



Facsimile of a Testimonial to R.S.M. Ridgewe.

Swinging the Lead.

The primal object of the not too ambitious soldier, as every military victim knows, is to "make hospital."

Secondary tactics include, of course, staying there as long as possible. This, I am aware, is merely stating commonplaces and universally accepted homilies. Nevertheless, they lead us to the debateable ground of the application of principles.

There are several approved and fairly reliable methods, but it must be conceded that this worthy field of human ingenuity has been imperfectly recognized.

The final plane of eminence is reached (in this process of applied charlatanism) when you effect your discharge. To accomplish this is to be the oracle of your kind. This, however, is not always attainable, as some doctors are notoriously unreasonable.

The chief mental essential apparently is a supreme contempt for the dignities and obeisances that the medical world arrogantly claim for themselves.

One very successful hospital profiteer of my circle, for instance, assured me that medical science comprised little else than a motley collection of crocodile lettering, dogs-ear hieroglyphics, mystery bottle worship, and parchment skin verbiage. This, perhaps, was a slight overstatement of the case, but nevertheless, it formed the touchstone of his brilliant career.

Then I recall another singular case of a man who, by cleverly introducing foreign matter into a wound, delayed the healing considerably, and to the envy of every other occupant of the ward. Buttonholing me, he pungently remarked that expelling germs followed along the same lines as driving black beetles from a barn.

Another informant on this rather abstruse science (popularised as "lead-swinging"), in a scathing invective on the medical profession at large, illustrated to me how its more troublesome enemies were those who were most informed members of their profession. This failing alone saved them from admirably planned impositions.

This was exemplified in a case where a masterful scheme was frustrated within measurable reach of success. A soldier, an impeccable character, exasperated with his Sergeant-Major, and wishing to avoid an impending impeachment at the Orderly Room, "paraded sick" with a stiff knee. It got to a board; two doctors had just diagnosed it "Compression on the timphenal," when another asinine fool kicked it from behind and exposed its meretricious nature.

A luminous guide on the eternal enemies to the advancement of human progress and knowledge!

But doctors, it appears, taken on the whole, are easy fry.

Certainly, their vocation cannot boast the individual courage and skilful subtlety needed in successful "lead swinging." Another very cherished acquaintance of mine secured a B2 category by admirable means.

Parading sick in the usual manner, he was ushered in by the irritated Sergeant to the human analyst, and the following duel in dialectics took place:—

"What's the matter with you?"

"Can't walk, sir."

"Why can't you walk?"

"My feet pain me, sir."

"What's the matter with your feet?"

"That's what I have come here to learn, sir."

"Oh! Show them to me. Don't see anything wrong."

"Nor do I, sir. But I can't walk."

"Well, show me something, man; everyone has pain in their feet."

"Don't see how that affects me, sir. I haven't got anything to show you, sir, but I can't walk."

This meant a Board. Now, mark the sequence, and the delicacies of the study put into practice.

One very learned doctor in the circle suddenly remembered having read or heard about the vagaries of "Trench fever" leaving it occasionally in the direction of the pedal extremities, and all that remained to be done was to call it a long name, regain dignity, and mark the supplicant B2!

Experts in this art of duping doctors evince a lofty contempt for the unimaginative addeplate who resorts to those obvious and exploded deceptions such as soap and cordite, etc.

I have even heard them declare that in scabies and dental treatment there was something petty and ignoble. Insufferable trifles will creep in, and one fly often spoils a lot of ointment.

While paying a high compliment to the *personnel* of this distinguished society, I must admit its precarious rules, for there often happens a "rift within the lute."

A poignant example was furnished by a dear friend of mine, who reported for spinal trouble, and got put in plaster of Paris for six months.

This was a regrettable loss to the Royal Society of Lead Swingers.

J. HADDON ROWAT.