

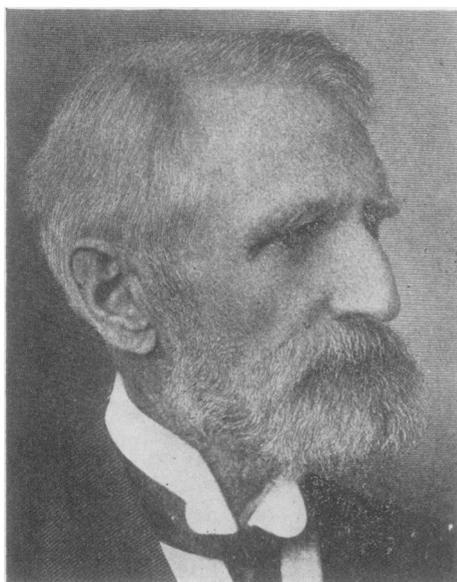
## Men and Books

### A SHORT SKETCH OF MEDICAL PROGRESS IN ALBERTA\*

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*Edmonton*

Twenty-three years ago Alberta became a province. In its short existence it has made a medical record worthy of notice. The profession has contributed an ambassador to France and two lieutenant-governors to the province. The University has developed a medical faculty to a Class A standing and now graduates its own students. A member of its staff shared in the Nobel Prize for 1923 and in 1924 discovered the hormone of the parathyroid gland. During the World War a Field Hospital was organized and saw service. Almost 100 medical men enlisted in the C.A.M.C. or R.A.M.C. Previous to 1872 there was only one medical man in the North West Territories. Dr. W. M. Mackay, a graduate of Edinburgh arrived at York Factory on Hudson Bay in 1864 to serve as surgeon to the great Company of Adventurers. Three years later he became a factor. For thirty-four years he travelled by York boat and dog-train through the vast country west of the Bay. Half of this time was spent in the Athabaska and Peace River districts.



Dr. W. M. Mackay

The first medical practitioner in the North West Territories. Photograph kindly loaned by Mrs. W. M. Mackay, Edmonton.

Retiring to Edmonton in 1898 Dr. Mackay became in 1902 the first president of the newly formed North Alberta Medical Association. He died in 1916. Mrs. Mackay and several children are living in Edmonton.

In 1872 Dr. Verey accompanied David McDougall from Fort Garry to Edmonton. He spent the winter in the Fort and then moved to Morley where he assisted in teaching the Indian children and giving his medical services when called upon. After two years he returned to Edmonton, where he married. He built a house on the flats, now used as the Municipal Golf Links. Here he died, leaving a widow, who is still living, and four children.

Before this, four medical men visited the future province. Dr. John Richardson, who accompanied Sir John Franklin on his overland journey to the Polar Sea, visited Fort Edmonton in 1820, and commented in his diary on the amount of goitre there present. In 1867, Dr. Hector, medical officer with the Palliser expedition, came from Winnipeg to Fort Edmonton and then went by way of old Bow Fort into the Rockies and discovered the Kicking Horse Pass, whose name commemorates an accident to himself. Dr. Cheadle, another English surgeon, came with Lord Milton and after traversing the great plains made his way through the Yellowhead Pass and on to the coast. The original survey for the Canadian Pacific Railway was through this pass and then down the North Thompson River. With Sir Sanford Fleming, who chose this route which is now used by the Canadian National Railway, was Dr. Arthur Moren, of Halifax.

Smallpox, in 1870, was so widespread among the Crees and Blackfeet that the Lieutenant-Governor of the Territories appointed Captain (later Sir) W. F. Butler to estimate the extent of the epidemic and to suggest a means of dealing with it. It was found at St. Albert, which had a population of about 1,000, mostly half-breeds, that nearly 300 had died. A Board of Health was appointed and was the first organized form of local government to be established in the future province. This Board was composed of Roman Catholic Bishops and Priests, including Father Leduc; Protestant Missionaries, of whom John McDougall was one; and Richard Hardisty, Chief Factor at Fort Edmonton.

The main industry of the western part of the Territories was fur trading and this was in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Co., and it was conducted in an honest and straightforward manner with the Indians. In the seventies numerous traders began to cross the boundary and debauch the Indians of the south, in order to steal their furs. Bootlegging also became so widespread and so great a menace to peace that it was found necessary for the Government to take some

\* Presented with the menu of the annual banquet, September 18, 1928, by the Edmonton Academy of Medicine.

action. This resulted in the formation of the Royal North West Mounted Police. In 1874 this picked body of men made the long journey across the prairie to Fort MacLeod. Surgeon J. G. Kittson accompanied them from Dufferin and had as his assistant R. B. Nevitt, a medical student, who later became a qualified practitioner and remained in Ontario.

In 1878 Dr. George Allan Kennedy arrived at Fort MacLeod as Police Surgeon but later left the Force and engaged in general practice. A twelve-bed hospital was built for the use of the police at this place.



The R.N.W.M.P. Hospital in Fort MacLeod. It is still standing.  
Photograph by Dr. E. A. Braithwaite, Edmonton.

The coming of the Canadian Pacific Railway brought medical men to look after the workers on construction. In August, 1883, the railway entered Calgary and in the first passenger coach to cross the Bow River into the town was Dr. R. G. Brett, one of the founders of the Manitoba Medical College. Dr. A. N. Lindsay was with him; Doctors Olver, Henderson and J. D. Lafferty followed soon after.

In this same year Dr. Brett opened a small hospital in Banff. In 1886 the Galt Hospital was built by the Galt Mining Company in Lethbridge. It was attended by the surgeons of the R.N.W.M.P. Dr. F. H. Mewburn, who had been superintendent of the Winnipeg General Hospital for three years, was appointed surgeon to the company. Medicine Hat built a brick hospital in 1889. Calgary built in 1899 and the Grey Nuns opened the Edmonton General Hospital in 1895.

In 1885 the population of the territory now included, in the province was, exclusive of Indians, 5,000. These were mostly half-breeds. The chief centres of population were in the north, but with the coming of the railway there was an influx of settlers and the southern part of the province started to develop.

On August 13, and 14, 1889, the twentieth annual meeting of the Canadian Medical Association was held in Banff. This meeting was of very special interest since it was the first held within the boundaries of what was to be the Province of Alberta. It saw the birth of the North West Territories Medical Association. To it was contributed a paper by Dr. G. A. Kennedy, of Fort MacLeod, on "The Climate of Alberta." This

paper extolled the west as a country of brilliant and health-giving sunlight, a dryness excellently suited to lung affections, and an altitude which gave a zest to life that was absent in the east. It is a matter of record that the reader of the paper was regarded by the visiting members as an enthusiast who had lost his sense of judgment.

The officers of the new association were as follows: President, Dr. G. A. Kennedy; Vice-president, Dr. R. G. Brett; Secretary-treasurer, Dr. O. C. Edwards.

The second annual meeting was held in Medicine Hat.

These early meetings were concerned mostly with discussions as to charges for life insurance and benefit society examinations and papers on the nature and treatment of a widespread fever then common on the prairies. It is now known to have been typhoid fever, but in the eighties it went by such local names as Red River, Saskatchewan, Nor'-West and Mountain Fever. Typhomalaria was also a name sometimes given to it. A tariff of fees was adopted. It differed very little from the present one. There was one item of interest, however. A special stethoscopic examination of the chest called for a fee of \$5.00 to \$10.00.

In 1905 the Province of Alberta was formed.

On March 7, 1905, a meeting was called in Calgary by the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the North West Territories. This was thought to be an opportune occasion to form a medical association in the new province. Thirty-one medical men were present. Banff was chosen for the first meeting and the following officers were elected: President, Dr. R. G. Brett, Banff; First vice-president, Dr. E. A. Braithwaite, Edmonton; Second vice-president, Dr. J. D. Lafferty, Calgary; Third vice-president, Dr. F. H. Mewburn, Lethbridge; Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Gordon Cumming, Calgary.

At the first annual meeting of the new association a resolution was passed asking the Provincial Government to establish a bacteriological laboratory for the medical profession in Calgary. The code of ethics of the Ontario Medical Association in its entirety was adopted by the Association. In Banff, at the third annual meeting in 1908, Dr. R. G. Brett gave a report on

inter-provincial registration and said that Manitoba and Saskatchewan were anxious to join Alberta but that British Columbia was unwilling. Alberta favoured a board by which a man passing an examination could practice in all four western provinces. British Columbia men were opposed as they considered that "it was a case of giving more than they would be likely to receive."

At the fourth annual meeting held in Calgary in 1909, Dr. J. G. Adami, of McGill, and Dr. J. T. Fotheringham of the University of Toronto, were present and made Honorary Members on motion of Doctors W. A. Lincoln and Wm. Egbert. Dr. Fotheringham represented the Canadian Medical Association and urged the affiliation of the local association with that of the Dominion. Dr. Adami gave a paper on "Arteriosclerosis."

On January 15, 1902, a meeting of the practitioners of Edmonton and the surrounding towns was held in the office of Dr. H. L. McInnis and the North Alberta Medical Association was formed with Dr. W. M. Mackay as the first president. One of the members of the committee was Dr. Philippe Roy who became a senator in 1906, a commissioner to France in 1911, and has recently become Canadian Ambassador to that country. In 1905 this society was re-organized as the Northern Alberta Medical Association. Dr. W. D. Ferris was elected president and Dr. T. H. Whitelaw, secretary-treasurer. Professor A. Primrose of Toronto was present at the first regular meeting on March the 3rd and was made an Honorary Member.

The University of Alberta was founded in 1908 and in 1913 there was added a medical faculty. Dr. D. G. Revell, who was director of the Provincial Laboratory, was the first member of that staff to be appointed and he became the first Professor of Anatomy. Dr. H. H. Moshier, of Calgary, was then made Professor of Physiology. Only the primary subjects were taught for some years, the students completing their work at Toronto or McGill. The medical building was completed in 1922 and in that year the Strathcona Hospital became the property of the University and its name was changed. A Class "A" standing was given the medical faculty and a grant was obtained from the Rockefeller Foundation. A full course is now given and the University graduates its students with an M.D., C.M. degree.

In 1912, for the second time in its history, the Canadian Medical Association held its annual meeting in Alberta, at Edmonton, with Dr. H. G. Mackid of Calgary, as president.

In 1914, at the outbreak of the Great War many medical men volunteered their services to the government. Some went overseas and joined the Imperial Forces. A Field Ambulance was formed and saw service.

Dr. R. G. Brett became the second Lieutenant-Governor of the Province in 1915. He served a second term and was succeeded in 1925 by Dr. William Egbert of Calgary.

The medical progress of any country is perhaps best reflected in the legislation which is passed in

the interests of the people. A perusal of the various measures assented to by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council in this province since its formation shows clearly that whatever party was in power an effort has been made to safeguard the health of the people.

A Venereal Disease Act, modelled on that of Ontario, was the first to be put into force in the Dominion. This went into effect in 1918. A course for Public Nurses was organized in 1918 and four nurses attended. District nurses were appointed by the Government to outlying parts of the country where it was impossible for a medical man to make a living. A Municipal Hospitals Act was passed in 1919. This permitted several municipal districts to combine for the purpose of building a hospital. A Workmen's Compensation Act was passed in 1908 and revised in 1918.

There are a few men in active work today who have played a large part in the progress that has been made and have done the pioneering for us, the last that will be necessary in this country. They have witnessed the coming of the railway, the first automobile; they have seen the ox-cart that slowly creaked across the prairie with their medical supplies and mail become a curiosity, and the aeroplane become commonplace; they have seen the small rude hospitals of the frontier become a memory and have watched the growth of the many up-to-date institutions now caring for the sick of the Province—79 of them approved, with a bed accommodation of 2,800. The problem of handling the insane no longer vexes, for at Ponoka, where in 1911 the Mental Hospital was opened with 200 beds, it has recently had its capacity increased to 1,000. Oliver with its 250 beds takes care of any surplus. At Red Deer the Provincial Training School for mental defectives looks after 150 children. The treatment of the tuberculous presents few difficulties now, for the Central Alberta Sanatorium which was opened in 1920, houses 180 patients. A special institution for poliomyelitis victims is in operation at Edmonton. It has 60 beds. Besides these public institutions there are 70 private hospitals with more than 300 beds. Six hundred and seventeen thousand people have their medical needs supplied by 550 medical men.

The ashes of many a campfire around which Dr. Mackay sat with his Indian and Halfbreed companions half a century ago have long since been scattered by the winds of the north, but the visions he saw in the blue smoke of the dying embers are fast becoming a reality. He opened a chapter of medical history, the first in Alberta. It seems fitting to end that chapter now. What the next chapter will contain not even the most far-seeing of us dare predict.

To several of the practitioners of the early days the writer is indebted for much of the information regarding the history of the past. Dr. R. G. Brett, who came with the C.P.R. in 1883; Dr. E. A. Braithwaite, who joined the Mounted Police in 1884; Dr. F. H. Mewburn, who arrived in 1885; and Dr. J. D. Harrison, one of the first practitioners of Edmonton, have each contributed much.