BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL:

BEING THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

EDITED BY ANDREW WYNTER, M.D.

No. CLXIX.]

LONDON: SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 1860.

[NEW SERIES.]

Lectures

ON

THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE.

DELIVERED AT

THE GROSVENOR PLACE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.

BY

ALEXANDER HENRY, M.D.

LECTURE I.

Introductory. Deficiency of Instruction in the Subject. Objections to the Study, Reasons for Cultivating a Knowledge of Medical History. Importance of the Study. Mode of following it.

GENTLEMEN,—I have the honour of appearing before you, by the kind consent of the lecturers of this school, for the purpose of delivering a brief course of lectures on the History of Medicine. And, while the honour attached to the duty entrusted to me is great, I approach the task with fear, lest I should fail in the performance. You will at once appreciate how much room there is for anxiety, when you reflect how extensive is the subject. What a vast mass of ideas is comprehended in the term "historical records of medical science!" What names it calls to our recollection! What a space of time it includes! There are, in fact, few records more ancient or more interesting than those of medicine; and none in which greater names appear, or in which deeds more worthy of man are narrated.

Yet, strange though it may seem, the teaching of the history of medicine is a novelty in England. The greatest pains are taken to shew the student what are the approved views in medicine of this our day, and what new springs of medical knowledge may have burst forth in the time that is, or within the personal memory of the present race of men; but to bear his mind back to the time that has been—to direct his attention to the prime sources of his knowledge—is a duty which is very generally neglected. Thus the majority of the profession in this country are comparatively uninformed of everything that relates to the rise and progress of the science whose disciples they are, or of the art which they practise. A few names of men great in medicine, as Hippocrates, Galen, Aretæus, Harvey, Haller, may now and then be mentioned: nay, they may be "familiar in our mouths as household words"; but merely as entities in connection with history, much as Plato, Aristotle, and Bacon, are known to the general reader. And some of us, more advanced, may even have an acquaintance with some leading facts of the labours and doctrines of these men; and we may even have perused with care and interest their writings. But estimates of the influence they have really exerted on the progress of medicine are seldom made; and, instead of our having before us a general history of the rise and advance of medical science, a few names are allowed to stand forth as the embodiments of all that has been useful and all that has been great. Do not misunderstand me, and suppose that I wish to depreciate the honour which of right belongs to those who have made their names great in connection with some doctrine or discovery. The names of individual men must stand forth as the exponents of the doctrines and discoveries they have given to the world. But what is here objected to is, that in our exclusive remembrance of individuals, the aid which any one man who has shone forth brightly has received from the labours of his predecessors, and the influence which collateral circumstances have had on him, are lost sight of, and he has attributed to him a power, little short of superhuman, of forming order out of the most ver-

table chaos—of creating a comely form out of nothing. In bearing a few prominent names exclusively in our remembrance, too, we are apt to forget men of lesser repute, but to whom nevertheless our art owes something which should entitle them to our recognition.

Of the history of medical science, then, in its periods of progress, stand still, and apparent retrogression; of the influences for good or for evil which have been exerted on it by collateral circumstances; few or no attempts have been made to give an idea to the English medical student or practitioner. At the same time, the good intentions and able performances of those who have written on the history of medicine, whether separately, or in the course of their works on the science in general, deserve due recognition. Yet the works of these men do not produce all the good they ought: in part, no doubt, from the subject not being brought before the mind of the medical practitioner in his student days.

In neglecting the teaching of medical history, we English stand alone, or nearly so: for the subject forms a part (voluntary or compulsory) of professional education in France, Sweden, America, and no doubt in most other states where medical science is taught. And especially, I must not forget to recognise the fact—a pleasing one—that within the last three or four years an annual course of lectures on the History of Medicine has been instituted in Edinburgh by a worthy member of the staff of extra-academical lecturers in that city—Dr. Warburton Begbie.

Medical history comes before you then, students of a London school, as a stranger; with high recommendation, it is true; but still requiring a somewhat formal introduction, and a brief statement of the grounds on which your acquaintance and favourable notice are sought. Endeavouring, then, to the best of my ability to fulfil my duty, I will occupy your attention for a while in laying before you some of the principal reasons for cultivating a knowledge of the past as well as of the present of our profession; and at the same time I will endeavour to indicate the disposition of mind in which you should enter on the pursuit of the study, and the objects you should seek to attain therefrom.

But, at starting, I see thrown in the way a number of stumbling-blocks—reasons, or *quasi*-reasons, why medical history should *not* be taught. These obstacles are, at first sight, formidable indeed—so formidable, that were it not that they are essentially false in principle, and that all things false in principle must of necessity fall to the ground, we might despair of a recognition of the claims of medical history.

One of the most prominent of these obstacles is the argument that, as the whole science of ancient medicine was based on erroneous principles and false data, the writings of the men who practised on these principles are not to be depended on, and that therefore it is useless to spend time and mind for the purpose of becoming acquainted with such authorities. You, gentlemen, will at once be ready to deny the indiscriminate assertion of the worthlessness of past medicine, contained in this objection: yet, perhaps, some may be disposed to modify the expressions used, and to take up another argument against the study of the history of medicine, somewhat in this way.—It is admitted, that among the ancients of the profession some wisdom has been taught; and that in their voluminous writings, a grain of gold may here and there be found: but these grains are so rare, and the bed from which they have to be dug is so heavy, that the reward is not worthy of the trouble of searching for them.

Other arguments against the study of medical history are, that the time of the student is too much occupied with the course of instruction required in his curriculum, to allow his leaving modern authors even for a time, in order to dive into works of ancient date: and that no knowledge of medical history is required to be shewn at the different examining boards.

Many other arguments of a similar kind may be added: it is enough, however, to have pointed out these. I shall not occupy your time with refuting them *seriatim*. They are all

exceedingly weak, and may be left to the discipline of your good sense, and of the impressions which, it is hoped, the course of lectures now begun will make on your minds. The plan of refutation I shall rather follow, will be to give a general outline of the advantages which must follow a course of study of the past records of medicine.

1. The first argument in favour of the study of the history of medicine is the same as that in favour of the study of any general history—of our own country, or of the world, for instance. To know the present merely, is comparatively to know but little; for the present is but a part of the great whole of time. And, in speaking of history, I do not mean a mere collection of events and dates and names, important as this knowledge may be, and highly necessary: not a mere laborious exertion of the memory, but a highly intellectual exercise, in perceiving the influence which individuals and events and public currents of thought and action have had in modifying the existence and the prosperity, be it of a science, or of a nation, or even of the human race. Thus we apply a dual sense to the word *history*, and in such a sense should it always be understood. The narration of events, the record of the lives of illustrious men, and so forth, are history, so far as they go: but this is only half the matter; the philosophical ideas, of which the mere narrations are the nuclei, still remain, calling into play the mental powers, and opening an inexhaustible field for investigation.

And in the pursuit of other branches of knowledge than the medical, the importance of antiquarian knowledge is recognised. It is held indispensable to any one who could maintain a superiority in any branch of knowledge, that he should know and be able to philosophise on the past; that he should be always able to recur to the mighty events and changes that have happened before this age; that he should have the power of observing their influence on the present, and therefrom of drawing inferences as to the acts and prospects of the future. Hence we find the assiduous divine busy with the history of his church; the astronomer with the records of his sublime science; and the politician with the origin and progress of human institutions and laws. And not with mere event-history only, but with true philosophical history, do men concern themselves. Gibbon and Robertson and Hume and their analogues, are not enough; Niebuhr and Grote and Macaulay form the staple of the reading of the modern student of history.

In medicine, too, we have an event-history and a philosophical history; and in the extensive bearings of its philosophical history, medicine is surpassed by no other study. Fail to note these, and the study of the history of medicine is deprived of the greater part of its value. It is not sufficient to know that, at such a period and in such a land, some distinguished man lived, or some peculiar sect existed, or some remarkable discovery was made. We want to be informed what influences the man, or the sect, or the discovery, had in his or in its times, in aftertimes, or in the present time. We require to know, why those who take rank as distinguished men are distinguished; what plans of investigation they pursued; what right they have to their distinctions. We would derive both encouragement and warning for our own guidance; for, in all ages, the substantial basis on which progress has been built, has been one and the same; and the errors and pitfalls into which men have fallen, though varying in appearance, have been of the same kind.

With the community, a deep acquaintance with historical records of any kind is sufficient to gain for its possessor, when his acquirement is known, the reputation of being a learned, industrious, and useful man. And what holds good with reference to other historical topics, extends itself also to medicine, and will extend itself more and more. For, I doubt not that the time will come, when the physician or surgeon who may be ignorant of the history of his own profession will be looked upon in his proper light—as a man ignorant of subjects which ought to be as familiar to him as are the letters of the language in which he speaks.

2. A second advantage which must follow the course of study now recommended, is an important one, and I beg you to mark it well. It is this: that in the course of any researches you may happen to make, an extensive knowledge of what has been already done, may keep you from going over ground already trodden. What can be more annoying to the feelings of a sensitive man, than to find certain remarks, which he has published as original, pointed out by some malicious critic to be as old as the hills; to have his supposed new facts marked down as having been known and described by Galen,

described by Aetius, etc.? Nothing, in fact, can well be more annoying; and yet there is scarcely a fault more common in our profession than this innocent plagiarising. But this fault might be at once remedied, by implanting a good store of historical medical information in the mind of the student.

3. Again, besides the negative advantage just now described, in cases where you wish to extend knowledge on any particular subject, nothing can be of more advantage to you than to have your minds enriched by an acquaintance with the labours of your predecessors. It may be urged that, in this research, nothing but crude notions, absurd dogmata, or conflicting opinions, will be met with. But read on; and read all; for in the most crude mass of facts or thoughts, there is pretty sure to be some real essence.

Let me take, for example, one department of medical science—the therapeutic; and in it I think I shall find the strongest practical arguments in favour of the study of medical history. Information on matters pertaining to the records of medical science in past days would greatly assist the student and the practitioner in forming an accurate judgment as to the worth of many of those remedial measures which modern teaching places at his command. In the progress of the healing art, numerous changes have taken place in the treatment of disease; but, with all the changes, numerous important points of practice, of very ancient date, have held their ground even down to our own times. Here are a few such points, all of which were known and used previously to the sixth century of the present era. The list runs thus: frictions, baths, fomentations, poultices, and vesications; the removal of blood by venesection, arteriotomy, cupping, or leeching; the arresting of bleeding by ligature of vessels, torsion, pressure, styptics; the operations of tracheotomy and lithotomy; reduction of fractures, and the use of the splint, bandage, and sling; the reduction of dislocations, and the use of the pulley for that purpose; the use of the trephine (which is as old as Hippocrates); the extraction of cataract; the removal of foreign bodies from wounds; the treatment of aneurism; the administration of opium, squills, henbane, hemlock, and many other valuable medicines; and the employment of most important rules regarding the preservation of health and the hygienic treatment of disease.

Well! some one may say; but it does not follow that a remedy must be of any value, because it was employed ages ago—it may be, in the Æsculapian temple of Cos, before Hippocrates wrote. To such an objection I would answer, that the weight of antiquity does give authority to the use of a remedy—its use, I say, apart from its misuse. For it must be acknowledged, that the ancients used—at least on some occasions, and perhaps on many—the remedies without judgment, and in an absurd manner. But there is no less probability that even the wisest physicians of the present day sometimes use their remedies in an absurd and injudicious manner. The ancient physicians acted to the best of their abilities; modern physicians can do no more; and, until they can act unerringly, they cannot blame the ancients on the score of want of judgment.

But another may object, that the ancients mixed up superstition with the use of their remedies. Granted that they did do so in many cases; but then it must be granted also, that even the moderns are not altogether free from the same charge. And, after all, what is superstition in regard to medicine? It consists in the enveloping of a simple fact in some mysterious explanation or accompaniment, which has little or no connection with it, but which serves as a means of conveying it more palatably or more surely to the public mind. While man is fallible, incapable of recognising all simple facts in their own merits, superstition will exist.

And, if we examine into the wildest superstition of ancient medicine, we may find in it a soul of truth: a truth, indeed, which was the original nucleus round which the superstition was wrought, which retained its character through all changes of medicine, sometimes shining dimly forth to some keen eye, until at last it became manifest to the universal eye, in its pure and naked character. We all know the history of the sympathetic powder of Sir Kenelm Digby. The powder was applied to the weapon that had inflicted a wound; but the wounded part was to be bound up, and let alone for seven days, at the end of which time the wound would be found united. In this instance, we no doubt have, as Dr. Paris has pointed out, the hint which led surgeons to the improved practice of healing wounds by “the first intention.”

4. The power of making great and correct generalisations is a result capable of being brought about by the study of medical history.

It is quite possible for a man, by working hard at some given subject, to make some display, and to distribute a certain amount of useful information; but, after all, such a man's attainments are but limited, and the results of his labours are comparatively small and evanescent. The man who can speak and write from the fulness of his knowledge, he it is that can so deal with special subjects as to create a permanent effect. The listener or reader believes this man, because he is grounded in his knowledge. And this feeling of confidence is not confined to the reader or hearer; it reacts on the possessor of the knowledge, and gives him greater power of appreciating his own strength as well as his own weakness. The man who is not thus strengthened stands on a giddy height, an admired object it may be, but liable to be blown over by any wind that may cross him. But the standing of the man full of the knowledge of others, as well as of his own, is firm as well as elevated. If he has a weak point, he knows it, for no man knows his weak points better than he who possesses most real knowledge. Such a man is, in one sense, "monarch of all he surveys."

The power of generalising derivable from a study of history of medicine, is of the same kind as that which has proved of extensive application in other sciences. In astronomy, generalisation led to the discovery of new worlds, and to other great facts. It has guided the naturalist, the chemist, and the geologist, in their researches. It was by means of great generalisations that Columbus arrived at his brilliant discovery; and it is through his immense power of generalisation that the name of the illustrious Humboldt is deservedly known and revered by the whole civilised world.

And if the generalisation of ideas has indubitably influenced and improved other branches of learning, is not the same process capable of leading to great results in reference to medicine? Unquestionably it has done so, and will do so more and more. Even now it is extensively recognised, that disease is not naturally split up into the multitude of existences which find a place in our systems of nosology, each with a distinct name, as if it were a distinct thing; and that the symptoms of disease are not mere matters of accident. On the contrary, the doctrine is gaining ground, as an hypothesis, that diseases are capable of being reduced to a few simple forms; and that the phenomena which we call symptoms are subject for their development to certain fixed laws. If ever—and I cannot but think that the time is approaching—this idea of the simplicity of the forms of disease shall be brought out by distinct demonstration, one of its most important proofs will be a generalisation derived from a review of the past records of medical science.

"History," says Hecker, in speaking of pestilential diseases, "that mirror of human life in all its bearings, offers even for great pestilences an inexhaustible, though scarcely explored, mine of facts. Here, too, it asserts its dignity as the philosophy of reality delighting in truth. It is conformable to its spirit to conceive general pestilences as events affecting the whole world; to explain their phenomena by the comparison of what is similar. Thus the facts speak for themselves, because they appear to have proceeded from those higher laws which govern the progression of the existence of mankind."

But perhaps it may be asked—Are the accounts which we find in ancient records so to be relied on, that general deductions may be made from them? Most certainly they are to be relied on; unless you are imbued with so deep a feeling of scepticism in all matters historical, as to lead you to doubt that the ancients possessed either the power of observing, or the will to record their observations truthfully. The extensive records of disease which we now make are indeed much more minute in details than were such records in former times; but they are not more accurate in their general outline; so that the leading characters of disease may be traced with safety into the most distant ages.

5. Another advantage gained from the study of medical history is the additional incitement and encouragement it gives us in the scientific pursuit of our profession. Place the modern physician, with his microscope, his stethoscope, his gravimeter, his barometer, and thermometer, by the side of the venerable Asclepiad of Cos, who possessed no such aids, but worked merely with his own sound sense, and his will to interrogate Nature, and force her to reply. Compare the results brought out by the two respectively; observe well what the ancient did, aided only by his own powers of observation and reasoning. Some of us may fear, lest, with our advantages, our results may not be found proportionate with those obtained by our ancestors. It may be, there is some ground for this

fear; yet not for a dismaying fear, but one which shall only incite us to renewed activity—a feeling more of encouraging hope than of fear. The mental powers of man are the same now as heretofore; the material on which he exercises those powers is the same; and if, by following with steady eye the leadings of a sure guide, our ancestors arrived at results which have rendered their names immortal, surely we, following the same guide, may arrive at results as much greater as our accumulated mass of knowledge is greater than theirs, and as the aids with which science has furnished us are more numerous and more ready to our hands.

And, again, the history of medicine shows that the art is of gradual development; that the progress of medical discovery is slow; and that, in every advance that has been made in our art, numbers of minds have been employed for long periods of time in working out that advancement. Let me refer to Hippocrates in proof of the gradual development of medicine. He did not make, and frame, and emit from his own mind all that valuable mass of medical truths and suggestions which have been handed down to us under his name. No! for centuries before him the vast stores of medical learning which he sent forth to the world had been accumulating in the temples of Æsculapius. Besides, he had been preceded by Pythagoras and his disciples; by Empedocles, who had uttered a rude physiology; by Alcmaeon, who is believed to have dissected; and he had seen Democritus opening the bodies of animals, with a view to the study of their structure. He lived in an extraordinary age, contemporary with extraordinary men; and his great merit consists in the fact that he collected and wrote down the wisdom of his period, and enriched it by the fruit of his observant and philosophic mind.

So, too, with regard to the circulation of the blood. We attribute to Harvey more than his due, when we designate him as the sole discoverer. No! the way had been paved for him by Galen, Servetus, Realdus Columbus, Fabricius; and Harvey completed the last link in the chain of evidence. He connected all the previous discoveries, made out other truths from nature, and joined the whole in the demonstration of that beautiful theory with which his name will ever be bound.

Do not suppose that I desire to lessen the fame of Hippocrates, or of Harvey, or of any of the acknowledged leaders of our profession. I have of necessity brought them forward, because their legacies to medicine are illustrative of the fact of the gradual accumulation of knowledge, and of the value of the record of any, even the smallest, well-observed fact. No observer and recorder of a real fact has thrown away his labour; for, as it has been in times past, so it will be in the future, some master mind will from time to time arise, and, connecting the isolated facts gathered by his predecessors, group them into one harmonious whole, adding something to perfect it from the stores of his own mind.

6. The practical lessons afforded by the history of medicine, in respect to the detection and avoidance of error, form another argument in favour of its study. We would make, in fact, to the experience of ages precisely the same application as we make of our own daily experience, when, convinced we have done wrong, we use the ordinary expression, "I shall be wiser next time." We would let our daily professional life be absorbed into the great individuality of medicine; and, taking the errors of our predecessor as our own errors—for we too might have committed them—we would trace out the causes which led to them, and thereby learn to avoid the actual commission of similar errors on our own part.

And here I must take the opportunity of insisting on the importance of impartial records in medicine—records of failure as well as of success. Is it not to those men, who have not been ashamed to confess their faults, that we most confidently look for honest instruction? We must bear in mind, that what we put forth as the result of our reflection and experience is not for ourselves alone, but for our after-comers. How important is it, then, that they should know our failures as well as our successes! Be assured of this, that, in future ages, when the followers of medical science shall turn back to the volumes which we of this generation are leaving on the shelves of our libraries, they will confide most in his teaching who, with the history of what he has done in any special subject, shall have honestly recorded what he has failed to do in the same. And, in acknowledging our faults, we shall not detract from our reputation, if we have any reputation worth preserving; for, as Celsus says—"Levia ingenia, quia nihil habent, nihil sibi detrahunt; magno ingenio, multa que nihilominus habituro, convenit etiam simplex veri erroris confessio, præcipueque in eo ministerio, quod utilitatis causâ posteris tra-

ditur; ne qui decipiantur eadem ratione, quâ quis ante deceptus est."

Not only is the study of medical history profitable in pointing out the causes of the errors which have occurred in the straightforward progress of medical science; but also in enabling us to form a proper estimate of errors of another class—heresies and quackeries. Errors of this kind arise from folly, or from ignorance, or from selfishness. They are founded in and reared on the ignorance of the many, by the designing and the selfish; and the priests of quack-systems have worked on the public mind in other ages as they now work.

"It is now upwards of 2000 years," says Dr. Gairdner in a public address, "since the Father of Physic embodied a great truth in the striking expression, 'Our natures are the physicians of our diseases.' Yet this truth, accepted and acted upon by almost all great physicians, has generally been scouted by the public at large; and the whole tribe of quacks have aided and abetted them in despising or distrusting the influences of nature, and pointing the finger of scorn at physicians who knew better, or who did not choose to pander to popular prejudice. . . . Only the other day, I found in a homeopathic journal one of the partisans of infinitesimal globules accusing ordinary physic of being a system of scientific trifling with disease, using only palliative remedies, and based on the rule of 'let ill alone;' the very same charge, in different words, which Asclepiades of Bithynia brought against the Hippocratic practice, when he called it a 'waiting upon death.'"

Does any one fear that the rampancy of modern charlatanism endangers the existence of true medicine? There is no room for fear. Systems of charlatanism have again and again sprung up; but they have sprung out of the ignorance of the age, and the soil in which they have been planted has been too shallow for them to take deep root. They have their time, and make a very gaudy show, and are much admired; but their attractions soon fade, and their *débris* only remain as monuments of our occasional folly. In their life, they have in all ages attempted to undermine the great Hippocratic oak; and some even attempt to steal vital supplies from it by clinging to it as parasites. But the roots of the noble old tree become more and more deeply fixed in the healthy soil of experience and induction; it has outlived and will outlive all insidious undermining weeds, and will shake off its parasites, nothing the worse for what they have plundered from it to support their miserable existence a little longer. The observance of the history of medicine cannot, in this respect, fail of being a source of great encouragement to those who, when quackeries are the order of the day, fear lest they should so increase as to put an actual extinguisher on the light of true science.

Such are some of the motives which should lead us to the study of medical history; and I beg you to note them well in your minds, and allow them to have their full influence. Remember, again, that in no age of the world has man, as an intellectual being, lived solely for his own time. The tendency of the operations of the human mind is to accumulation and to perpetuity; and their power of perpetuity increases in proportion to their congruity to unchangeable facts—that is, to the stability of the foundation on which they are placed. In medicine, much has passed away, after lasting a few ages, or perhaps only an age, because it was unstable; and much that is now remaining will pass away for the same reason. But the truthful observations—the well founded reasoning—that form the substantial part of our art and science, these have been accumulating from the earliest ages—from the times at least when the restored sick wrote up their clinical histories in the *Æsculapian* temples. The life of a man, as an animal, is a limited period of threescore years and ten, or thereabout; the life of a man, as man, is but an integer in the vast mass of time during which man has existed and will exist. The whole aggregate lives of man form one great existence, of which no part can be isolated from its past or from its future. So it is with medicine. Our lives, as followers of the healing art, are not mere isolated periods. The commencement of our existence dates back to a period of which we have no more idea than of our individual existence in the first year of our childhood; and, like the early recollections of childhood, the early history of our science dawns gradually on us. We can no more ignore the fact that our medical lives are only integral parts of the great life of medicine, than we can ignore the fact that the present moment is but a part of the life which we commenced as infants.

The medicine of no age, then, can be thoroughly comprehended if merely studied *per se*, apart from the medical history of other ages. But I will go still further, and generalise still

more widely, and perhaps alarm some of you with the idea of the vastness of the subject. We can scarcely study the history of medicine to its full profit, unless we also study the influences which external circumstances have had on it in its different periods. We ought to have a knowledge of the state of civilisation of any country, in any given age, if we would correctly appreciate the state of medical science therein. Indeed, without knowing the general character of the age, we cannot understand its medicine. Dr. Gairdner, whom I have already quoted, has made some apposite remarks on this.

"We very often hear the art of medicine spoken of as if it were a thing apart, subject to conditions and laws of its own, and standing aloof from the general current of human sympathies and activities. Medical men are regarded as a kind of priesthood, drawing their inspiration from some mysterious revelation of traditional philosophy, which cuts them off, for good and for evil, from the aspirations, the knowledge, the follies, the vices of the hour. People rarely reflect that the faults and the virtues of medical men are in reality only their own faults and virtues, modified by accidental circumstances. Yet nothing is more certain, than that medical men are nurtured on the same intellectual and moral diet with the rest of the educated population, and only differ in possessing a technical knowledge of things relating to disease. To accuse the medical art, therefore, wholesale, as some people are fond of doing, is substantially to criminate the age which has produced and tolerates it. You can no more expect to have a real and exalted art of healing among a degraded or half-educated population, than you can expect to gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles. I will not indeed assert, because I do not believe, that it is impossible for the medical art, or for individual medical men, to be, to a certain extent, independent of the circumstances in which they find themselves; but in the main it is true, that from a barbarous age you can have nothing but a rude and ignorant medical practice; from a superstitious age, an irrational practice; from a corrupt age, an immoral practice; from an age of imposture, a practice of quackery." (*On Medicine and Medical Education*, pp. 29-30.)

The author of these remarks is evidently looking on the dark rather than on the bright side of medicine; and, so far, his observations are quite just. In proof of them, we only require to call to mind the notices which historians and travellers give us of the barbarous surgery and superstitious medicine of uncivilised tribes. But the converse proposition is also equally true—that from an enlightened age—an age of moral and intellectual enlightenment—we get a striking out in the direction of rational medicine. We find this when we study the progress of civilisation, and observe the periods in which human intellect has most prominently burst forth in general science and philosophy. No doubt the progress of medicine is slow and steady—and perhaps there has never been a period when it has been at an entire standstill; but it is in these periods especially that medicine has made its greatest and most marked advances; and we learn to look on these advances, and on the men with whose names they associated, not as a kind of supernatural phenomena, but as the necessary results of a combination of circumstances. Medicine, then, as an art, advances somewhat of necessity, because it is always before us; but, as a science, it progresses as a part of the caravan of general science. In proof of this, we need but look at the state of the intellectual world at the time when Hippocrates put forth to the world the imperishable volumes which bear his name, and at the period when Harvey completed and made known the great discovery of the circulation of the blood. On the other hand, if we consider the period which bears the significant name of the "dark ages," when science was at a standstill, we see medicine equally retarded in its advance.

This subject, the connection of the progress of medicine with that of general science and philosophy, I shall have occasion to speak of again in certain parts of this course of lectures.

Having thus endeavoured to give you some idea of the importance of the study of the historical records of medicine to all who desire to be well-informed in this science, I will now offer a few words of advice as to the disposition of mind in which this study should be followed. For it must be said of this as of the study of medicine in general, that unless the motives which lead to it are pure, unless it be followed with a view to the cultivation of the intellect and higher moral feelings, it would better never be undertaken.

Enter on it, then, if you can, with minds free from prejudice of any kind, favourable or unfavourable to particular men or

particular doctrines. That you will so far run against common notions as to look for perfection—even relative—I do not expect; but what I would especially impress on you is, never to take up the history of medicine with the preformed idea that all you are going to read is so much nonsense, the perusal of which is an absolute waste of time. Where you find doctrines laid down, and practices inculcated, which the enlightenment of the present age refuses any longer to recognise as binding upon the practitioner of medicine, judge of them temperately and charitably. Examine, as far as opportunity is afforded, the sources of each error with which you meet. If it be traceable to moral obliquity on the part of the individual committing it, and to no other assignable cause, pass on it what mental condemnation you will; but at the same time always reflect whether our profession, in the nineteenth century, is altogether free from men who, in future ages, if their names and deeds survive, will be mentioned but with the voice of warning, as examples for the avoidance of all true and honest followers of medical science. If the error be plainly one of the judgment, condemn it not hastily. Examine well the intellectual atmosphere in which the man lived who committed it; recall the opportunities which he possessed; bear in mind the popular prejudices which operated in retarding any desire he may have had to obtain a more perfect knowledge of things relating to medical science. And if, notwithstanding all the allowances to be made for the disadvantages under which the ancients laboured, you still feel disposed to judge harshly, ask yourselves whether medical science is in the present time so free from intellectual error, and its disciples so learned, that the errors of the past can, with good conscience, be pointed at with the finger of scorn. But I believe that hasty condemnation can never be uttered by those who are really advanced in sound knowledge; for it is an essential attribute of true wisdom to be moderate in judgment. Mark, then, the errors, not for ridicule, but with charity; and take them for instructive lessons, as pointing out courses to be avoided. Value the records of them in history, as the mariner values the markings of the shoals and sunken rocks on his chart.

When you meet with records of improvement in medicine, note down these, too, in the tablets of your memory; and take them as lessons in regard both to the science and to individuals. For our science, they teach hope; they encourage us to look and work onwards to its perfection. To the individual modern practitioner, the records of the deeds of the fathers of medicine teach lessons of industry and perseverance. Consider well what they did, and under what conditions. Weigh here again the circumstances surrounding the ancients with those surrounding the moderns; and remember that the same patience and perseverance which overcame obstacles in times past, when they were great, ought to overcome them now, when they are much less.

Honour, then, the great among the ancients in medicine; and take them as your examples. Yet, while you render them this filial duty, beware of hero-worship. Nothing, perhaps, tends more to retard the progress of science than hero-worship: the system, I mean, of setting up some noted individual as the exponent of all that is good and worthy of admiration in his time—of all progress. Do not let all the medical knowledge of an age be merged in one man. Rather let the man be merged into the science, except so far as you derive instruction for your personal advantage from their example. Give their due to the men whose names stand forth less prominently; and, while Hippocrates and Galen and the Arabian physicians are in distinct outline before you, do not neglect to recognise the numerous others in the background: for each of them did something, small though it might sometimes be, to advance the progress of medicine.

I will conclude this lecture by some extracts from a work of an English physician who lived a century and a half ago, and whose opinions on the value of the history of medicine give additional force to the arguments brought forward in this lecture. I allude to Dr. Freind.

"I am satisfied, that a thorough acquaintance with the writers in physic, especially the old ones, is the surest way to fit a man for the practice of this art. And if this may seem too strong an assertion to some, who can taste nothing but their own reflections on their own practice, I desire it may be observed, that there are some cases at least, which do but seldom happen, and when they do, I dare venture to say that they will be less surprising to one, who has a familiar acquaintance with the good authors in physic; nay, that they will be more readily discerned, and more clearly distinguished by

him, than by the greatest genius that despises these assistances.

"Every physician will make, and ought to make, observations from his own experience; but he will be able to make a better judgment and juster observations, by comparing what he reads and what he sees together. It is neither an affront to any man's understanding, nor a cramp to his genius, to say that both the one and the other may be usefully employed, and happily improved in searching and examining into the opinions and methods of those who lived before him; especially considering that no one is tied up from judging for himself, or obliged to give into the notions of any author, any further than he finds them agreeable to reason, and reducible to practice.... There is as large and fruitful a field for sagacity and good judgment to display themselves in, by distinguishing between one author and another, and sometimes between the several parts and passages in the same author, as is to be found in the greatest extent and variety of practice.... 'Tis true, that no one ought to run implicitly into another's notions, merely upon account of his name or his antiquity, how great soever either of them may be; but surely 'tis as true, that a long and established reputation is a sufficient reason why any of the ancients should be heard and try'd, before they are condemned: and I am apt to believe, upon an impartial inquiry it will appear that it was upon very good grounds that Hippocrates, and Galen, and their successors, have been all along reckoned the great lights and fathers of the faculty, and that such an universal deference has been paid to their writings through an uninterrupted succession of many centuries. In some of which times, it is possible, there may have lived men of as great talents, and of as large experience, as even the present age, renowned as it is, can produce."

Having thus placed before you some of the advantages derivable from the study of the history of medicine, and the motives for its pursuit, I shall, in the next lecture, enter on a sketch of medicine among the ancient Greeks anterior to the time of Hippocrates.

Original Communications.

ON MORNING SICKNESS: ITS SIGNIFICANCE AS A SYMPTOM.

By THOMAS INMAN, M.D., Liverpool.

THERE are many phenomena of disease so common that we fancy we know all about them, and this prevents our thinking; yet no sooner do we begin to examine into them than we find not only that our knowledge is scanty, but that they involve considerations of the highest interest, and lead us into the most recondite problems of physiology. Morning sickness is one of these. We are as familiar with its occurrence as with that of pregnancy; yet few, if any, understand its full significance. What an array of questions we may ask respecting it!

1. Why are pregnant women sick? 2. Why does the sickness occur in the morning? 3. Why does it occur during the early months more frequently than the later? 4. Why does not morning sickness attend a distended bladder, bowels distended by flatus, ovarian dropsy, or fibrous or other tumours of the uterus, as often as it attends pregnancy? 5. Does morning sickness attend any other complaints? if so, what have these in common with pregnancy? 6. What is the proximate cause? is it to be sought in the stomach itself, the brain, the uterus, or all combined?

In answering these questions, we light upon an interesting series of facts. All pregnant women do not have the symptom in question; many escape it entirely; others have it at one time and not at another; some of those who escape it have flatulence and other signs of dyspepsia; others, simple faintness. If we dive still deeper, we find it common amongst town-bred women, and rare amongst the healthiest of the rural population. We find, as I have had repeated opportunities for observing, that a lady who suffers from it in a town is comfortable the day after she resides in the country, and is ill again the day after her return; and that, for such an one, a prolonged residence in a pure air prevents morning sickness altogether. It is clear, then, that women are not sick simply because they are in the family way; there is something required in addition to that, to produce the vomiting.