AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF

THE SECTION OF SURGERY,

*At the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association in
Liverpool, August 1883.*

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GENTLEMEN AND FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.—Let me in the first instance welcome you to the city of Liverpool, and congratulate you on the abundant and rich programme of subjects that will occupy our attention in the Section of Surgery. I do not intend to take up your time by an address on any special subject connected with our Section; that, indeed, is not expected nor required of the President of a Section. The Council, in its wisdom, decided that the Address in Surgery should be given by one not occupying the presidential chair. They have selected my friend and colleague in the Royal Infirmary, Mr. Reginald Harrison, for this duty; and we have heard from him much that will interest, and, I doubt not, much that will encourage and cheer, us in the work to which we have devoted our lives—the advancement of surgery as a science and as an art, the relief of human suffering, and the promotion, in short, of whatever tends to render life happier and longer, and freer from the discomforts and pains which, whether necessary or not, certainly exist.

Sanitary science has, as we all know, made enormous strides during the last few years; but Liverpool remains as it always has been, almost the most unhealthy of our great centres of population; and no wonder, when we remember that the density of its population to the acreage is more than double that of London, and far more than any other great town in the kingdom. With a limited water-supply, demanding, in the opinion of our authorities, the use of a "regulation cistern," restricting the supply of water to our closets to a degree which I think inadequate to the proper flushing of house-drains, it is not surprising that the house is unhealthy; though the street-drains are regularly flushed. Smoke, and the prosecution of offensive trades in our very midst, poison the atmosphere of our streets, which otherwise might be comparatively pure; and every night (when formerly we were for twelve hours at least enjoying fresh air, at any rate, those of us who opened our windows), Widnes pours forth its foul impurities, and we are, if the wind be favourable, compelled to breathe air so charged with poisonous gases, that vegetation is injured.

Altogether, Liverpool is not a pleasant or desirable place to live in; and life is not rendered more comfortable by the recent action of the City Council, in its obstinate determination to lay tram-routes along every outlet, and even in residential streets, that have hitherto enjoyed the comparative quietness and peace of macadam pavement. Even Rodney Street—the street occupied, above all others, by the profession, on account of its convenient position and its quietness—is to be invaded and laid with square setts "from kerb to kerb," as we are told by the relentless and merciless party that is dominant in our City Council. We are to be driven out by our homes being rendered untenable, whether for the pursuit of our profession or the comfort of quietness during the brief period of rest snatched from our laborious life. I say nothing about the deterioration of our property, though this is certain; nor of the wilfulness of the proceeding, for the actual traffic in the street does not support an ordinary omnibus-route; but I do mention the fact, as showing how little attention is shown to the wishes of the profession, who attended (as a deputation) in large numbers, and protested against this unnecessary and unjust proceeding.

But the subject of pavement with square setts is one which, I think, ought to be taken up by the profession in a wider sense than a purely personal one. Quiet is essential to the sick, and nothing can be more painful than to witness (unless it be to bear) the suffering of those confined to their beds, along the existing tram-routes. Imagine the agony of those suffering from painful nervous affections, brain-disease, fever, joint and spinal complaints,

and the thousand and one other diseases in which quiet is, of all things, most important. To open the window for a breath of fresh air (however hot and sultry the day may be) is simply cruelty; conversation is impossible; and I have often been obliged, after futile efforts to hear the poor patient's voice, to retire into some back room or passage to consult with the friends, or with my brother practitioner.

And why is this? Do the City Council suppose that by paving as they are now doing, they are making life more comfortable and bearable, more healthy and happy? Certainly not. Is it that they may provide a more luxurious seat for those who have hitherto ridden in the ordinary omnibus, or for themselves (who, having secured sufficient wealth to enable them to reside in suburban retreats, may be more comfortably conveyed to their business offices)? Let us hope not. Do they suppose that, by laying such pavements as render all other vehicular traffic, not only most unpleasant to those who ride in cabs and carriages, but actually dangerous, and cruel to horses, they contribute to the welfare and prosperity of Liverpool? I venture to assert that they do not. It has been long said that no one who could help it would reside here. With more truth than ever it may be repeated now.

In other great towns, attention is paid to the comfort of the inhabitants. London has its great thoroughfares—Oxford Street, Regent Street, Piccadilly, and scores of miles (where traffic is ten times as great as anywhere here)—laid with wood; and it is possible to open windows and doors, and enjoy conversation in the daytime, and rest at night. The better class of residential streets are everywhere paved with macadam, and, wherever practicable, square setts are being replaced by wood or other quiet pavement. But enough on this subject. Let us hope that, ere long, our authorities will awaken to the fact that the city exists for the inhabitants, and not alone for those who can afford to live in quiet suburbs; that life is unbearable in the midst of din and noise; and that it is their duty to promote whatever tends to the comfort, health, and happiness of those whom circumstances compel to reside in this busy centre. Let them no longer pursue a system of false and niggardly economy, by paving with iron and the hardest and noisiest stone, calculating that it will last longer than the brain and nervous system of the youngest inhabitant, and so in the long run reduce paving and scavenging rates. We most sincerely thank them for their consideration in temporarily spreading bark over the obnoxious pavement they have just laid down in front of this College, and so enabling us to conduct our deliberations within its walls; but we cannot congratulate them in the spirit of disregard they have shown in condemning the present and future youth of Liverpool to the difficult and delicate task of education in the midst of noise, thus tacitly acknowledged to be prohibitive to quiet thought and calm discussion.

In conclusion, let me hope that, during your residence among us, you are all provided with comfortable abodes, in streets where we may still have peace and quietness after the labours of the day.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.—From the annual report of the College from Midsummer Day, 1882, to Midsummer Day last, it appears that the income amounted to £19,374 19s. 2d., the largest amount being from fees paid by students on their examinations—viz., £16,249 2s.; rents from chambers adjoining the College, £1,524 8s.; dividends on stock, £1,124 5s. 2d.; receipts from trust funds, £345 17s. 6d.; fees paid on admission to the Fellowship, Council, and Court of Examiners, £115 10s. The total expenditure amounted to £19,446 18s. 5d., principally in fees paid to Members of the Council, Courts, and Boards of Examiners—viz., £7,374 19s. 6d. For the large staff of officers and servants in the three departments of office, museum, and library, the sum of £3,849 18s. 5d. was required; stamps, taxes, and rates, £1,427 16s. 6d.; alterations, repairs, and painting, £2,142 11s.; miscellaneous items, £433 14s. 2d. The balance at the bankers' is represented by £2,087 10s. 4d.

WEST LONDON HOSPITAL.—The Princess Mary Adelaide recently opened the west wing of the West London Hospital at Hammer-smith, which gives to this valuable institution an addition of fifty beds. The Princess was accompanied by the Duke of Teck, with the Princess Victoria and Prince Adolphus of Teck, and was received in the central hall by Viscount Enfield, the Bishop of London, Cardinal Manning, the vice-presidents and trustees, and a numerous gathering. After the west wing had been declared open, purses were received; and, in conclusion, the thanks of the vice-presidents, etc., were tendered to Her Royal Highness by Cardinal Manning, and acknowledged on behalf of the Princess by the Duke of Teck.

¹ The MS. of this Address has been accidentally delayed in transmission, and has only recently been received at the office of the JOURNAL.