
Obituary.

Sir Edwin Saunders, F.R.C.S.

WITH the death of Sir Edwin Saunders we lose not only one of the "old familiar faces" of our profession, but a personality of great charm, typical alike in taste and thought of the Victorian Age in which he lived. His influence was manifest in almost all those movements of dental progress which belong to that period and which have raised our profession to what it is, and with that, at the dawn of the Twentieth Century, he bids us farewell.

Sir Edwin Saunders was born in London on March 12, 1814, the son of a book publisher. From an early age he showed great aptitude for all mechanical contrivances, and from the age of from 12 to 14 was engaged in experimental attempts to supersede steam, for the propulsion of vessels, by hydraulic power. He also invented a sweeping machine for use in cities, not unlike those now in use, and various other appliances.

With such tendencies his taste was strongly for civil engineering as a profession; however, the railway system being yet undeveloped, he was compelled to abandon the idea in favour of something with

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prospects less remote and uncertain. One of the family having to seek the aid of dentistry, Sir Edwin was attracted by the mechanical opportunities which it afforded and became articled as a pupil to Mr. Lemaile, and at the end of three years had become thoroughly grounded in Dental Mechanics. About this time Literary and Mechanics' Institutions were in vogue, and at one of these Sir Edwin gave some courses of Lectures on Elementary Mechanics and Anatomy. During one of the latter lectures, Mr. Tyrrell, Surgeon at St. Thomas's Hospital, who happened to be present, was favourably impressed by the young lecturer, and after a consultation with his colleagues invited Sir Edwin to give a course of lectures at St. Thomas's Hospital. Subsequently, on completing his membership of the College of Surgeons, he became permanently attached as Dental Surgeon and Lecturer on Dental Surgery to that Hospital.

About this time he wrote a small book on Dental Hygiene, and in 1840, as a result of the abuses of the Factory Act in the matter of the falsification of the register of age, Sir Edwin investigated the date of the eruption of the various teeth, and for this purpose visited most of the public schools around London. He published the results under the title of the "Teeth a Test of Age," and this became adopted by the Inspectors of Factories, and led to the detection of an immense amount of fraud.

In the same year Sir Edwin, in conjunction with Mr. Harrison and Mr. Snell, started a small Institution for the treatment of the teeth of the poor; this was the first of its kind and lasted about twelve years.

Whilst working at the subject of Cleft Palate he was brought in contact with Mr. Nasmyth. And later, in 1846, Mr. Nasmyth being seized with illness, it was at his earnest desire that Sir Edwin took over at short notice his large practice at 13A, George Street, Hanover Square. It was shortly after this that he became appointed Dental Surgeon to her late Majesty Queen Victoria, the late Prince Consort and other members of the Royal Family. During the forty years in which Sir Edwin remained her Majesty's adviser, he received many marks of approval and regard, and in 1883 she bestowed upon him the honour of Knighthood.

In the efforts which were made to improve the status of our profession at this period, few names are better known than that of Sir Edwin Saunders. He, with others, in 1856 petitioned the Royal College of Surgeons of England to grant a diploma in dental surgery. The delays were many and disappointing, and not until Parliament had given authority to the college to thus extend its powers, was this recognition obtained.

Until this time there had been no journal and no professional Society, and each man was thrown on his own resources; but in 1857

the preliminary arrangements for the formation of a Dental Society were settled at a meeting held at Sir Edwin's house, and at his suggestion it was called the Odontological Society. He became one of its early Presidents, and was re-elected to the Chair in 1879. His portrait is in the Society's possession.

Sir Edwin Saunders was trustee of the first dental hospital which was established in Soho Square in 1859, the school shortly following. After some years its growth necessitated a change of position, and it was in his action in connection with the rehousing of the hospital in 1874 that Sir Edwin Saunders' name comes so conspicuously before us. In the words of Sir John Tomes' generous acknowledgment, "To one gentleman, I say, we mainly owe this great advantage. He saw the difficulty in which we were placed in Soho Square, and he also recognised in some old houses an appropriate dwelling for us. At considerable cost of time, trouble and money, he obtained possession of the lease of these houses. He then, at a considerable cost and trouble, devised a plan of alteration, and through his architect put it into form. He then offered the Managing Committee the premises, and furthermore, he offered to see the hospital removed from the inappropriate building to the appropriate one free of cost. I do not mean to tell you that he did this entirely by himself, but I do mean to tell you that but for him it would not have been done."

To commemorate his efforts on behalf of the hospital, a sum sufficient to found a scholarship was raised by the subscription of his fellow practitioners, and the Saunders Scholarship became established.

There can be no doubt that the opening of the new hospital caused a great stir in the dental world, and the concerts, dinners and addresses by eminent medical men served to make it widely known, not only by the public but also to the provincial practitioners, for hardly had it entered on its new career when letters appeared in the *Journal*, calling for dental schools in various parts of the country.

It is perhaps hardly realised how largely Sir Edwin used his influence and position in making known the wants of our profession amongst the leaders of the medical world and of those of science, wealth and position. Sir Edwin Saunders was steadfast from the beginning to the end in his belief in the close association of our calling with the medical profession, regarding our lot as strengthened thereby. At the same time, as his strenuous support of the Dental School and Hospital abundantly shows, he saw the necessity of a special dental training. His ideal was probably that of a surgical qualification additional to the Dental Diploma.

He was as quick to resent a slur on our position as to acknowledge a praise, whether occasioned by remarks in the medical press or elsewhere. He never failed to champion our cause in his addresses and

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on all public occasions; this was conspicuously so when President of the Metropolitan Counties Branch of the British Medical Association in 1881, and the honourable recognition of our profession as a branch of medicine which his election implied was significant and highly appreciated.

In the same year Sir Edwin Saunders occupied the chair of the Dental Section at the International Medical Congress at its meeting in London, memorable to us by the demonstration of the bacteriological origin of dental caries, by Messrs. Underwood and Mills. Sir Edwin Saunders' presence at the various meetings of our great representative body, the British Dental Association, whether as President in London in 1886, or on other occasions, gave always an added interest to the proceedings, and many will remember the Garden Party in the beautiful grounds of Fairlawn given to welcome the Association.

A pleasant memory will linger over the last Bath meeting and Sir Edwin's reminiscences. Few then realised it as his last appearance at our professional gatherings.

Sir Edwin Saunders was married to Marion, daughter of E. Burgess, Esq., and on the occasion of their golden wedding a vellum bound address, with the names of some of his old professional friends, was presented to him, and to Lady Saunders a diamond brooch.

Those only who knew Sir Edwin in private life were able to realise how wide were his sympathies, how brilliant his conversation, and how inexhaustible his store of narrative on art and travel, or how much of the old true courtesy existed in his nature.

Sir Edwin Saunders was laid to rest, after a short illness which terminated a long life, in a grave amid the heather and the bracken of his beloved Wimbledon Common, attended by our chief representatives of the dental world, his relatives, friends and servants.

THE curator of the Museum of the Dental Hospital of London, Mr. D. P. Gabell, asks us to appeal through these columns to members to send him specimens of teeth. Those showing abnormalities of whatsoever kind will be especially welcome, but he would also be glad of any extracted teeth for purposes of instruction. If those of our readers therefore to whose lot it falls to mitigate the sufferings of their patients by extraction of teeth would be good enough to forward them to Mr. Gabell at the Hospital in Leicester Square, they would not only earn his gratitude, but would also be conferring a benefit upon the institution, and possibly contributing to an interesting exhibit at the annual meeting of the Association next August.