

# A Note on the Early History of Veterinary Science in Canada

By CHAS. A. MITCHELL\*

Duncan McEachran

**D**UNCAN McEachran was born in Campbelltown, Scotland Oct. 27, 1841. After receiving a sound preliminary education he entered the Royal Dick Veterinary College Edinburgh, from which he graduated in 1862. Almost immediately he came to Canada and established a practice at Woodstock, Ont.

About this time Andrew Smith was founding the Ontario Veterinary College, and McEachran's assistance was invited. For three months he lectured in the embryo college. There appears to have been a difference of opinion between Smith and McEachran in matters pertaining to veterinary education, particularly entrance requirements. As a result these two great men, each with clear cut objectives and each possessed of great gifts of leadership, were unable to work together. From this time on their talents were employed in different manners.

In 1865, McEachran moved to Montreal where, with the assistance of Sir William Dawson, Principal of McGill University, and Dr. George Campbell, Dean of Faculty of Medicine, he immediately organized the Montreal Veterinary College. This college and the faculty to which it subsequently gave rise, was a concrete expression of McEachran's views relative to veterinary education. In 1875 he built, at his own expense, a college on Union Avenue, Montreal, where the clinical side of veterinary medicine was taught. About this time he became associated with Dr. William Osler, who was later to play so important a part in the first scientific investigation of animal diseases in this country. These two men shared similar views and, in 1889, were successful in having the college become an integral part of McGill University under the title of "Faculty of Comparative Medicine and Veterinary Science". This faculty functioned until 1903 when due to lack of financial support and the competition of schools of lesser standing, it discontinued. Between the years 1866-1902, approximately 315 students graduated, a small number in comparison to some of the other schools of the day.

From the first, McEachran insisted upon matriculation requirements that would insure a type of student with sufficient grounding to intelligently study biological science. With Osler, he looked upon medicine as a common field, and the divisions between veterinary and human medicine as required only for purposes of application of the art. Both believed members in each field should be rigidly trained in the common fundamentals. Consequently, McEachran always insisted that the course be one of at least three years. This may seem meagre, compared with present day standards. It must be remembered, however, that at that time no college in an Anglo-Saxon country insisted upon a matriculation entrance, and the majority presented only a two year course of study. Actually McEachran was a pioneer and a foremost leader in sponsoring higher veterinary education.

<sup>1</sup>Continued from July issue.

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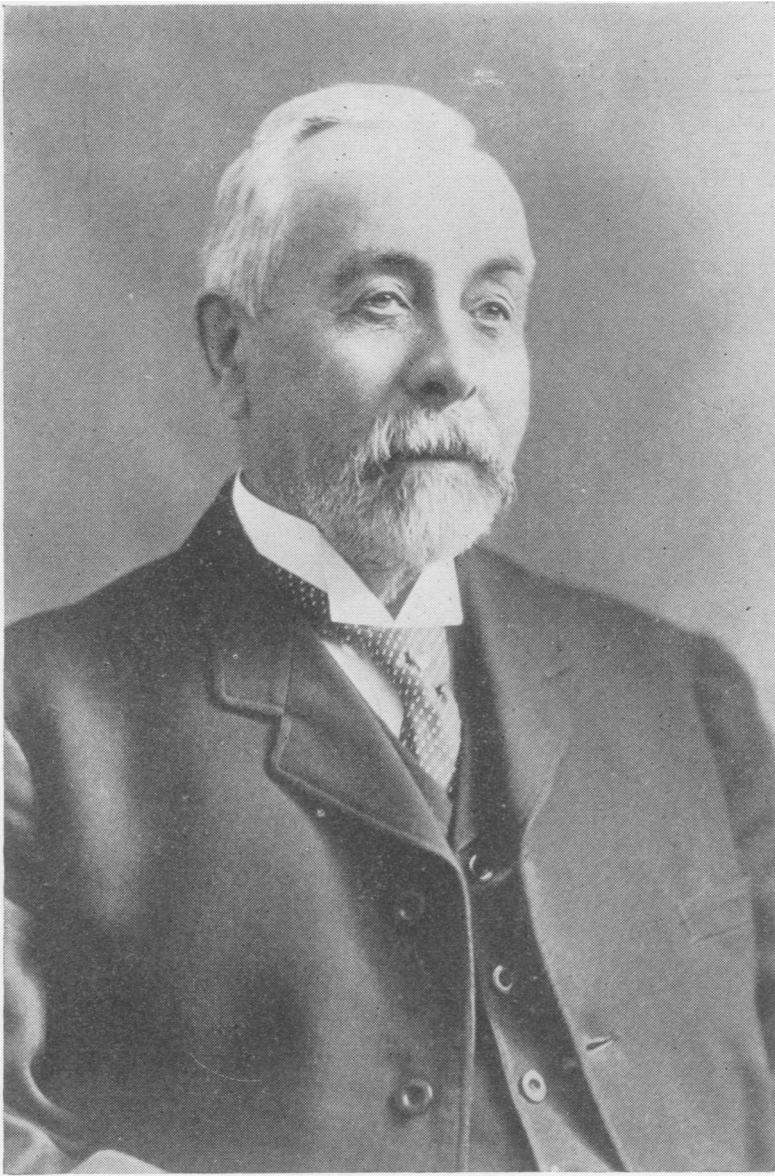
Another advance fathered by McEachran was the experimental study of animal disease. This was an almost untouched field in America at that time. McEachran's scientific turn of mind, however, and his remarkable powers of visualizing the future, brought about the introduction of the experimental study of animal diseases in this country. Not an investigator himself, he urged Osler to undertake the task and, as a result, several investigations were carried out that have since proved to be of great scientific interest and value. These will be dealt with more particularly when consideration is given to Osler.

McEachran saw the danger to which Canada was exposed from the invasion of animal plagues rampant in parts of Europe and which could easily be introduced into this country by the importation of stock from infected districts. He brought this matter to the attention of the Dominion Minister of Agriculture in 1875. The value of the suggestion was immediately recognized. A quarantine station was established at Levis, with McEachran as the executive head. This, and disease control work, was extended until, in 1884, more co-ordination was required. For this purpose McEachran was appointed Chief Veterinary Inspector of Canada, a post which he held until 1902 when Dr. J. G. Rutherford assumed the duties, under the title of Veterinary Director General. Thus McEachran laid the foundation of the Health of Animals Branch. An example of his remarkable foresight may be found in his request for \$100,000 to pay compensation for animals proved tuberculous by means of the tuberculin test. He argued that, before this disease became widespread, a relatively small sum of money would bring about its eradication. If, however, it was allowed to extend vast sums would be required to bring it under control. Veterinarians to-day are aware of the truth of this prediction. In this connection it is worthy of note that McEachran was one of the first to introduce the widespread use of tuberculin as a diagnostic agent of bovine tuberculosis.

A critical study of McEachran's achievements indicates that he was one of the foremost veterinarians of his day, and certainly the most versatile. One may ask why he is not better known and his great achievements better understood. Perhaps the reason lies in the personality of his great contemporary in the educational field, and the brilliance of his successor as Chief Veterinary Inspector.

It may be that time is needed to estimate the great benefit which McEachran attempted to give Canada by training a highly qualified body of veterinarians. There was no place in his educational scheme for the empiric or the individual who blindly practiced an art without a proper fundamental training. He insisted that the veterinary student have the same standard of training as the medical student, with subjects taken jointly whenever possible. He had little time for "provincialism" in veterinary science and was absolutely opposed to that bugbear, so dear to the hearts of some which condemns veterinary students to a segregated life removed from the stimulating influence of a university. He believed the veterinarian had an important place in the life of Canada, not because he possessed a diploma from a veterinary school but because he had a trained mind and was possessed of special knowledge of value.

A cultured gentleman McEachran was, in many respects, a hard taskmaster, requiring an unremitting effort from his students. But he taught them respect for their profession, respect born of the knowledge that



DUNCAN MCNAB MCEACHRAN

they had taken classes with students of older faculties and had proved themselves possessed of equal capacity. McEachran was somewhat deficient in or ignored diplomacy, of which Andrew Smith was master. It is unlikely he could tactfully have handled students of poor elementary training. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that they would not have been tolerated since he would have considered them unfitted to follow

a professional career. Perhaps too this quality, and the absence of large classes in his college, has operated to dim the great reputation which is justly his. He has had to depend on sterling worth rather than personal popularity. As time goes on and the pioneers of veterinary science in Canada are viewed more in perspective, McEachran's reputation is bound to increase. One who lead the way in higher veterinary education in the Anglo-Saxon world, who first encouraged research in animal disease in Canada, and who first visualized the quarantine and control measures of our present day, was no ordinary individual. He remained true to his ideals and scorned the wealth which might have been amassed by lowering his standard of veterinary education.

By 1903, his work was largely finished. In 1909, McGill University honored him with the degree of Doctor of Laws. In later years he lived at his Ormstown home, dying there October 24, 1924. Although his ideals have not always been achieved, Canada has had no greater veterinarian.

## PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL

### La journée vétérinaire est retardée

LA suggestion du Dr Arthur Rajotte, M.V., maire de Drummondville, la première "journée vétérinaire" qui devait avoir lieu dans cette ville le 14 octobre a été remise au 4 novembre prochain. Nous espérons que les vétérinaires v'endront nombreux pour l'inauguration de ces "petits congrès régionaux" qui seront tenus dans les différents centres de notre province. Le Journal vous en fera connaître le programme détaillé dans sa prochaine édition.

### Dr. F. A. Humphreys Promoted

DR. F. A. Humphreys, for ten years attached to the staff of the Animal Diseases Research Institute, has been promoted to the position of Bacteriologist assuming charge of the Kamloops Laboratory, Department of Pensions and National Health. The activities of this laboratory are particularly devoted to the study of Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularaemia and sylvatic plague.

For several years Dr. Humphreys has been intimately associated with the activities of his profession, serving its best interests by a keen interest in the work of veterinary organizations.

This Journal joins his former colleagues in extending best wishes for success in his new field of work.

## CASE REPORTS

### Anastomosis of the Intestine

By GEORGE M. STEWART\*

THE area is prepared in the usual manner and the abdomen is opened on the median line or flank, according to the position of the offending portion of the intestine. The intestine is withdrawn

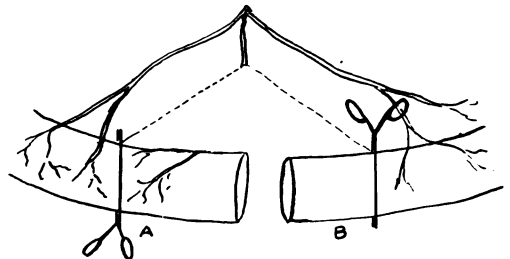


Fig. 1.

\*Hamilton, Ontario