

*In re Herbert affair* R.M.S. 22-12-14.

COS417/16.7



THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE,  
1, WIMPOLE STREET, W.

All communications should be  
addressed to the Secretary.

30th December, 1920

Dr. Harvey Cushing,  
Peter Bent Brigham Hospital,  
721, Huntington Avenue,  
Boston, 17,  
Mass.

Dear Cushing,

I came across a letter of yours the other day which must have arrived here during my absence in the summer, for I was away most of August and September, and it contains a number of questions which I expect you have got the answers to already from Malloch, who by this time knows more about everything connected with W.O. than anyone else.

But you ask about the H.<sup>Herbert</sup>..... affair, which I don't suppose he can know, and I suggest that that affair should be blotted out of any record of W.O. for I know it was very painful to him. H. was a wrong'un whom W.O. had known slightly at McGill, and with characteristic kindness wrote him an appreciative letter in reference to a little pamphlet he had issued (sheer advertisement) and which, of course, H. exploited for all it was worth. H. was actually in gaol at the time and of course we had to strike him off our Roll. When he got out of gaol he brought an action against me, claiming £2,000 damages for implied libel in removing him from our list. The action was fought in the courts here and he lost, had the impudence to carry on to the Appeal Court, and lost again. He was adjudged to pay our costs (over £600) but bolted after transferring his property to some nominee. Since then from time to time we have heard of him in America and Canada, where during the War he distinguished himself by making public speeches against the Allies and in favour of Germany, and by this time I can only hope he has been hanged. You cannot publish anything about this without mentioning the man's name, or telling the story in such a way that it could be easily identified, and you would run the risk of you or your publisher having (OVER)

*Concluded*

to defend an action for libel.

*Mac Alister, 1904*

You ask another question which perhaps Malloch cannot answer - as to how W.O. dropped in upon me at a moment of discouragement, etc. Well, here goes!

It was probably some time in 1904, but as I think I told you, the only date I remember is the Battle of Waterloo, 1066. Anyhow, it was shortly after a disappointing conference I had had with some of our leaders on my pet subject of amalgamation which I had told W.O. all about, and he was keenly interested. Since Andrew Clark's death I had never found a single one of the leading men keen enough to take it up or even to encourage it. And perhaps to this was added a little hepatic congestion. Anyhow, he burst in on me in his dear old breezy way, with "How goes the Amalger?" and I replied - "Cut it out; it will probably come after I am gone, and so the sooner I quit the better!"

He sat down beside me with his old affectionate trick of embracing the shoulder, and got me to tell him all about it, and after a little thought he said "It has got to come, and you are the man to do it, but you will have to get at the young men. Drop the old fossils and try to inspire the young men who have to look to the future." So we smoked and chatted, and whether the hepatic congestion was subsiding, or whether I was absorbing his faith and enthusiasm, I don't know, but the next day I sat down and wrote the first sketch of my new scheme, which as an official necessity, and as I thought, a mere formality, I sent to Douglas Powell, who was then our President.

He was so interested that he suggested I should take a fortnight's leave to enable me to work out details, financial and other, and I went away to Hastings, where I knew I should not be disturbed, and slogged at the job for a fortnight, and then sent him the detailed scheme, which at his request was printed and circulated, and from that we marched right on till success was reached within two years, after, of course, numerous meetings of all the various Societies concerned.

In case you have not got it, by same post I am sending you a little volume of "mémoires pour servir" about the Amalgamation, small cuttings, as you will see, from various transactions recording the progress of the negotiations, and some day perhaps it may be of use to someone who thinks it worth while writing a coherent story. At the beginning of it you will see the letter I refer to above, dated from "St. Leonard's-on-Sea," which is a characteristic bit of British snobbishness for the west end of Hastings; cf. "Cliftonville" for Margate, "Westcliff" for Southend, Belgravia for Pimlico, etc. etc.

By the way, you told me you were sending a notice of the Gorgas funeral to the American Journal, and promised to let me have a copy, but I have not seen it. I had a charming letter from Mrs. Gorgas only yesterday, renewing all the nice things that she said about what I had done, but unfortunately not giving her address. If you are writing to her, perhaps you can supply it. *me*

With kindest regards and best wishes for a happier New Year,

Believe me,

Yours always,

*John Y.W. Mac Alister*

(SIR JOHN Y.W. MAC ALISTER,  
Secretary.)