INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN

THE SECTION OF MEDICINE,

*At the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association,
in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, August 1870.*

By D. EMBLETON, M.D.,

Physician to the Newcastle Infirmary; President of the Section.

THIS being the first meeting of the British Medical Association in the North of England, I take the opportunity of heartily welcoming this Section to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. We have been long, perhaps, in casting in our lot with the Association: it may be that there exists among us a tinge of that caution the full development of which is best seen north of the Tweed; but, once convinced of the advisability of joining the body, we have rapidly entered into the main spirit of it, and the development of the Northern Branch has been rapid, steady, and continuous.

Last year, at the Leeds meeting, it fell to my lot to have the pleasure of inviting the Association to meet here this year; but I did so with diffidence, fearing that we might fail to receive this influential body in a befitting manner, recollecting its reception in previous years at Dublin, Oxford, and Leeds. Now, however, I feel sure that you have met, and will meet, with the same friendly hospitality with which we have been greeted elsewhere.

In this ancient town you will find a type of the present time—new buildings and streets jostling and thrusting aside the old and inconvenient, what is worth preserving being repaired and restored; demolitions, reconstructions, and new works, going on simultaneously in various parts; our population—shrewd, intelligent, independent, somewhat rough, and rapidly augmenting—having in my life-time quadrupled itself by immigration from most parts of the United Kingdom, and of the north and west of the continent.

The practical application of science to the arts of life is the chief characteristic of our district. Our coal and iron are the basis of our industry and commerce. A long array of names, however, illustrious in classics, mathematics, theology, and law; in the different departments of engineering, as applied to agriculture, mining, the construction of bridges, ships, and cannon, of locomotives and railways (of the present system of which this immediate neighbourhood was the cradle); in chemistry and its application to the manufactures of iron, lead, the alkalis and their salts, pottery, glass, etc.; in antiquarian research, and in the fine arts, might be given to show that Newcastle has not been behind in the march of intellect and of improvement. It may suffice to mention Eldon and Stowell, the Stephensons, the Hawthorns, and Sir W. G. Armstrong, as names well known to the whole English-speaking race. In medicine, also, we have had names of worth in these northern parts, as witness Mark Akenside, the physician and poet of Newcastle; Dr. Armstrong, author of a celebrated work on fever; Dr. Clanny, the improver of the Davy lamp for coal-mines; and Dr. Brown, all of Sunderland; Dr. Trotter of Morpeth, physician to the navy, and author of *Medicina Nautica*, and *A View of the Nervous Temperament*; the benevolent Dr. Winterbottom of South Shields, founder of hospitals and schools for seamen; Dr. Addison, the skilful physician and eloquent lecturer of Guy's Hospital, who will always be remembered in *Morbis Addisonii*, and whose native place, Long Benton, is not three miles distant. The sciences accessory to medicine, as botany, natural history in its various divisions, comparative anatomy, and palæontology, have been greatly enriched by the labours of Thomas Bewick, the justly celebrated engraver on wood; of William Hutton, Joshua Alder, Albany and John Hancock, Daniel Oliver, Richard Howse, George and H. B. Brady, Thomas Athley, and others, members of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club.

There has been a school of medicine here since 1834, of which Sir John Fife was the principal founder. In 1851, it was broken up, but immediately two schools arose, which in 1858 were amalgamated. Very recently, the College of Medicine has been erected into the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Durham.

Our Infirmary of Newcastle enjoys in the northern counties a similar reputation to that enjoyed in the West Riding by the Leeds Infirmary. The University of Durham, in conjunction with the College of Medicine, was among the very foremost of the medical bodies to require that practical examination and clinical testing which is now becoming imperative upon all the medical educating and licensing bodies. Our

regulations for the year 1856-57 attest the truth of what I have here advanced.

In this time of change and progress, when everything, even the groundwork of religious belief, is being examined, tested, and proved, when everything must show its *raison d'être* or be passed by, we strive to advance with the progress of the age, examining all things, holding fast that which is good; and we are persuaded that from this great gathering we shall receive a new and powerful impulse in our progress, which we shall not readily allow to die. We shall have your new cases and views; your new facts, the result of experiment and research. We shall listen to, and take part in, your discussions, adding what we can to the common stock of knowledge; examine the specimens in the Annual Museum, of healthy and diseased parts, of medicines, of foods and drinks, of instruments and various appliances, of drawings, and of new books; and shall have good reason, I doubt not, to thank you for your acceptance of our invitation to meet in Newcastle.

It is not for me here to attempt to trace the progress of medicine even during the past year; but I may be allowed briefly to mention a few points that seem to be characteristic of the present medical epoch.

In the first place, we have the discovery and successful application of anæsthetic remedies—ether, chloroform, chloral, bichloride of methylene, nitrous oxide—remedies which not all “the old vegetable neurotics,”

“Not poppy, nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,”

can approach in their beneficial and blessed operation—remedies which have been ordained to blunt the sting of the primeval curse.

Secondly, there are the intricate and deeply interesting researches into the origin of life, with the view of solving that *crux* of philosophers, the question of equivocal generation; and most intimately connected with this is the question of the origin and mode of propagation of zymotic diseases. The great question of equivocal generation is as yet *sub judice*; but the able contest between Pouchet and Pasteur, and the more recent researches and writings of Bennett, Bastian, and others, appear to bring us back more and more nearly to the ancient belief, though under widely different conditions and circumstances. The modern investigations into infusions of animal and vegetable substances, whether natural or “selected”—into the dust from the most varied localities—into the very motes of the sunbeam—into the air of every possible region—into the solar spectrum of light and heat—into the blood and other fluids of the body—by means of practically educated observers, in whose hands are the modern microscope and a most subtle chemistry, will yet wring from reluctant Nature a plain answer to this most important question—an answer fraught with the happiest consequences to the ease, health, enjoyment, and longevity of man. Inquiry in the proper spirit must and will proceed, in spite of all opposition and anathema. The latest results of such researches we may hope to hear during this meeting of the Association.

In the third place, there is, as every one must have remarked with astonishment and delight, the wonderful rapidity and extent of the advance of medical knowledge. Those who can look back some forty years, to the time when the curriculum of education was gone through in two years; when the original *Dublin Dissector* was almost the only manual of anatomy; when Milligan's translation of Magendie gave a scanty physiology, but more than was required by any examiner; when Thomas's *Practice of Physic* was almost the sole *vade mecum* of the practitioner; when most of what was known of medical botany and chemistry might have been put almost into a nutshell; when the stethoscope was beginning to penetrate the hospitals of England, and the microscope in its present form was unknown; when the lancet, the stomach-pump, and the enema-apparatus were about the only medical instruments; when the old treatment, ridiculed so keenly and justly by Molière, was still in vogue; those only can realise and estimate the vast changes which in forty years have revolutionised our profession.

At the present time a student learns, or ought to learn, in his four years, many times more than a whole staff of medical teachers taught at the period of time alluded to. Now, diseases are being all studied anew, and a microscopic anatomy has succeeded to that of the scalpel and forceps; we want to know the natural history of diseases, and how they affect the fluids and the minute elements of the body chemically and pathologically; we have daily, teeming from the press, a flood of excellent books, all of which it is impossible to read; we have instruments of precision for examination of the body and for treatment, such as former ages knew not; and every day our art and science are becoming more rational, exact, and reliable, and the diffusion of our knowledge throughout the profession of the world by means of the medical press resembles that of newly liberated gases through the atmosphere.

The division of labour very generally established is a great aid in the advancement of medicine, though there is perhaps danger of specialities becoming too special. On the other hand, it is to be hoped that the mediæval and antiquated fashion of combining the clerical and the medical professions in one person will never find favour with the profession or the public.

Much has been achieved; more yet remains to be done. Many and great rewards for medical labour have been obtained; more and more valuable lie in the dark future, awaiting the labour and the daring of the intellectual. As, however, our science advances, the veteran heads of our columns of workers fall off one by one, worn out by the ceaseless conflict with the unknown, and the work falls on younger, but not less ardent, or, let us trust, less capable heads. *Ars longa, vita brevis.*

During the past twelve months, we have had to deplore the loss of several of our best men: Dr. Jeaffreson of Leamington; Sir James Y. Simpson, the warm-hearted and open-handed, the versatile, the tireless, the inventor of the use of chloroform, with the motto *dolore victo* ascribed to him; Sir James Clark, the physician and friend of our beloved Queen; Dr. James Copland, the amiable and laborious author of the *Dictionary of Medicine*; Mr. Nunneley of Leeds, a worthy successor of the Heys in surgery, and the giver of the Address in Surgery to the Association in his native town last year. Peace to their ashes! glory to their names! May we who remain have the spirit to emulate their bright examples!

And now, I must not keep you longer from the business of our Section. Let us listen with attention and courtesy to the numerous communications that will come before us; let us freely, openly, and boldly, but temperately and fairly, discuss them, and, as those whose only desire it is, rising above all petty and unworthy considerations, loyally to discover the truth, award to each and all the communicants English fair play and due meed of praise. Of blame there will be no need, for I feel that all the members of this Association, increasing in numbers, and more prolific of work, will always do their duty with a single eye to the advancement of a profession whose grand object it is to do as much good and as little harm as is possible to the great army of martyrs to disease and death. May this meeting be as successful as its predecessors!

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

DELIVERED IN

THE SECTION OF PUBLIC MEDICINE,

*At the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association,
in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, August 1870.*

By HENRY W. RUMSEY, M.D.,
President of the Section.

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OF MEDICINE.

Now, for the third time, this Association has recognised "State-Medicine" as a subject for separate treatment in a special department of our Annual Congress.

When, at the Meeting in Dublin, I suggested the formation of this Section, our leaders at once admitted the propriety of such an addition to the usual scheme. Accordingly, at the following meeting in Oxford, Mr. Simon, and last year in Leeds, Dr. Farr, occupied this chair, to the great furtherance of the cause to promote which we here assemble.

At the kind request of our President, I accepted the honour now conferred on me,—not, indeed, without misgivings as to my fitness for the post, yet anxious to do what I could to aid your deliberations, and conscious that I should be supported by many able fellow-workers.

Without waste of words, I proceed to our business—the Public Relations of Medicine.

The State, even in this country, has availed itself of medical knowledge and skill in many ways; not, however until laws had been enacted and Royal Charters granted—all since the 15th century—for the purpose of incorporating the several orders of the profession in the three divisions of the kingdom: thus improving the *status* and raising the qualifications of each. In 1858, for the first time, the State began to provide for the more uniform education of the whole profession, and for its complete registration. And now, at last, Parliament has been asked to provide for a single State Licence, which may supersede the licences of the several corporate bodies, whose diplomas have been permitted so long to perplex the profession and mystify the people.

But the State has for some time recognised the profession as a whole by making use of it, through public authorities, for public purposes.

Thus, many of us are occupied in an organised system for the medical relief and sanitary care of the destitute classes in districts and workhouses. To us is officially committed the health and sickness of classes still more helpless—the inmates of asylums and of prisons. Even the hospitals and dispensaries of this kingdom are to some extent employed and protected by the State: in Ireland, they are entirely under public control. The Government also provides for the medical requirements of certain public bodies, the police, some departments of the civil service, and the labourers in public works.

Above all, the State, through its War Departments, secures, under exact regulations, the due examination of those entrusted with the medical charge of sailors and soldiers; thus acknowledging that the wisdom of the sons of Machaon and Podalirius avails more than many thousands of combatants in the bloody conflicts of a yet uncivilised, unchristianised humanity. It was in this department of the public service that the earliest, and (next to those of Howard, the prison Reformer), the most signal efforts of preventive medicine were made. It was under our Pringles, our Linds, and our Blanes, that the foundations of a scientific hygiene were laid; and here still it is that important sanitary experiments are being constantly made, which may ultimately be extended for the benefit of the whole population.

By medical agency, again, the State protects the children and youth of the working classes in factories, workshops, and mines, where the keenly contested race between Labour and Capital requires continual and vigilant supervision.

It is men, medically educated, who have to determine in many cases the capability of persons to fulfil civil duties, social and family responsibilities, and labour contracts.

In the administration of justice, it is the physician or surgeon who has to ascertain and report facts which can be discovered and described by him alone, and to deliver opinions which he only is supposed to be competent to form, for the furtherance of right, the redress of wrong, and the detection of crime.

All these matters show the reality and the existence of State Medicine. It has *not* to be formed: it has only to be re-formed. What is now done imperfectly, irregularly, distractedly, may be done normally and efficiently. To reduce this chaos into order is a work in which we may heartily co-operate with the Government and Legislature.

To some, no doubt, the necessary reforms will seem objectionable innovations. Every movement of the kind in this country is said to pass through three stages—that of ridicule, that of discussion, that of adoption. State Medicine has probably passed the first of these stages, and has gained strength in the encounter. We are now happily discussing the methods of its better organisation. It may yet be a work of years to complete the machine, and a still longer process to regulate its action.

I recollect a party of earnest men meeting in January 1853, at the late Dr. Marshall Hall's. Sir Ranald Martin was a moving spirit on that occasion. Mr. Pollock acted as our Secretary. Here, in this prospectus of the Society of State Medicine, is the result of the deliberations of that meeting. We received no support either from the profession or from the public. Excellent as were our objects, and well-considered our scheme of inquiry, the subject was too novel—perhaps, I may say, too high—for popular approval at that time.

In promoting the cultivation of State Medicine and its proper application to the public service, we are, in fact, building upon the physical sciences as the foundation of our work, just as medicine in general began to comprehend them during the revival of learning in the Middle Ages. The nascent Universities then claimed for Medicine a wider and more philosophical meaning than that of the healing art, and assigned it a place under physics. It was long after the fall of the Roman empire that the higher order of medical practitioners became, and were first called, *physicians*. When Pliny the Elder wrote of *Empedocles physicus*, he did not mean *medicus*. The epithet "physicus" then denoted a follower and observer of Nature. The words "Physiker" in Germany, and "Physician" in England, do not appear, I think, until the thirteenth century;* and they are perfectly distinct in original meaning from the Greek *ἰατρός* and the Latin *medicus*. Nor do I know that any other nation has employed this designation of a professor of physics to mean a healer of the sick.†

The "Kreis-physikus" of Germany, I hardly need say, is the type of the State medical officer, whom we are endeavouring to establish in England. Here, however, not only did the word physician come to mean simply a therapist, but a further and still more curious pervers-

* Chaucer's "Doctour of physike" must have been a graduate of some university.

† When the late Professor Whewell said "Medicine, in its original and comprehensive sense, as one of the great divisions of human culture, must be considered as taking in the whole of physical science," he probably referred to the revival rather than to the origin of medicine.