

for premature baby incubators and resuscitators and with the hospitals for inpatient beds or the flying squad. The ambulance depot can also telephone the general practitioner.

3. It aids the general operation of the domiciliary midwifery service:
  - (a) By allowing the midwife more flexibility in temporarily leaving patients in labour.
  - (b) By enabling midwives going off duty to notify the conditions of their cases needing immediate attention.
  - (c) By saving midwives' time and mileage by a midwife being able to make radio contact and inquire about other cases in the district she is in. Also by preventing the attendance of several midwives following multiple telephone calls.
  - (d) By making the best use of the midwives who become more flexible during peaks of large numbers of births.
  - (e) By aiding recruitment into the service.
4. Although this experiment is primarily on the use of the radio by midwives it has been found that, when the midwife is also a district nurse, time and mileage can be saved on purely nursing calls. Calls from patients and doctors requesting a district nurse often arrive after she has started on her rounds. A few of these calls are urgent. With the radio she can be directed to the patient needing attention who may live in the vicinity where the district nurse/midwife is working at the time.

For about 100 midwives over a county area, the cost could be about £45 each per annum. Mileage would be saved and much staff time, but the main purpose is to provide a more efficient service.

## OUT OF THE PAST

### ERNEST HART — A FORGOTTEN MAN

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“A MAN WHO WITH A NOBLER AMBITION and a loftier ideal, might have left the whole world his debtor for ever. He preferred a cheaper glory and he had his reward.” (Obituary, *Practitioner* 1898.) Indeed! Let us look at this man a little closer.

Ernest Hart, the second son of Jewish parents was born at Knightsbridge in 1836. Qualifying at St George's Hospital in 1856, Hart became

a junior consultant at the age of 22, Dean of St Mary's Hospital when 28, editor of the *British Medical Journal* at 30 and, in spite of some religious discrimination, president of the Harveian Society, London, at the age of 32.

Successful he may have been professionally, but a man whose interests and future lay in social reforms and literary activities could not give his undivided attention to his students. This was reflected in the decreasing number of students entering St Mary's in the five years of his deanship. But during this time Hart became the first to describe the ganglionic network which lies upon the iris, and he introduced the medicated gelatin disc into medical practice, as well as other original work.

Aged 20, Hart was introduced to Thomas Wakley and four years later he became co-editor of *The Lancet*. One may wonder if the flame, now burning low in Wakley was to ignite the spirit of this young man who likewise was to become a great agitator for reform.

The movements with which Hart associated himself in the field of public welfare are only mentioned briefly, and his authority in accomplishing them was greatly increased when in 1871 he was elected chairman of Parliamentary Bills Committee of the British Medical Association, which committee attacked and abolished evils affecting all classes of society.

Hart's successful agitation when still a student raised naval surgeons from the midshipman's cockpit to professional status, and later he tackled the Admiralty and War Office so effectively that the rank, pay and privileges of service medical officers were put on a par with that of other officers.

Hart's interest in the poor law work-houses led to the establishment of the Metropolitan Asylums Board. Soon he was helping to draw up the Infant Life Protection Act, directed against the lucrative practice of baby farming. His efforts to counter intemperance by establishing coffee houses finds vivid personification today in the increasing popularity of the Espresso Bar, and how contemporary it is to read that in 1881 Hart organized the Smoke Prevention Exhibition at South Kensington, and the following year the Smoke Abatement Movement to counter the damage by smoke to health and property.

His interests and his writings on the promotion of vaccination, on the spread of cholera and typhoid through drinking-water, on diphtheria, and on the need for clean milk in London find few parallels in English social history.

Invited to attend the first meeting of the Indian Medical Association in Calcutta, Hart attacked the sanitary deficiencies of the Indian Government, such that attempts were made to hush up his outspokenness, but he lived to see the dawn of a new era in Indian health. Further, he brought about improvements in factory legislation and improved conditions in the Barrack Schools (illustrated in Charles Dickens' works) and he became chairman of the National Health Society.

Hart devoted the greater part of his working life moulding the British Medical Association into the professional body we know today. Being editor from the age of 30 for 32 years, 'till his death in 1898 he saw its

weekly circulation grow from 2,000 to 21,000 copies and its size from 20 to 64 pages.

With characteristic initiative Hart launched himself successfully into providing the British Medical Association with a library and reading room, worthy of its name, and he presented to it many books and valuable rare editions.

Distressing hardships and illness (including typhoid) were not unknown even to doctors, and in 1883 Hart considered the possibility of a self-help society. From this the Medical Sickness Annuity and Life Assurance Society emerged, run voluntarily by doctors with Hart as its first chairman.

Hart's latter years were dogged by illness, but this he turned to good account by extensive travelling holidays, visiting the Far East, and North America where he was connected with the formation of many medical associations. Dr Robert Warren of the American Medical Association, said that his Association badly needed a man of Hart's calibre who "by his great push and enterprise had caused the journal (*B.M.J.*) to outrank any other journal published by any association".

Hart's other achievements were yet legion.

He was a philanthropist and associated with many committees donating to research and scholarships. He pressed for the entry of women into practice and personally supplied money for two scholarships. He wrote and lectured on ancient Japanese art and had one of the finest collections of such objects in Europe. His knowledge of London's local countryside was the rival of any local guide, and he was a singularly successful rose-grower. Hart was an Honorary D.C.L. of Durham and McGill Universities. However, the ethics of some of his business enterprises may have been a little suspect.

Ernest Hart's first wife died in suspicious circumstances when he was only 22. His second marriage was a most successful partnership, for Mrs Hart, herself medically trained and a social worker and philanthropist in her own right, was her husband's constant companion.

Ernest Hart was a proud Jew and lost no chance of saying so. When 18 he published articles urging Jewish emancipation and his book *The Mosaic Code* (1887) excelled on Pentateuchal sanitation. Belonging to many Jewish organizations he was frequently sought as a speaker and, on one occasion, through illness, an unknown young journalist, Theodor Herzl, spoke for him.

Hart was diagnosed as a diabetic in 1893, and in spite of a leg amputation in 1897, he carried on as editor of the *British Medical Journal* until his death the next year. Hart faced death in the same manner as other great doctors, by discussing with colleagues the clinical significance of his symptoms.

"As an individual Hart was a small slight figure, always with quick nervous movements of his body; a noble head and brow, pale, clear-cut face and large grey eyes that blazed out thoughts before they were spoken by the mobile lips and bell-like voice. His work was always done with the warmth of a sensitive and eagerly human mind." (Obituary, *Brit. med. J.*, Jan. 1898.)

Controversial? Yes, *but the whole world is his debtor for ever.*