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AN ADDRESS

ON

LOCAL MEDICAL TOPICS AND ASSOCIATION WORK.

Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Lancashire and Cheshire Branch.

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GENTLEMEN, twenty-five years have passed since, in June 1859, I gave expression to my gratitude for the confidence and esteem evinced in electing me president of the Lancashire and Cheshire Branch of the British Medical Association, on the occasion when it celebrated its twenty-third anniversary by meeting for the first time in the loyal and ancient city of Chester, so rich in archaeological interest and in historical traditions and associations. I then hazarded the prediction that that first visit would prove to be the precursor of numerous similar gatherings, each succeeding one increasing in numbers, in influence, and in the importance of its transactions. Facts have fully justified that prediction. Like the parent Association in relation to the general body of the profession, so the Lancashire and Cheshire Branch embraces the *élite* of the profession in the district it comprises, and comparatively few members remain outside its ranks. The difficulty of adding to our numbers is, therefore, necessarily ever increasing, but still, after the lapse of so many years, I again have the courage to believe that, in the future as in the past, this important Branch will grow in at least equal proportion and power with the gigantic Association, the largest the world has ever known, of which it forms so considerable a part.

I am this day—and it is in truth a very proud and happy day for me—entering upon the duties of your president for the second time. You have thereby conferred on me an honour which, in this large Branch of the Association, is unprecedented, and which from that very circumstance necessarily carries with it enhanced value. I should indeed be unworthy of your renewed confidence if I did not rejoice in the proof it affords, at a time when my professional career must at no very remote period terminate, that—however unworthy such distinction—I have never lost, and still retain, the favourable regard of my professional brethren; and so long as I may be spared I must ever esteem it as the crowning reward of my life. I trust that life has not been wholly selfish during which, however often I may have failed, however often I may have erred, I have yet to the best of my poor ability aimed at promoting mutual regard and self-respect amongst my brethren, so as to weld them into a united body, powerful for good. In all efforts in this direction the purpose must be to seek the approval, not of the outside public merely, not of this or that clique in the society of provincial towns, but the approval of the members of our own body politic. No means have ever been conceived so well adapted to promote mutual esteem and goodwill amongst us as the mixing of ourselves together in the scientific and social proceedings, whether of the parent Association or of the Branches. Misunderstanding of the motives of others is a fertile source of disagreement and bitterness, which a few moments of frank personal examination, the opportunities for which our meetings afford, will frequently suffice to dissipate.

With this preamble, it now becomes my duty, as it is my pleasure, to give you, on behalf of the profession in Chester, and also of the Chester Medical Society, a most hearty welcome. The pleasure we anticipated from receiving you has unfortunately not been destined to be unalloyed. Something of cloud, something often of deep sorrow, must come round with each revolving year. Untoward events will

supervene, and bereavements occur to excite that sympathy with and pity for others, which are the special appanage of the human race. Of those who have filled the office of president of the parent Association, though the Association has existed for little more than half a century, how few survive!

In our own Branch, also, we have too often had to mourn the loss of those we have honoured. In Chester, two only, Dr. Davies-Colley and myself, survive out of the four who have presided at our meetings. John Harrison, who filled the chair in 1867, and Dr. McEwen, who occupied it only two years ago, have both gone to their eternal rest. To come still nearer, our friend Borchardt, vigorous in mind as in body, who played so important a part in the medical life of Manchester, and who, full of energy and apparent health and strength, presided in Manchester at the last annual meeting, has also been fatally stricken and been claimed by the great majority; while we are left to deplore his absence as that of one who, in all his varied characteristics, is not to be replaced. Strangely, he himself communicated to me his wish that the Branch should, if possible, meet this year in Chester, and that I should succeed to his office. Alas! little did he then dream that he would not be with us. This sad coincidence has so forcibly impressed me with its striking resemblance to that which occurred when I was President of the Association in the year 1866, that I cannot refrain from communicating it. The death of Sir Charles Hastings, the revered founder of the Association, who during his life had never been absent from the annual meetings, preceded but a short time the meeting in Chester, and cast a gloomy shadow over the assemblage. Sir Charles Hastings was to have been my guide and counsellor, and had promised to be my honoured guest. Instead of this, I had to give utterance to the solemn feeling of profoundest grief, which marred the gratification inseparable from the proud position to which the Association had raised me.

I have to apologise for the detail of these personal matters; but the lives of your presidents, their inner life as well as their outward action, must always bear some slight relation to the Branch which honours them. I have, however, now to apologise for not meeting you with an address, such as I might have hoped to prepare had I been able to command sufficient time for its composition; but I have been compelled, by many circumstances, over which I had no control, to defer its preparation to so late a period—indeed, to some few hours with difficulty snatched from work of the day and night preceding this meeting—that it has been impossible for me to discharge the duty as I could wish. Not to weary you, but still to show that I have not been insensible or indifferent to the exigencies of the situation, I may state that, in addition to my professional avocations, which, in the case of most of us, make such demands upon our time as leave but scant leisure for other occupations, I have had to follow up through good report, and, I am sorry to add, much unjustifiable evil report, for more than fifteen years, certain special work entrusted to me by the Association—work involving constant and untiring watchfulness, and voluminous correspondence, which has been so heavy (and rarely more so than during this critical period), and so varied by alternations of hope and despair, that, but for the blessing of excellent health, and tolerable imperviousness to worry, it must long ere this have crushed me. I have never flinched from the work, because I have been hitherto sustained by the unbroken confidence of the Association in myself and my colleagues of the Medical Reform Committee, as expressed at all the annual and other general meetings of the Association. To complete the catalogue of my troubles, the happiness of my home has also been clouded by the protracted illness of its head, confined to her room during the whole of this year, though bravely bearing up with cheerfulness, and insisting on my going through all the duties connected with my position as if no such drawback existed. Her great hope is that the meeting may be a success in a social as well as in a scientific point of view. This combination of circumstances brought me to the eve of our meeting without a prepared address; and it is only at the very last moment, when further delay was impossible, that I have been able to put these thoughts together.

The subject of an address, such as is the rule at Branch meetings, is not always easy of selection. Nothing could be more admirable for its

brevity and clearness than the last address by Borchardt on a subject peculiarly his own, viz., the use of milk in rearing infants. Few can hope to rival it. In Chester, however, subjects of interest abound in close connection with the neighbourhood. The names of Haygarth, Sir Henry Holland, Latham, and, among the living, Sir William Bowman, at once strike us, and will ever remain household words in our midst. Haygarth, at a time when the contagiousness of typhus fever was denied, was the first to advocate and realise the isolation of such cases, in order to diminish its spread, by establishing fever wards in the Chester Infirmary. The thorough education of Sir Henry Holland, whose father was a general practitioner at Knutsford, conjoined with the advantages his remarkable passion for foreign travel gave, placed him in the first rank of accomplished courtly physicians, while many of his literary and professional papers maintain their interest to the present day. In contrast to Holland, Latham, whose classical work on *Diseases of the Heart* has, since his death, been recently published by the New Sydenham Society, will ever be esteemed a model of careful clinical observation, recorded in pure and elegant English. Latham differed from Sir Henry Holland, whose abilities were restricted to private practice, in devoting himself with zealous assiduity as a clinical teacher in the great school of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, to the training of large classes of students, many of whom have made the knowledge thus acquired from him the stepping-stone to further progress. In their respective walks, both will ever rank amongst honoured Cheshire men. The name of Bowman, for years at the head of ophthalmic surgery in Britain, is also connected with Cheshire. He is also an accomplished physiologist and surgeon, as well as oculist, and his address in surgery delivered to the Association in Chester in 1866 is one of the most perfect for learning, for judgment, for eloquence, and, above all, for high moral and pure religious tone. The review of the works of these men, collectively or separately, might well form the subject of an address.

Other interesting subjects connected with Chester would be that of the epidemics which from time to time have ravaged the city, the Black Death and the plague more especially, and, in a hygienic sense, the water-supply. In 1866 the supply of water to the city was in near proximity to the delivery of sewage into the river. In this condition of things cholera visited us, but the epidemic was in no way marked by exceptional virulence. The water now supplied to the city, turbid after heavy rain, and within reach of the tidal flow at spring tides, though greatly improved, is, in the fact of being drawn from a river on which large and small towns are situated, derived from a polluted though greatly improved source. It has never been shown that ill consequences have followed its use. On another occasion the city sewer burst, and for three months discharged its contents on the Roodee, whence the effluvium was oppressively offensive. A very few men, something like three, were occupied for about three months in making it good, when a hundred men might possibly have closed it in three days. No case of fever occurred in connection with the offensive stagnant outpour. This also is a fact of considerable interest.

Another subject which would to my mind afford abundant material for an address, would be furnished by the almost incredible advance made in all departments of medicine and surgery during the last forty years. I well remember one glorious Sunday in the year 1848 discussing with Sir Spencer Wells, on the terrace of St. Germain, overlooking the Seine, the feasibility of ovariectomy, and concluding that it was unjustifiable; and now the name of Sir Spencer Wells is indissolubly associated with the operation, which has lost all its terrors, which he may truly be said to have popularised, and which has been the means of adding incalculably to the sum of human life and happiness. I equally well remember, one evening in 1849, after returning from Paris, meeting the late Dr. Sharpey at Professor W. B. Carpenter's, and describing Claude Bernard's experiments. On mentioning the development of sugar in the urine of the rabbit, after pricking the floor of the fourth ventricle, I observed the account was received by Sharpey with an air of incredulity. These two marvellous instances of progress in surgery and physiology are fully equalled by the advances in medicine. Bernard, Brown-Séquard, Broca, Lockhart Clarke, Ferrier, and Ross, have thrown a flood of light on nervous diseases, the localisation of which, though much remains to be done, is steadily making definite progress. In fact, at no period since the discovery of the circulation of the blood by the immortal Harvey has progress in our profession made such giant strides.

The British Medical Association, by the formation of Branches, and by developing imperial and international intercourse in the ranks of the profession, has largely contributed to the diffusion of all new discoveries and to the practical illustration of the gravest operations; and these acknowledged advantages have undoubtedly stimulated our brethren in America, in the remotest colonies, and even in Europe, to

follow our example; the International Medical Congress lately held in London being the most conspicuous success hitherto witnessed.

Another respect in which our Association has led the van in our country has been shown in the formation of the Scientific Grants Committee, by which assistance in money and in the use of delicate and expensive instruments is given for the prosecution of original researches; and the same may be said of the Collective Investigation Committee, by which the observations of the scattered members of our profession on various moot points are collected and recorded. The first real step in this direction was urged by Professor Hughes Bennett, in his address in medicine at Chester. The amount of knowledge which has died with members of our profession, too busy or too modest to make it known, passes calculation. Hughes Bennett pointed out the importance of collecting and classifying it; he maintained that all real advance in therapeutics must now depend on combined investigation, and he proposed, at the Chester meeting, to utilise the Association in promoting original investigations by grants to committees or individuals, and by working out collective investigation. The report of Bennett's Committee on the action of mercury was the first result of his labours. His subsequent investigations into the antagonism of remedies was terminated by his death. The funds of the Association at that time were not equal to any heavy strain; and, after his death, the work languished until, with the increased means at the disposal of the Association, Professor Humphry gave a fresh impetus to the movement, which is now a permanent charge on our funds.

In all matters relating to sanitary measures and the public health, the Association must ever exercise a powerful influence. That the public requires assistance is shown by the following question asked by Mr. Wigner, president of the Society of Public Analysts: "How long is the public health to be jeopardised by bad milk?" The answer is: So long as a good day's watering far exceeds the occasional fine of ten or twenty shillings. The only remedy is new legislation. Not only is milk fraudulently dealt with, but it is also known that the refuse fat of pigs and bullocks, and occasionally deodorised grease, are substituted for butter; and so with other articles of diet.

Again, the spread of infectious diseases, and, amongst other points, their propagation through public schools, demands stringent supervision; and in close connection with this subject, the source of every supply of drinking water should be rigidly scrutinised in the interest of the public. Without dwelling on the interesting and important researches of Pasteur and Koch, it is manifest that the field of sanitary legislation which awaits the labours of the workers of our Association is boundless. It is not only in medicine, surgery, and physiology, not only in hygienic measures, that the Association proves itself a great educating centre, sending out its missionaries to disseminate knowledge in all directions; it has also played an important part in promoting medical legislation. In my own case, I find that history repeats itself. When, in 1859, I presided over this Branch, the Medical Act of 1858 was only recently passed. The necessity for amending it was admitted on all hands by the profession and by the Medical Council, but to this day the defects then existing still remain. Time has shown that, as that Act was the work of the profession outside the corporations, so now, unless through the profession in combination with the Government, medical legislation cannot take place. The Lancashire and Cheshire Branch has always been true to the grand principles of reform enunciated by the Association fifty years ago; and to realise them, union must be preserved, points of detail being left to discussion should the Bill reach committee. I am happy to inform you that Lord Carlingford and Mr. Mundella are both in earnest in pressing the Bill. It is for you to be equally in earnest, and success will then reward our efforts.

Gentlemen, I thank you for your great patience in listening to this hastily written and discursive address.

THE TREATMENT OF GASTRIC ULCER.—Dr Debove has recently deposed his views on this subject in the *Gazette Hebdomadaire de Médecine et de Chirurgie*. He does not approve of the milk-diet, as it may cause dilation of the stomach, in consequence of the large quantity of fluid which the patient is obliged to drink. He prescribes three daily meals, consisting each of 25 grammes of meat-powder mixed with 1 gramme of burnt magnesia, 2 grammes of prepared chalk and 1 gramme of saccharated lime. A quarter of an hour after each meal, the patient takes 4 grammes of bicarbonate of soda. For several cases of gastric ulcer with severe attacks of pain and vomiting, the adoption of this diet was followed by a very rapid cure. The gastric juice is neutralised, and no peptone is formed in the stomach, but the meat-powder is easily digested and absorbed in its passage through the intestines.