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INTRODUCTORY LECTURE TO THE COURSE OF CLINICAL SURGERY;

Delivered in the Theatre, at the Northern Hospital,
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(Concluded from page 707.)

Since then the time allowed for the attainment of such knowledge as may fit you for entering into practice, is far too short, it becomes a matter of necessary prudence to give a preference in your studies to that which is essential; and first we will mention anatomy. It is apparent that he who knows not even the most minute details of the organization of man, who studies not the complication of this most perfect machinery, the wonderful adaptation of every part to its own especial purpose, can do nothing towards rectifying partial derangement, or restoring impaired order to the whole. It is essential that you should be grounded in anatomy. And here let me remark, that it is by studying the condition of perfect health that we best can understand the variations of disease. You must attach specific ideas to health before you can judge of the extent or importance of deviations from it. Founded on this intimate knowledge of the structure of the organs, necessarily follows an inquiry into their functions. I must, therefore, impress upon you the importance of accurate physiological investigation, based upon the knowledge which you have previously acquired of anatomy. Having thus acquired an intimate knowledge of the structure of the human frame, and the mode in which its functions are performed, you will proceed, on the surest foundation, to the study of pathology, without which no man can be otherwise than empirical in his practice. It is only by a careful and minute investigation of the functional derangements which are obvious in disease, and the changes of structure upon which the outward symptoms depend, that you will be able to refer diseases to their real source, to anticipate in some degree their progress and termination, and apply with confidence to yourselves the means best adapted for their removal.

Neither must we overlook the science of chemistry, which, as it is progressing to eminence in our own day, so is it more and more assuming its position side by side in importance with anatomy. You must be good chemists as well as good anatomists if you desire to reach a fair standing in your profession. Remember that it is chemical analysis which supplies us with the products of those organs of which by means of physiology we have been studying the functions, and it is chemistry which provides us with such combinations as

may rectify their derangements. I would also remind you, that as major points often turn upon minor ones, and the wisest plans frequently fail, because of their dependance on the means of carrying them out, so it is necessary that a prescription should not only be wisely written, but carefully compounded. A sensible man considers nothing small that may be great in its effects, and many a patient has been lost through either the negligence or incapacity of those on whom the duty of making up medicine has devolved. In whatever class of medical men you may rank, a practical ability to compound your own prescriptions is absolutely necessary. The occasion may seldom arise, but where it does present itself, it may be one of no small importance. There are cases in which promptness of application may be nothing less than bodily salvation, and delay the sacrifice of life. Whether you compound your own medicines or not, pharmacy is an important branch of medical science.

But to call your attention to the great advantages to be derived by the pupils of an institution such as our own, I would more especially notice the value and importance of clinical surgery. I cannot dwell upon this too strongly, because it offers opportunities of information and improvement not to be found under any other circumstances. I have spoken to you of the insufficiency of books, but these are the books which you ought to read. Nature should be your volume, and here it is open to you. What wisdom can there be in trusting to descriptions of disease, when we may look upon the reality. Be assured that this sort of second-hand information is wholly inadequate to the task of fitting you for your profession; and at the best, why rest on verbal evidence when you can look on facts. What can books tell you in comparison with that fulness of material evidence which here lies before you? The hospital is the true school for the student, and of all hospitals one that we must naturally see crowded with accidents must be considered the most efficient. There is no practice like hospital-practice for training the student into the practitioner. Our Hospital is your school; our patients are your books. From these you may acquire information the most accurate, the most extensive; from these you may gain the most valuable of all knowledge,—practical knowledge. You cannot learn the history of a disease, by which I mean its progressive stages, by any means but those of daily observation. If you would really profit by the opportunities afforded you by this hospital-practice, be found by the bed-sides of our patients, and your advance in medical skill will

prove both rapid and secure. You must not depend upon descriptions. Books often give the most contradictory statements, so that you will inevitably receive false impressions if you depend solely upon them. You must either correct or confirm their statements from your own observations. Many medical works are mere compilations, and on these I would advise you to look with a jealous eye; the knowledge which they contain is derived from others, and you had infinitely better labour for yourselves. I press this point upon you, because I believe that men's minds are often crippled by the habit they acquire of leaning upon others, and that they are as frequently led the wrong way as the right. I repeat to you that you will find in clinical instruction the great means of advancing yourselves in all that is most valuable in medical and surgical science. By the bed-side of the patient the pupil may observe the gradual operation of such medicines as have been administered, may watch the cycles of fluctuation of disease, and catch the most accurate and minute results; and from our patients' bed-sides so superintended, he may ground for himself the premises of his own future practice in every similar case that may hereafter fall into his hands.

Having thus pressed upon you the necessity of bed-side practice, I would say a few words of those lesser services which are required of pupils, students, and surgeons, in the discharge of the duties of their profession. In all these a readiness of manipulation, promptness, a quick perception of what is required, and a quiet skill in supplying it, are not only of real value, but of the last importance. *Tact*, that indefinable but perfectly well understood quality or faculty of the mind, is one of the greatest advantages a medical man can possess. In addition to this, the bearing of a medical man towards his patient has some influence upon his disorder. Common humanity requires that the mind, which is in a state of diseased excitement, should be soothed and quieted, and medical skill requires the same. Kindness and suavity have often a most salutary influence, for we scarcely yet understand the sympathy which exists between the mind and the body. In a sick room, awkwardness ought to be denounced, I had almost said as a sin, for independently of its injurious effects upon the fears and feelings of a patient, it may actually do him physical injury.

Another means of instruction belonging to hospital-practice, and one of the most valuable if students and pupils did but avail themselves of it to its full extent, is the opportunity it affords them of asking questions. It is in this way that the fullest, the most ample, and the most various information is to be gained, and the pupil neglecting, or availing himself of, such a means of advancing himself in his profession, supplies a test to judge of whether or not there is hope of his ultimate success. In going the rounds of the Hospital I would have you all ask every requisite question. He who does this of course desires information on those points which most require elucidation to his mind. If you ask questions, you ask them on specific points, and you receive specific answers. Every bed-side would thus become your theatre, by which each of you might bear the most valuable of all lectures, with the example of the particular disease before you, and you would

thus acquire definite ideas, not in one only but in every stage of disease.

Closely allied to this species of instruction, the value of which must so entirely depend upon yourselves, I propose to arrange the plan of the ensuing lectures. In my present one it has been the object to press upon you the necessity of profiting by each and all of those opportunities which are here opened to you, more especially recommending to you such as are of paramount importance. If we would abridge labour and ensure success, it is necessary that we should work upon a plan. In carrying out the arrangements which we contemplate, we hope to lay before you a succession of interesting cases, such as may appear to us the most important. We would wish to call your attention to every particular connected with such cases while they are fresh before us, while the stages of those diseases of which we are treating are even at the same time progressing, while every point is capable of elucidation, and no point need escape if we be but on the alert to note it, and that so step by step we may combine the parts into the whole.

I wish you also perfectly to understand that in my own succeeding addresses to you, I do not purpose to make studied lectures. My object is to give you plainly and explicitly, and perhaps the more familiarly the better, brief outlines, sometimes perhaps filled in with minute details of such cases as appear to me most valuable for your instruction, calling your attention to the modes of treatment adopted. These lectures, in conjunction with my colleagues, will be continued every Wednesday.

Having thus laid before you my views and hopes with reference to our immediate and individual concerns, I would now call your attention, though but briefly, to matter of more general interest. Every age has its own peculiar characteristics. As society advances, it undergoes unceasing change. Just as the individual in the various stages of his existence leaves behind him the old for the new, so do masses pass through all the phases of advancement. And never was there a time in which this truth was more evidenced and attested by rapid change than in our own. The human intellect appears to have received a new and energizing influence in every walk of life. Man seems to have reached a mental elevation far above his former level. Literature has done much towards effecting this—science more. Science, which formerly made its lofty boast of raising man nearer to his Maker, but which might have held itself degraded in ministering to his corporeal wants, now carries its triumphs into the labours of handicraft and the workshop of the artisan, and with the result of elevating these without humiliating itself. There is scarcely a necessity of our civilization that is not now supplied to us by science. The commerce of our country receives new impulses from science; the manufactures of our country owe their vast improvements to science; the mistakes of our ancestors are rectified by science; the very arrangements of our dwellings are formed on the principles of science; the pulses of a mighty impulse are beating through the world, and urging everything on. It remains for us to choose whether we will be carried on with the tide, or remain to be wrecked on the sands of time behind. The busy hum of the world sounds in our ears; men are astir in its

various walks, active, energetic, straining every nerve for advancement. Sloth is not the reproach of our day, and shall it be ours? While the age goes on like a conqueror, shall we be left behind? You will say no! energetically no! But it is not in words, but in actions that we must prove our honourable intentions. It is discredit to an individual to be found in the rear, but it is disgraceful to a community, and degrading to an influential town. Advance is made by simultaneous effort, and each one of us in his vocation must do his part.

What though we may be surrounded by the schools of Manchester, Birmingham, and Dublin, are we therefore to sink into dependance upon them while our own resources are great if not superior. Shall we leave to them the credit of sending practitioners abroad into the world while we rest contented in our indolence? We are placed in a conspicuous situation, and we must not suffer ourselves to be shamed by any comparisons. Of all the various branches of science, medical and surgical science is the most important, because this has in its keeping the life of man; and be it remembered that one human life is of more value than a world of mere material existence. We must do our part to support the interests of science, the interests of humanity, and the interests of this Hospital; and happily these interests all unite in one, and may be advanced conjointly; though apparently triune, they are indivisible and the same.

In the midst of this rapid progress in human affairs, it could scarcely be expected that the quiet philosophy of our own profession should remain uninvaded. The spirit of the day is opposed to deep investigation—it despises the wisdom of experience—it must have a more speedy and railroad progress to its intended purpose. The impatience which men feel in sickness, the eagerness which they manifest to regain their health more rapidly than is consistent with the natural energy of the human frame, the credit which they give to narrations of real or pretended cures of diseases, somewhat analogous to their own, gives unceasing opportunities for the introduction of plausible systems, and their temporary prevalence and fashion, until some newer and bolder innovation supersedes them in its turn. The constant succession and variety of these transient systems, and the very slight amount of real good which experience has shown them to possess, render not only natural but desirable the caution and jealousy which the medical profession has been said to exhibit on these occasions, and constitute them as they ought to be the watchful guardians of the public against the dangers of general and unlimited credulity. I feel assured that I am now addressing those whose ambition it is to make themselves scientific and legitimate practitioners; yet still I think it not inconsistent with my duty, nor irrelevant to the objects of this address, to caution my younger hearers against being led astray by the fashionable and perishable theories of the day—those railroads to fame and fortune.

It would be inconsistent with the due limits of this lecture, if I were to enter into any investigation of the merits of the two prevailing systems of the day—homœopathy and hydropathy. These belong not to us who are content to abide by fixed principles and legitimate experience. It is enough for me to state that the former system is now repudiated in the region

of its birth, though it still possesses a precarious existence amongst ourselves; and that the latter has been productive of such fatal issues, and is so little adapted to the constitution of the inhabitants of this country, as to be likely to fall speedily into oblivion, like all other systems which have no real or substantial foundation.

In confirmation of what I have thus briefly alluded to, I may be allowed to state the sentiments entertained by the most eminent practitioners of the present day. In the introductory lecture of Dr. Gregory, he states—“It is very true—it is lamentably true, that quacks and charlatans still abound, and in the disguise of homœopaths, and mesmerisers have even intruded on the legitimate boundaries of science. But be not deceived by these specious appearances. Men of this stamp start up for a time into notoriety, but track their course, and you will find that sooner or later their career is checked. Knowledge has taken no root in them. When difficulties occur, (and occur they will to all in the course of time,) they wither like the corn that was sown on dry ground. On the other hand, the man of education continues his even course, overcomes the difficulty, and gathers experience from it. With experience comes self-confidence; self-confidence brings in its train the good opinion of the world—character, wealth, honours, follow. The longer you live, the more you mix in the world, the more you will be convinced that nothing can be relied on to ensure the steady advance of a young man in our profession but a thorough acquaintance with the principles of the science which he professes.”

I would have you keep another remembrance in view, it may serve to keep you watchful. Remember, that every officer in a public institution has the public eye upon him. He can never escape from its superintendence, neither ought he to desire it. He should on the contrary court such inspection. It is a satisfaction and not an injury or injustice to the man who is zealous in the discharge of his duties, that such an inquisition should be exercised. The world thus bears testimony to his zeal, his industry, his faithfulness. You ought likewise on a different principle, to court the exercise of critical acumen as one of the most efficient helps to improvement. If such criticism be just, it may correct your views, if false, it may establish them, and in either case render you a service. Besides, critical acumen may quicken our zeal, and our own exertions may stimulate those of others living within our influence. No man can tell where an impulse of good may end, any more than an impulse of evil. The power of example can scarcely be estimated; where one convert is made by words, hundreds are made by actions. Energy is contagious. The spirit of one man may be diffused throughout a multitude. Besides, there is a contingency of good that may I trust, ere long, result from our endeavours. In thus courting and not shunning the observation of the public, who shall say what generous individual may notice our exertions, and may thus be brought to consider this Hospital a fitting sphere for their charity, a suitable medium for their benevolence. Through us they may send those streams of liberality which are to heal the sick and comfort the sorrowful. At Birmingham, and elsewhere, they have in their similar institutions received noble proofs of private benevolence, and why