that in every campaign disease has been very much more destructive than the most devastating engines of war ever conceived by the mind of man.

In the early pages of his diary, Hall shews the meticulous attention to detail which characterizes all his writings. After re-embarking at Alexandria he wrote on 11 June, under the heading "Points to be attended to on the overland journey", "If ladies are of the party, send down and have their names painted on the door of deck-cabins. Gentlemen should put their carpet-bags on one of the seats in the cabin to secure it . . . It is necessary to take a wicker chair on board the steamer to sit on deck" — and so on, with details as to how much to pay the donkey-boys and porters.

All these trivialities were soon forgotten when he landed at Varna on 27 June 1854, having no inkling as to the plan of campaign or the resources at his disposal, and the farmer's son and ex-grammar school boy was confronted by the "top brass" of the expedition, the Duke of Cambridge, Lords Raglan, Cardigan, Lucan, Sir George Brown, and others.

It was an unhappy introduction. The hospital accommodation allotted was a square of an old Turkish barrack, "literally alive with fleas and quite uninhabitable". He regrets the "lukewarmness of the authorities" and reports the "Establishment in great confusion". This was largely owing to the fact that a flood of cholera cases was pouring in from Devna some ten miles to the North. Hall had visited this place, a well-known plague spot, and had reported adversely, but Sir George Brown insisted on remaining there with the Light Division on account of the beauty of scenery and opined that the duty of medical officers was limited to the treatment of the sick and wounded.

Much of the Crimean tragedy might have been avoided had the advice of Sir John Hall been taken. On the 4 July, a week after his arrival, he wrote: "It is very unwise of the Allied Commanders to put off their operations until the sickly season arrives, when half their force would soon be crippled by disease . . . what would

be the use of going to the Danube to get fever . . . far better to transport the army by sea to Odessa if they really want to get near the enemy." But, as usual, his advice was ignored.

The ghastly toll of death and suffering runs as a tragic motif through the pages of the diaries until 31 August, he wrote: "Lord Raglan talks of embarking the army soon but whether he will be able to do so with this terrible scourge raging I very much doubt."

In spite of all, Raglan decided to make a landing and a convoy of some 450 craft brought 3 armies off the coast of the Crimea on 9 September. Even then his P.M.O. was not informed of the destination. Morale was low and Hall records how many senior officers had voiced their doubts about the propriety of the undertaking. He gives them short shrift, "officers who dislike hazardous service and have not the prudence to keep it to themselves had better give up their commissions to men who have more nerve".

There were no hospital ships to receive casualties, and on 15 September he estimated that there were probably five or six hundred British sick still on the transports.

The hopeless confusion of the landings was only a foretaste of events to come in the later campaign. We read of Hall, with little or no executive authority, going from ship to ship trying to induce the staff to take the casualties down to Scutari, of his disappointment on finding the few ambulance wagons which had been provided were left standing on the beach with no horses, harness or drivers (they were later sent back to Malta by one of the beach staff!).

The winter of 1854-1855 was indeed the winter of his discontent. He made repeated appeals to Raglan and his staff only to be met with rebuffs. Conditions in the forward areas were truly appalling. He writes on 15 November that he found misery and discomfort everywhere, the men fearfully overworked, ill fed and reduced to

eating their rations of pork raw in the trenches. Extracts from the diaries give a clear picture of the difficulties he had to face:

Nov. "16: Visited Balaclava, state of sick wretched in extreme."

"17: Visited the village of Karani where there are some sheds well calculated for the reception of sick. One or two are occupied by commissariat mules and their drivers."

"18: Spoke to Lord Raglan about hutting the sick."

"19: Wrote officially to the Q.M.G. about better accommodation for the sick — and well — during the winter . . . Received through Q.M.G. a remonstrance from the Commissariat about turning out their mules and drivers at Karani to make room for sick soldiers, which they think a monstrous hardship, but I do not . . ."

"24: Heavy rain all night much sickness in camp, Lord Raglan startled at there being 2,160 sick in camp. Directed the Adj. Gen. to ask me if means were taken to get them down to Balaclava as ordered. I answered yes so far as our limited means of transport would permit and that the commissariat could not assist us, pointed out some of the causes of sickness at which he was displeased."

"26: About a quarter of the army is sick already, applications from officers to get away numerous. Everyone anxious virtually to depart."

"27: Had an interview with Lord Raglan this morning . . . Nothing has been done about hutting the sick and Osman Pasha came in at the time. I spoke to Lord Raglan about getting Turks to assist and the Pasha said we might have as many as we wished to do it. So much for doing one's own business! the Q.M.G. had not moved in it at all and never would I verily believe."

"29: A Mr Stafford has been into the hospital at Scutari to see what the sick want — troublesome fellow this and not too particular about the truth. Nothing done about the huts at Karani for the sick. Sick list increasing rapidly. Cholera raging amongst the newly arrived troops."

At midnight on 1 December the Adjutant-General came to Hall's tent with an angry letter from Raglan, saying that an officer had reported the case of an unfortunate man found lying on the deck of the *Avon* who had lost both legs and was covered only by a blanket. He directed his A.G. and P.M.O. to go and investigate

the matter and, if necessary, to bring the culprit to court-martial. When they arrived they found he was receiving proper attention but was hopelessly ill with hospital gangrene. This ship, which contained 22 wounded and 275 sick, was in poor condition. There were three medical officers on board, whereas Colonel Davis, who made the report, had asserted that there was only one. The diary continues: "His Lordship is still angry about the newspaper reports and says he must have the matter investigated by a Court of Enquiry! 'Straining at gnats' when men are dying at the rate of 100 a day in camp from exposure, want of clothing, fuel and food."

At the end of 1854 the entries show that the strain must have almost reached breaking point:

"Captain Chapman of the Engineers came over about the huts for the sick and I went with him to Lt-Col. Gordon, the Q.M.G. about them. Timber is required to cover the huts and I asked if two ship-loads had not arrived at Balaclava. He said 'Yes', but Lord Raglan desired that cavalry horses and those of the artillery are to be put under cover first. When I applied for the sheds at Karani it was the commissariat donkeys that were to have preference over sick soldiers and now it is the horses, asses then horses! and the men, 'Ha Ha'! The world has come to a fine pass. No provision has been made for sheltering any portion of the army. They are overworked, badly fed and have no fuel to cook their food with. They have no camp kettles only one blanket, many of them no shoes and they are dying by hundreds of exhaustion. Yet his Lordship pounces on a solitary instance where he thinks the medical department is concerned to chime in with the newspaper cry that has been raised against it and so add weight to what would otherwise be empty as air. Be it so — but he cannot expect me to keep silent when the men are 12 hours in and only 12 hours out of the trenches, are half fed and nearly naked and have only scant protection against the weather from their canvas tents." Jan. 3 "No rain for a wonder. Very busy writing all day. At night received an order to go down to Balaclava and see some rice and bedpans put on the *Avon*. His Lordship's memorandum was a long and angry one. He dwelt on the small number of orderly men on board, forgetting that it was his own order through the Adj. Genl. that only four per 100 should be allowed

to embark with the sick and that the subject has been a matter of contention between the medical officers at Balaclava and the Commandant, the latter sheltering himself under the order he has received."

"4: This day Lord Raglan issued a severe general order censoring Dr Lawson about the *Avon* and blaming me for not having the ship properly found. I put the inspection report into his own hand and the provision in it was ample for everything. His Lordship seems to have forgotten that the scant number of attendants was in strict conformity with his own orders when he was framing his political order, for it is quite evident he is preparing for enquiry and his intention is to throw as much discredit on the medical department as he can and so make that the scapegoat of all other mis-managements, both military and commissariat and so it will be I dare say as the weakest always goes to the wall and we have no friends to protect us. Alas my poor wife and helpless children. Would I had never come here, to be fettered as I have been by helpless people in every department under me is enough to drive one mad — and now the whole blame will fall on me. To a man at 60 it matters little what happens to him personally for his days in the common course of nature are necessarily numbered, but to those dependent on him it is melancholy. I see now that an effort will be made to sacrifice me for political purposes and I have unfortunately not taken sufficient precaution to put many things in writing that would have protected me from injury."

"17: Another angry letter about the *Trent* which went down on the 25 November and which was inspected by Dr Lawson. What he intends to do in this case I know not, but this anger may have been excited by a letter from Lord Wm. Paulet whom he sent down to Scutari as commandant . . ."

"27: A Mr Bracebridge who has come out with Miss Nightingale writes irritating letters that keep his Lordship's temper at boiling point."

The diary continues: "My riding horse is lame, my best arab broke his leg in the storm of 14 November and I had to shoot him. The horses and servants left at Varna never came up, my present establishment is insufficient and I have no means of increasing it, in fact my position is one of utter misery, better dead than to exist like this. How the poor soldiers bear up against it is a wonder to me, this is only the commencement of the winter and what will it be in another month when the intense cold sets in . . . Today, when in Balaclava, I received at half past one a note from the A. Genl. to provide for the

reception of 600 sick to be taken down in the morning by the French ambulance. The ships were not even appointed, how is it possible to make them comfortable . . . Received a note to explain a paragraph in the *Times* about a want of lint in the hospital at Scutari. When it appeared there were 3,750 lbs. in store."

"22: Wet morning. Went to A. General to have the departure of the sick put off. He promised and wrote a note . . . but sent them afterwards it rained all day in a furious manner and I dread to ask the result of this cruel experiment."

He notes that "It is possible that his Lordship wants to get rid of me and make room for his protégé Barry." This was the extraordinary creature James Barry, then stationed at Corfu, who, after a turbulent career as an army surgeon, rose to the rank of Inspector of Hospitals and after death was found to have been a woman.

Things had settled down in the closing months of 1855 and early part of 1856. His inspection reports are generally satisfactory, his relations with allied hospitals cordial, and he finds time to organize meetings of medical societies on professional subjects, though there was still some friction with the naval authorities; Raglan was no longer there to harry him, but the back-door methods of Miss Nightingale continued to be something of a trial. He finally arrived home on 23 July 1856 and was put on half pay on 1 January 1857 after 39 years' service in the army.

It would be wearisome to continue the long story of the commissions, enquiries and bitter wrangles which followed this disastrous campaign when each department sought to throw the blame on someone else and, as Hall had prophesied, efforts were made to make him the general scapegoat. Suffice it to say that ultimately he emerged from it all as a Knight Commander of the Bath, with a Legion of Honour and a special reward for distinguished and meritorious service. He was also an M.D. at St Andrews University and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Honoured by his queen, his army chiefs, his government and by ancient universities he was surely justified in supposing that his vindication was complete, but it was not to be.

Today, if he is remembered at all, he is represented as an irascible, obstructive, sadistic old man stamping around in the filth and squalor of the Scutari hospitals doing his best to thwart the noble efforts of Miss Nightingale to set things right. As recently as 1959 a book for children appeared, the latter part of which is a long diatribe against Hall. "Dr Hall was a very unpleasant man", the young doctors were more generous than their "cross-grained chief", "The soldiers hated him" . . .

In an article on "The Amateur Historian" Professor Greenleaf of Hull University has dealt very firmly with many references to Hall in Mrs Woodham Smith's *Florence Nightingale*. In that book he is said to have been associated with an unsavory case in which a soldier stationed at Hounslow Barracks had died under the lash. In point of fact Hall had never heard of the case until, as inspecting officer, he was called upon to enquire into the causes of death which were found to be unconnected with the flogging. Again he is reported to being averse to pampering the soldier as he "did not believe in chloroform". This is based on the fact that he issued a directive on the subject to his medical officers in which he wrote that it was better to hear a man "howl lustily than see him sink silently into the grave". It must be remembered that Hall spent most of his time among the front-line troops and he must have seen many camp hospitals in ruined buildings with some 20 or 30 cases awaiting operation. Rapid amputation was the common operation, a limb might be taken off in under five minutes. Chloroform anaesthesia had only been introduced some seven years before, and if the doctors, many of whom can never even have seen chloroform given, were to be encouraged to try their 'prentice hands on

this new discovery without anaesthetists or skilled assistance of any kind the results might well have been disastrous.

At another point Cardigan is said to have told the Roebuck Committee that he had been struck by the "absolute terror" with which the doctors regarded Hall. The professor could find no such statement in Cardigan's evidence. Many other instances are quoted, but perhaps this is enough to shew the extent to which his reputation has been attacked during the last hundred years. Hall himself did not take all this lying down. After the war he published devastating "rejoinders" copies of which were sent to all members of Parliament and all the London clubs, but they seem to have been of little avail. It must be remembered that the case against the medical services has mainly been built up from extraneous sources. There was Howard Russell of the *Times*, there was Mr Stafford, M.P., a peripatetic politician ("not too particular about the truth"), reporting to Parliament, to say nothing of various sanitary commissions writing home without reference to the principal medical officer. Finally there was Miss Nightingale. It would indeed be churlish as well as futile to write anything which might belittle her truly magnificent work for the army and for humanity, but it must be remembered that the "usual channels" of army parlance meant nothing to the nurses brought out by Mr and Mrs Bracebridge. Miss Nightingale's previous assignment had been at an "Establishment for Gentlewomen during illness" in Harley Street. It speaks volumes for them that initially they got down to scrubbing and washing and conscientiously tried to fit in the army framework, but it did not last very long. Soon letters by-passing the P.M.O. went direct to Raglan and later to London.

Any member of the medical services who has served in war must know something of the chaos and confusion

which inevitably occurs when large numbers of wounded unexpectedly pour in to some medical post without sufficient staff and equipment. None, however, can have seen anything like the conditions existing in the Scutari hospital after the battle of Inkerman (5 November 1854) when a flood of sick and wounded swept into the wards mostly in rags, half-starved, crawling with lice, riddled with disease and with their rough dressings still clotted with blood from the battlefield, this happened shortly after Miss Nightingale's arrival, and this is the scene usually depicted in books, pictures, films and on radio and television.

One cannot help wondering what conditions were like in more normal times. Some light on the subject is shewn in two letters from young medical officers. One of these is from J. H. Taylor, M.O. to the Royal Horse Artillery, who went to Constantinople on convalescent leave from the camp before Sebastopol, dated 2 January 1855, it reads:

"I went to Scutari to see the grand hospital there, and was greatly pleased with the comfort of the men and the arrangements, and astonished at the extent and excellence of the accommodation afforded. The men are placed in long galleries with wards off them, and all are clean and well ventilated. It was the grand barracks for the Sultan's troops; along the walls are fixed large, well-made racks for arms. As a barracks its arrangements are very good and deserve credit. It is the only good thing I have seen in Turkey. As a hospital it is as nearly perfect as can be imagined, when its extent and hasty adoption for this purpose is considered. However, unfortunately at present fever of a bad type has made its appearance and has carried off many men.

"I did not see Miss Nightingale herself, but I met several others of the 'Sympathisers' as we call them. They all dress in plain black woollen dresses with unbleached linen aprons and a scarf across the shoulder from right to left, embroidered in red thread with the words 'Scutari Hospital' — it gives them quite a martial, uniform appearance. They go about slipshod, and very meek-looking, but evidently proud of their office. The Medical Officers say they are very kind and do a great deal of good, but are very much in the way."

The other is even more striking: it is from young David Greig who had been a student under Sir James Simpson, the pioneer of chloroform anaesthesia and who helped to introduce it into the base hospitals. He sailed from England on the *Vectis*, which also carried the Nightingale party. He wrote:

“In the *Courier* of the 11th, which I have just received, I am sorry to see a letter extracted from the *Times* headed ‘Neglect of the wounded in the Crimea on the 18th June’. I am sorry to see such a letter, as I can tell you it is a lie from beginning to end, and calculated not only to alarm the good folks at home, but to hurt the service itself — of course Mr Stafford must bring it before Parliament and make a world’s wonder of it — the service is much obliged to him for his tales about the Scutari Hospital, I lived longer in that hospital than Mr Stafford and I must say, I never saw what he describes. That man must either be mad or a consummate fool and ought to be drummed out of the regiment. He says he could not get drinking cups, food, water, splints, etc. — Why? because he was an ass and did not know where to get them, which he should have done. I have never yet applied for anything in vain which would be of use to my patients, even to calf’s-foot jelly, lemon jelly — soups, turtle soup or even champagne.”

It is emphasized that these were not hardened regular officers reporting with an eye to promotion, but young newly-qualified doctors with no axe to grind writing home to their friends. Hall has been repeatedly accused of sending home unduly optimistic reports on the conditions at Scutari; perhaps this is not surprising if these are typical examples of the information he received. It must be remembered that as principal medical officer his place was forward with the fighting-troops, that is where he was, grappling against much opposition, with the appalling problems which faced him every day. It would, indeed, have been surprising if he had spent his time at the base in Constantinople some 300 miles away. In 1945 few would have expected Sir Percy Tomlinson, Lord Montgomery’s Director of Medical Services, to have busied himself with domestic problems at our hospitals

at Netley or London in the critical days of the invasion of Europe!

Hall's medal bears the clasps "Alma", "Inkerman", "Balaclava" and "Sebastopol", and it is not surprising that his visits to Scutari took second place. It is probably true to say that all the turmoil and confusion in the medical services was due to a most unhappy clash of personalities. Raglan, unlike our great commanders, never seems to have realized the important and decisive part played by the medical and hygiene services in the attainment of victory in war. Wellington referred to Sir James McGrigor, his principal medical officer, as "one of the most industrious, able and successful public servants I have ever met with". Napoleon left 100,000 francs to his chief surgeon, "The most virtuous man I have ever known". The kings of France worked hand in glove with the great French surgeon Ambroise Paré while, to come to modern times, Field Marshal Montgomery from Berlin in 1945 sent a message to the R.A.M.C.: "In gratitude and high regard to a Corps whose contribution to victory has been beyond all calculation." Perhaps the best commentary on the attitude of Raglan and his staff to the head of his medical services is contained in an entry in Hall's diary of 3 January 1855: "Very busy writing all day. At night received an order to go down to Balaclava to see some rice and bedpans put on the *Avon*"!

Florence Nightingale, on the other hand, with no military background, was wholly absorbed with the welfare of the sick and wounded; not for her the niceties of official correspondence, red tape existed only to be ruthlessly cut. Lord Panmure, the Secretary for War, became "the bison", Mrs Bridgeman the matron at Balaclava and one of several of her female *bêtes noires* was "old Mother Brickbat", while Hall himself was dubbed "Knight of the Crimean Burial Grounds".

Sir John Hall, the third of the trio, was a complete

contrast. Like many officers today, he must have been sorely tried by the multiplicity of army forms and tangle of red tape involved in army routine, but his reports shew that during his long service he had worked harmoniously with the directing staff, always meticulously following the "proper channels". Even in the intimate pages of his private diary his chief is never anything else but "His Lordship", and in the sea of troubles in which he was involved we never find him disloyally consorting with journalists and politicians, all his approaches were made through the Adjutant-General or Quartermaster-General or to Raglan himself.

There are remarkably few references to Miss Nightingale in the diaries. In the first we find him resenting her interference with hospital administration:

"Visited the General Hospital and found it dirty and irregular from Mr Jackson making innovations, directed them to be discontinued and the former system reverted to. The hospital has been much admired by foreigners for its neatness, cleanliness and regularity and it is provoking to have the labour of months lost by the stupidity of a man like this to please Miss Nightingale, but he is mistaken if he thinks his imbecility will be allowed to prevail."

The second refers to a period at the end of the war when she was packing up the vast amount of stores which she had received from kindly folk at home through the *Times* fund. Mitra, Hall's biographer, tells how M. Baudens, the French Chief Inspector of Hospitals, visited Hall to enquire how it was that he had been offered no less than 6,000 litres of port wine. When Hall learns that these stores are not to be disposed of for medical purposes but to be distributed among military units his indignation knows no bounds:

"Miss Nightingale packing up her goods and free gifts which amount to more than 100 cases which she does not know what to do with. Like those at Balaclava which she sent to the Russian hospitals uninvited! Those at Scutari are to be distributed to the commandments of the military stations in the

Mediterranean and not to the Medical Department, can nonsense go beyond this! either these (?) boasted stores were wanted or they were not, and, like the wine and arrowroot thrust on the French Intendant after it had been refused, were simply a matter of absurdity on the part of the kind-hearted well-intentioned contributors and a piece of silly ambitious vanity on her part to have the reputation of being the guardian angel of the sick and wounded, but if she and her supporters could hear the commentary of our neighbours it would cool if not cure her officious intermeddling with other people's affairs."

As far back as January 1855 he had realized that he was likely to become "the scapegoat of all other mis-managements both military and commissariat", and it would have been easy to have covered himself by submitting a series of Utopian schemes which he well knew were not capable of fulfilment but which he could quote in his defence in any subsequent enquiries. This he scorned to do. In his "Rejoinder" to his critics he wrote:

"The system of what is called 'putting on record' recommendations and demands that you know those in authority have no means of carrying out only creates embarrassment without serving any useful purpose and ought to be discountenanced and despised by all upright men."

An "upright man" is, indeed, an apt description of this sturdy, forthright, north countryman who had faithfully served his country and British soldiers for nearly forty years only to find himself at the end entangled in a web of vilification and intrigue. A man who, while still serving loyally did his utmost to improve the lot of the soldier and who, after retirement, spent his time in a spirited defence of the medical services who had shewn so much devotion and gallantry under his command.

On arrival home at the end of the war his health broke down as a result of the almost intolerable strain to which he had been subjected. In 1859, while living at Dawlish in Devonshire, he suffered from a slight stroke which put

an end to his hopes that he might write the medical history of the war. He sold his London house and for the rest of his life lived on the Continent with his wife and two little daughters, spending some years in Paris, Stuttgart, Switzerland and the Tyrol.

The story of his life has been written by S. H. Mitra (*Life and Letters of Sir John Hall*—Longsman Green, 1911), and the following extract is a fitting tribute to one of the most greatly misjudged characters in our history:

“At Bellagro Sir John Hall suffered from slight heart-attacks, the illness which subsequently terminated his life. In October 1865 he and his family left Como for Pisa in Tuscany where, on 17 January 1866, after an illness of ten days he died. There is no doubt that anxiety for his little daughter Lucy’s health and the constant travelling necessary to provide with the change of climate required, contributed to hasten his end. He was buried in the English Protestant Cemetery at Leghorn.

“Thus passed away at the age of seventy one an honourable and upright servant of the Queen, one whose keen sense of duty upheld him through all the vicissitudes of his long and arduous military career. For forty-one years he served his country in various parts of the globe, and during this time he proved himself a hard worker, a strict disciplinarian, a man not of words but of action — ‘Duty’ was the keynote of his character; ‘Labour and Succeed’ was his motto. The medical profession can count many a distinguished name on its roll of honour, but none whose success has been more nobly and worthily attained.”

One is irresistibly reminded of Henley’s lines:

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed.*

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