A Discourse ON THE PORTRAITS AND PERSONALITY OF JOHN HUNTER.

BY

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ON July 22nd, 1831, the Court of Examiners was seated in the Council Room of the College of Surgeons in London cross-questioning young men who appeared before it as candidates for membership. On the wall behind the examiners there hung, just as at the present time, Reynolds's famous portrait of John Hunter (Fig. 1). Having done with his candidate, the senior member of the court, Sir Anthony Carlisle, rose from his seat and proceeded to feast his eyes on the features of the man who had taught him the principles of surgery forty years before. Presently he began to look closely at the various objects which Reynolds had introduced into the background of the picture, and, having satisfied himself, resumed his seat and wrote on the back of a stray sheet of paper the following note*:

"In Sir Joshua Reynolds' picture of John Hunter: he has intelligibly portrayed his pursuits by the two exposed plates; the one displays a series of forelimbs, from the simplest foot to the human hand. In the opposite plate he ranges the human skull first and descends to the quadruped with least brains. His elbow rests on a white paper showing radiating lines from a large periphery and terminating at a point under his elbow. The MSS books are *Natural History of Animals* and *Natural History of Vegetables*. In the background is the skeleton of the great giant, and the example of a spliced spine by an ossific prop." (See Fig. 1.)

In spite of every care Reynolds's portrait of Hunter is not lasting well; it is useless now to seek for details in the background, but these are preserved in the engraving which Sharp made in 1788† from the freshly finished portrait (Fig. 1). Indeed, Sharp, the friend of Reynolds and of Hunter, was the instigator of the portrait; he prevailed on the master-surgeon of the time to sit for the master-artist of the eighteenth century, and was ultimately successful. We may be sure he took pains to get every

detail right in his engraving, and hence it is Sharp's rendering of the background of Hunter's portrait that is reproduced in the illustration given here (Fig. 1). But there is one other source of information preserved in the Royal College of Surgeons—a small but exquisite enamel done on copper by Henry Bone early in the nineteenth century, when the rich colouring of the original Reynolds was still fresh and vivid. The Hunter family had it done, anticipating just what has happened—that the great painter's pigments would prove to be not permanent. Hence it is from these two sources, and the Hunterian specimens in the museum, that we have to reconstruct the objects represented in the background of the original picture.

We may be sure that Hunter, in supplying Reynolds with the materials for a background, picked what he prized

most—objects or representations which illustrated his most cherished discoveries. The folio of drawings which stands open upon the table on which his left elbow rests (Fig. 1) is one of many which his brother-in-law Sir Everard Home committed to the flames. The folio has been opened to show two of Hunter's "graded series"; they give us his conception of the two structures which make man man—the head and the hand.

In the "head" series the skull of a European is placed at the top; then follows that of an Australian aborigine; then a young chimpanzee's; then a monkey's—a macaque; then a dog's; and lastly that of a crocodile. I had a mind to set these same skulls up again—in the Hunterian order—but the drawings are not given in sufficient detail to permit individual skulls to be recognized. It is strange, too, that although Hunter certainly dissected a chimpanzee and also a gibbon, and has left notes of what he

observed, their skulls cannot now be traced; they are not mentioned in the original catalogues compiled in Hunter's time, nor in those of a later date.

On looking at such a series, with the most highly developed human type at the top and a reptilian form at the bottom, with a bridge of intermediate types between them, the modern student may jump to the conclusion that Hunter had grasped the idea of man's evolution. Hunter may have suspected the truth; but he was held back by just the same obstacle which kept Huxley from giving his complete allegiance to Darwin. Until we have produced varieties from a common stock which are infertile with each other we have not solved the final crux of evolution—the production of new species. That was Huxley's obstacle, and it was also Hunter's; but I am sure neither the one nor the other would be surprised if they knew that practical students of genetics are now removing even this last obstacle.

FIG. 1.—Sharp's engraving of Reynolds's picture of John Hunter. In the background are shown the various objects described in the text. (Photographed by Grove and Boulton from Sharp's engraving.)

* The note is preserved in the diary of my predecessor William Clift, pupil of John Hunter and first conservator of the museum.
† William Clift gives the date as 1785, but, as will be explained later, he seems to be in error. The proper date is 1788.

In his "hand" series Hunter shows even greater pre-science. The horse is given the highest place and man is relegated to the bottom of the list. The gap between the extremes—reading the scale in a descending order—is: ox, pig, dog, monkey. The "hand" of the horse is the most

FIG. 2.—Portrait, believed to be that of John Hunter, recently presented to the Royal College of Surgeons by Mr. G. Buckton Browne, F.R.C.S., F.S.A.

specialized, most highly "evolved," of the mammalian series, and my friend Professor Wood Jones would support Hunter in placing the human hand at the bottom of the primate scale. I do not agree; in many respects man's hand does retain old-world features, but there are others in which it is highly specialized. However, these personal differences are neither here nor there; the broad fact stands out that Hunter had ranged his series of "hands" in the order now accepted by students of evolution—an order which it is clear his pupil Carlisle had not fathomed and which was regarded by Hunter's contemporaries as highly absurd. These "graded series" represent two of the many ideas which went into the flames. We have to thank Reynolds for their preservation.

Sir Anthony Carlisle misread the titles on the two books on the table. The title of the upper is *Natural History of Vegetables*, and contained notes which Hunter kept of his experiments and observations on plants and trees; the lower, *Natural History of Fossils*, was the gleanings of a lifetime from geology and from a study of the fossil remains of animals and plants which had come into his possession. Hunter had a dozen such volumes, each dealing with a particular line of research, but it was these two he wished to accompany him into posterity. They also went missing after the conflagration; fortunately Clift had made abstracts from them, and, strange to say, years afterwards the two original volumes came to light again; Sir Everard Home's son returned them to their rightful owners—the Council of the College. Nor does one wonder, when their contents are known, that Hunter was proud of them. We find that he had ceased to deal with the Mosaic bank of time and had demanded an unlimited chronology to account for what he had seen and found. He had discovered that the secrets of living matter could be wrung from plants more easily than from animals, and the experiments he had performed on seedling beans are only now having their counterparts in the laboratories of the modern experimental embryologist.

He was proud of O'Brien's skeleton; its feet dangle in the background of his portrait. In those limbs lay the

secrets of growth. The giant, although his death belongs to the summer of 1783, was not a public exhibit in Hunter's museum until 1788, when Reynolds was at work on the final portrait of Hunter. The finishing touches were given a year later—1789. Then comes that puzzling specimen placed by the giant's right foot (Fig. 1, background). Carlisle tells us it is "a spliced spine by an ossific prop"—which, translated into modern phraseology, must mean a "bone-graft introduced experimentally for the repair of a broken dorsal spinous process—of an ox or horse." My colleague Mr. Cecil Beadles and all our assistants have hunted high and low for the original of this specimen; it is not in the museum, and there is no mention of it in any catalogue. It must represent one of Hunter's most prized specimens. As to its nature, we must be guided by its representation in Bone's miniature. It is preserved in spirit; the round bottle in which it is mounted is about ten inches high and four wide. The finer arteries of the specimen have been successfully injected with vermilion; it is the shaft of a bone laid open—about the size of the metacarpal of an ass; Hunter selected the metacarpal of the ass for many of his experimental investigations into the repair and living reactions of bone. There is a gap in the bone—apparently half an inch or more has been sawn out. At one side of the shaft, closely adherent to it and crossing the gap, is the "ossific prop," which I take to be a bone-graft, covered by patches of granulation tissue, introduced experimentally to secure the divided bone. In the museum is a series of metacarpals of the ass, showing the results which Hunter obtained while experimenting on the growth of bone and the exfoliation of necrosed areas. The specimen which Hunter had placed in his picture seems to belong to this series; the notes which relate to all these preparations went up Sir Everard Home's chimney in Sackville Street.

On the table by which Hunter sits is placed a specimen protected by a glass shade—one which puzzled my colleagues and myself for a long time. It looks like a successful

FIG. 3.—Portrait of John Hunter by Robert Home. The original is in the rooms of the Royal Society, London.

injection of the bronchial system of the lungs of some animal, but no trace of such a specimen could be found in Hunterian catalogues or collection. The puzzle was solved by Mr. Cecil Beadles; he recognized it as a Hunterian specimen still preserved in the museum (No. 2060.1)—the desiccated and dissected lungs of a man

who had an osteosarcoma of the lower end of the right femur, with secondary bony deposits in the lungs—deposits which had infiltrated and picked out all the ramifications of the bronchial tree. The remaining object in the background of the portrait concerns the sheet on which Hunter's elbow rests (Fig. 1). Carlisle describes the diagram on the sheet as "radiating lines from a large periphery terminating at a point under the elbow," but gives no explanation. William Clift does; on Carlisle's note he has written: "The facial angles of the skulls shown on the adjacent drawing"—a bad guess; the diagram has certainly nothing to do with facial angles. In Bone's miniature this drawing is reproduced clearly, and appears to represent a system of vessels—almost certainly arteries—arranged so as to show branchings at various angles, thus illustrating a matter to which Hunter gave much study—the laws which regulate the angle at which a branch artery separates from its parent trunk.

Thus we see that in choosing the materials for the background of his portrait Hunter exercised great care. In the opened folio, showing the graded series of "hands" and "heads," we see him as a philosopher of natural objects; the two closed books bound in sheepskin represent him as botanist and as geologist; the rare pulmonary preparation under the glass shade as pathologist; the drawing under his elbow as philosophical anatomist; the "wet" preparation as experimental surgeon; and the giant's legs as a collector of Nature's wonders.

Hunter was 60 years of age when he was painted by Reynolds; everyone is familiar with the face therein portrayed; reproductions or engravings of the original picture still hold the pride of place in the medical consulting rooms of the English-speaking world. Let me introduce to the reader at this point another picture of Hunter—one still the subject of hot debate, but which I am convinced is a portrait, or representation, of the great surgeon at an earlier date, when he was about 50 years of age (Fig. 2). This picture made its first appearance in public annals on December 1st, 1922, when a collection of portraits and pictures, "the property of L. M. McCormick, Esq., of 11, Hertford Street, Mayfair," 150 in number, "most of them having great names attached to them," was put up to auction at Christie's. Lot No. 131 was catalogued as "Dr. Hunter by Gainsborough"—a half-length portrait representing the subject life-size. When put up for sale the auctioneer stated that no guarantee was given that the portrait was "of Hunter" or "by Gainsborough," but that it was undoubtedly a picture of high artistic merit. Mr. G. Buckston Browne, who has been a keen student of medical portraiture and a collector of pictures all his life, made a close examination of lot No. 131, found evidence of its being a picture done in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and satisfied himself that it was a genuine representation of John Hunter the surgeon; he purchased it, and with great generosity presented the picture to the Royal College of Surgeons. The College thereupon obtained the expert advice of the director of the National Portrait Gallery, the late Mr. James D. Milner, and of Mr. W. T. Whitley; they had no doubt about the picture being of Hunter's time, nor that it was painted

by an artist of standing, but rejected it as a genuine work by Gainsborough. A study of the canvas, technique, clothes, and details proved that the picture had been painted, in all likelihood, between 1765 and 1785; but where had it been in the century and a half which had elapsed between the date of painting and its first public

appearance in 1922? The task of tracing its history was entrusted to Miss M. Tildesley, at present engaged in compiling a catalogue of the craniological collections in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons and well known by the studies she has published on the portraits of Sir Thomas Browne. She obtained access to the notebooks of Reynolds and of Gainsborough; she discovered, for example, that in 1788, when John Hunter was giving sittings to Reynolds, he was also attending Gainsborough professionally in that artist's fatal illness. She searched the archives of the Royal Academy, the lists of work of eighteenth-century artists, and of all sale catalogues, ancient and modern, but of this picture could discover not a trace.

We are driven back to prove that we have now another genuine portrait of John Hunter on the evidence afforded by the picture itself. The right forefinger is pointing to a skull held in the left hand; it is the skull of a monkey—

almost certainly of the macaque genus—very similar to the monkey's skull which occupies the central place in the Hunterian "graded series." The artist must have drawn from an actual specimen, but, either in a spirit of freakishness or to improve the appearance of an object otherwise rendered faithfully, has given a human outline to the nasal bones. Who in the eighteenth century besides John Hunter made the monkey's skull the central subject of a

discourse? There was, of course, another John Hunter—a Dr. John Hunter—who was born in Scotland about 1750, and obtained his M.D. degree at Edinburgh in 1775 by a thesis on "The causes of the varieties of mankind," and afterwards gave himself to military medicine. But he was neither anatomist nor zoologist. He was not the man to be handed down to posterity with a monkey's skull in his hand, for in his thesis he declared that he "looked on the suggestion of ape being transformed into man as monstrous." He became an eminent Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, but no portrait of him has been preserved.

But what of the features of the man? Are they, those of John Hunter? We know the features which Reynolds gave to Hunter at the age of 60, but what do we know of them at an earlier age? The sources of our knowledge are these: first the portrait now in the rooms of the Royal Society, a replica of which was presented to the Royal College of Surgeons by Sir John Bland-Sutton (Fig. 3). That portrait was painted by

Robert Home, the artist, about the time when John Hunter was courting his sister Anne Home, Hunter being then about 40 years of age. We are shown John in gala attire, debonair, seated in a sylvan glade with his dog—half mastiff, half wolf—resting his muzzle confidently on his knee. The coat has no collar but long cuffs, and the waistcoat, embroidered, tightly buttoned. The features are open; the face rather clean-cut, not puffy or full. The next record we have of him

FIG. 4.—Second portrait of John Hunter by Robert Home. The original is in the Royal College of Surgeons, to which it was presented by Hunter's grand-nephew, W. Hunter Baillie, Esq. (Photograph by H. George.)

FIG. 5.—Life cast of Hunter's face taken either in 1786 or 1788. (Photograph by S. Steward.)

is the portrait in oils which hangs in the hall of the College of Surgeons (Fig. 4); it also was painted by his brother-in-law Robert Home, and was done four or six years after the other. Hunter is here shown in working garb; his hair, a deep sandy yellow rather than red, is cut short in front, as in the new portrait, but hangs long about the ears. The colouring of the coat, and indeed the whole picture, catches its tone from the hair. Hunter had changed in the years which elapsed between these two portraits; his face had lost its clean-cut features and become puffy and full. There are three points in this picture to be noted: (1) The long tapering forefinger of the left hand—exactly the same form of finger as points at the monkey's skull in the new portrait. (2) The slight twist of the soft parts of the nose towards the left side of the face and the asymmetry of its tip—there being a fullness just over the left ala; the same features come out in the new portrait, which is not a study in reds and browns, but one carried out in cool greys, the hair being powdered and the costume toned to match. (3) The well known wart, situated on the right side of the bridge of Hunter's nose, is seen in the second "Home" portrait and also in the new portrait (see Figs. 2, 4, and 5). The new portrait I suppose to have been drawn some years after the second one by Home—somewhere about 1775-78, when Hunter was reaching his fiftieth year. The man is represented in a forceful mood, alert and alive—the work of an artist of undoubted talent.

FIG. 7.—From the original pencil drawing of John Hunter made by Sir Nathaniel Dance Holland, R.A., in 1793 (S. A. Sewell). The original hangs in the conservator's room, Royal College of Surgeons.

with the upper margins of the orbits was 115 mm.—very little more than the forehead at its narrowest. The new portrait reproduces the modelling of Hunter's forehead as closely as any of his acknowledged portraits. But there is in the new portrait a narrowing or compression of all the facial features; the upper lip, lower lip, and chin have all the peculiar features which are manifest in the plaster cast, there is a feeling of side-to-side compression in the representation of the face, especially at the jowls; in this the new portrait resembles the second "Home" portrait. One has to remember that the artist has sought to produce, in the Buckston Browne portrait, a "speaking" likeness; Hunter is depicted in the act of giving a

FIG. 6.—Engraving by Adlard of Tassie's medallion of John Hunter. The medallion is in the Hunterian Collection at the Royal College of Surgeons.

demonstration on a favourite topic. Hunter was short-necked, high-shouldered, and full-chested; the artist has been kind to his sitter in all of these respects; he was also, as we have seen, indulgent to the nasal features of the monkey's skull.

Another source of information regarding Hunter's head is the medallion made by Tassie in 1791, two years before the great surgeon's death, and now preserved in the College collection. This record is of value; it gives a true profile of the head (Fig. 6), and from it and from the Reynolds cast of the face we can make approximate estimates of the shape and dimensions of Hunter's skull. The length of his skull was between 190 and 195 mm., a few millimetres above the average Glasgow male of the nineteenth century. Its width was about 142 to 144 mm., being about 74 or 75 per cent. of the length, Hunter falling thus within the category of "long-heads." His skull, as is so often the case in the Scot of the south-west, was low-vaulted, rising not more than 115 mm. above the level of the ear passages. These dimensions tell us that Hunter's brain surpassed that of the average British male only by a little; its cubic capacity was about 1,500 c.cm. If we turn to the monograph which my friend Dr. Matthew Young wrote on the Scottish skull,¹ founded on material

drawn from the disused graveyards of Glasgow, we find many specimens which in shape and dimensions make a near approach to the Hunterian type. Physically Hunter was in no sense an exceptional man; we can recognize his great inborn gifts only by measuring what he succeeded in accomplishing. He was a man of very short stature, only 5 feet 2 inches, so Clift has recorded. People of his sandy-red colouring and short stature are particularly frequent among the people who live in the western counties—between Wales and Argyll.

Perhaps the most reliable of all Hunter's portraits is the pencil drawing made by Sir Nathaniel Dance Holland in 1793—the year in which Hunter died. It is almost a true profile (Fig. 7). We note in particular Hunter's small, deep-sunken eyes and his short neck; as he aged, his eye receded and his head sank down more between his shoulders. The new portrait, while it catches a certain curvature of the upper eyelids, gives no suggestion of the eyes being small, but they do not

FIG. 8.—A photograph of the Hunter portrait in the Apothecaries' Hall, London. Its history is given in the text.

depart so much in this respect from the eyes of the second "Home" portrait. Hunter's eyes were light in colour—a grey-blue, with a slight pigmentation near the margin of the pupil—as depicted in the Bone miniature. This is the colour which has been given to them in the new portrait.

There is still another portrait which deserves close attention—that preserved in the Apothecaries' Hall (Fig. 8). It is said to be by Reynolds, and I have no doubt it was painted by him. Miss Tildesley has worked out the details of its history. The tradesman who looked after Hunter's establishment, and continued to supervise the Leicester Square property for years after Hunter's death, was James Weatherall, upholsterer in the Haymarket. Mrs. Hunter gave him the picture, in question, informing him that it was Reynolds's sketch of her husband. Mr. Weatherall gave it to his nephew, Mr. Thomas Knight, who practised

in Chelsea, a licentiate of the Apothecaries' Hall, and "one of the livery." Mr. Knight presented it to the Hall in 1857. Now, in her researches into the history of Reynolds's great picture, Miss Tildesley was puzzled by this curious circumstance: From Reynolds's notebook she found that Hunter gave his first sittings, four in number, early in 1786; the sketch then done was shown in the Academy exhibition of 1786 as "the portrait of a gentleman." On its return from the exhibition Hunter gave Reynolds another sitting—in September. Then something happened—probably a dissatisfaction with the result, both on the part of artist and of sitter. Nothing was done in 1787, but in 1788 Hunter again sat three times to Reynolds; then, in 1789, he sat five times—in the afternoon from 2 o'clock to 4 each time. The Apothecaries' picture represents Hunter with a thin, straggling beard and moustache, but the poise of the sitter is exactly that of the acknowledged portrait. The Apothecaries' portrait cannot be a copy of the finished one; the rough materials for the final picture are there, but the inspiration and the finish, in a multitude of details, are altogether lacking. How are we to explain all of these facts—the two quite separate sets of sittings, a sketch by Reynolds, which Mrs. Hunter disliked; "the portrait of a gentleman" exhibited at the Royal Academy in the summer of 1786; its coming home and an attempt to mend it? And, then, why should Reynolds want a plaster cast of Hunter's face? All these things can be explained if we suppose that the Apothecaries' portrait is the picture done in 1786—that it was an admitted failure; that Mrs. Hunter disliked it; that a new one, the final portrait, was painted in 1788-89; that Mrs. Hunter was glad to get rid of the original picture, and gave it to Mr. Weatherall; and that Reynolds succeeded in getting Hunter to shave off his beard and become a fit subject for his art—by the subterfuge of proposing a plaster cast of his sitter's face. It is a painful process for a bearded man to submit his face to the cast-maker; it is easier and better to have the beard removed. That seems the most feasible explanation of a curious sequence of events.

Such, then, is the story of Hunter's portraits, so far as our present evidence will permit us to tell it. Our study has had the advantage of bringing us into close touch with the personality of a man whose like the world will see but seldom.

Lastly, as evidence of the authenticity of the new portrait, I must cite the testimony of one who is better qualified than any of us to recognize a Hunter—Miss Helen Hunter Baillie, the granddaughter of Matthew Baillie, Hunter's nephew, and now the chief living representative of John Hunter's family. She herself reproduces her great-grand-uncle's features and mental outlook with remarkable fidelity, and has been familiar with Hunterian portraits all her life. She has no doubt that the new portrait is that of John Hunter.

[Sir Arthur Keith informs us that there is to be an exhibition of Hunterian portraits and relics in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, Lincoln's Inn Fields, from February 13th to 19th, open to all medical men and students of portraiture. Visitors will have an opportunity of comparing the "new" portrait of Hunter with other well known portraits. A series of specimens have been fitted up to represent the background of Reynolds's portrait. Hunter's chief discoveries in surgery, pathology, anatomy, physiology, zoology, botany, and geology will be exemplified by preparations chosen from the original Hunterian collection. Students of Hunter's history will be interested by an exhibit prepared at the request of the President of the College—Sir Berkeley Moynihan—by Dr. George C. Peachey. By means of maps, sketches, and photographs, Dr. Peachey has succeeded in giving a vivid picture of London in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the "homes" of the Hunters during that period, and what these "homes" look like to-day. Specimens of Hunterian interest have been loaned by the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, University of Glasgow, St. George's Hospital, Apothecaries' Society, and other institutions, to make the present exhibition as complete as possible.]

REFERENCE.

¹ Dr. Matthew Young: A Contribution to the Study of the Scottish Skull, *Trans. Roy. Soc. Edin.*, 1916, vol. 51, p. 347.

An Address

ON

THE ACUTE ABDOMEN.

GIVEN BEFORE THE DEWSBURY DIVISION OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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DURING the years 1924 and 1925 almost one-fifth of the patients admitted to the surgical wards of the Leeds General Infirmary were cases of one kind or another of the acute abdomen, and the total mortality rate of these two years is mainly attributable to these lesions.

The Commoner Conditions occurring in 1924-25 in Order of Frequency (excluding Subacute Types).

	Cases.	Deaths.
Acute appendicitis ...	1,080	58 = 5.7 per cent.
Strangulated herniae of all types ...	190	43 = 22.6 "
Perforated gastric and duodenal ulcers ...	150	34 = 22.6 "
Acute obstructions ...	139	55 = 40 "
Acute cholecystitis ...	196	6 = 5.6 "
Acute salpingitis ...	48	2 = 4.1 "
Ruptured viscera ...	29	16 = 55 "
Ruptured ectopic gestation ...	16	0 = 0 "
Acute pancreatitis ...	13	9 = 69.2 "

Though these statistics are not sufficiently large to form an accurate index of the order of frequency of these diseases as a whole, yet they illustrate the common types of acute abdomen in an approximately correct order. In some cases the acute lesion is a complication of a disease which has existed it may be for months or years, and has, therefore, given ample warning of the impending catastrophe. Perforated gastric and duodenal ulcers afford a good example, but the same applies to many of the acute obstructions and the strangulated herniae. Certainly over 90 per cent. of gastric and duodenal ulcers have shown their existence by characteristic indigestion over many years.

Further examination of these statistics brings to light another unsatisfactory feature, and to illustrate it I will analyse the acute appendicitis figures. In 1925 the cases of acute appendicitis admitted numbered 612, and of these 301 (almost half) were complicated by abscess, or diffuse or general peritonitis. When appendicectomy was performed before these complications arose there were no deaths, so that the mortality is confined to one-half of the cases, and these all late ones. It is this "too late" factor which is responsible almost entirely for the high mortality of the acute abdomen; I wish to emphasize this most strongly, and at the same time to say that the time is brief between the onset of the attack and the "too late" period; it does not as a rule exceed forty-eight hours, and after twelve to twenty-four hours the margin of safety is rapidly passing.

The surgeon may make his contribution to the mortality by performing unsuitable operations, but I think it is fair to say that he has little or no share in the "too late" episode. There can be no doubt the responsibility lies between the medical practitioner and the patient, or perhaps, more correctly, the patient's friends. The more I see of acute abdominal conditions the more convinced I become that it is the friends who waste the time. In no disease is this better exemplified than in acute appendicitis. There is too often a meddling household therapy as well. The patient, often a child and so unable to fend for itself, complains of bad stomach-ache and is promptly given a dose of castor oil. There is no more certain way of spreading infection to the peritoneum than by stirring up the intestines with aperients at the beginning of a local inflammation such as appendicitis; when it is seen that the pain is worse the doctor is summoned, and by this time probably the appendix has perforated, and, of course, the doctor or the surgeon receives the blame if the result of an operation is unsatisfactory. I recently advocated a campaign of public education, properly controlled, in