

Lecture, introductory to a course of clinical surgery, delivered to the students of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary / by M.S. Buchanan.

Contributors

Buchanan, Moses Steven, 1795?-1860.
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Publication/Creation

Glasgow : J. Graham, printer, [1831]

Persistent URL

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*To the Editor of the
Medical & Surgical Journal
Edinburgh from the
Author*

LECTURE,

INTRODUCTORY TO A COURSE OF

CLINICAL SURGERY,

DELIVERED TO THE STUDENTS

OF THE

GLASGOW ROYAL INFIRMARY,

BY

M. S. BUCHANAN, M. D.

*Member of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow, and one
of the Surgeons to the Royal Infirmary, &c.*

NOT PUBLISHED.

LECTURE

CLINICAL SURGERY

DELIVERED TO THE STUDENTS

OF THE

EDINBURGH ROYAL INFIRMARY

BY

M. S. BUCHANAN, M.D.

Professor of the Principles of Surgery and Clinical Surgery, and
of the Diseases of the Special Organs, in the Royal Infirmary

NOT REPRODUCED

JOHN GRAHAM, PRINTER, GLASGOW.

R35910

TO THE
SURGICAL PUPILS

ATTENDING THE
GLASGOW ROYAL INFIRMARY.

GENTLEMEN,

In consequence of the misconception, and, I am sorry to say, the perversion which has occurred with regard to some passages of the INTRODUCTORY LECTURE ON CLINICAL SURGERY, which I had the honour of addressing to you in November last, I have been, in some measure, dragged into a defence of my own conduct. Instead however of arguing the various points at issue, or shielding myself by the imputation of misunderstanding or garbling, on the part of those who have thought themselves aggrieved, I have chosen rather to print the whole lecture, *verbatim*, and for the accuracy of which I now appeal to you all. By this means, though the materials are only of local interest, and perhaps con-

fusedly and hurriedly put together, I hope to prove, to all concerned, that the promotion of the surgical interests of the institution, over which I have been called for a short while to watch, and the advancement of those of you, who follow me in my rounds, were the sole motives which I had in view, in thus candidly and firmly expressing my sentiments on the paramount importance of Clinical Instruction.

I remain,

GENTLEMEN,

Yours faithfully,

————— M. S. BUCHANAN.

194, BUCHANAN STREET, }
March, 1831. }

LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN,

In the amphitheatres of our universities, and in the halls of our private lecturers, a practice has very generally prevailed, in commencing a series of Surgical Lectures, to give, what is called, an Introduction to the Course. By this, some understand a history of the art from the earliest to the present times, accompanied with a biographical detail of all the illustrious characters who have contributed to its advancement; while others are more in the habit of pointing out the advantages to be derived from its cultivation, and enforcing the necessity of its persevering and assiduous study. As to historical disquisitions, though they are found convenient by many to fill up the time, till the proper business of the course commences, yet, in this practical school, in my opinion, they are of no advantage; any information on this subject being to be obtained with much more accuracy and fullness from books, than from any observations which I could address to you.

My intention in the present lecture is,—1st, To take a rapid view of hospitals and clinical surgery, with a short sketch of British and Continental hospital management and practice; 2d, To point out the great importance of clinical surgery, and the advantages attending its cultivation, more particularly in this Infirmary, where, till lately, it was never regularly taught; and, 3d, To state the reciprocal duties

which, during the course, devolve upon me as your instructor, and upon you as pupils and dressers; and I sincerely hope that any observations which I may advance, in this last division of the lecture, will be received with that deference and attention, which I have so uniformly observed to characterize the students of this institution.

Hospitals, such as the one you are now attending, are, in my opinion, of all charitable institutions, the most laudable; and, whether publicly or privately endowed, if properly managed, do more to the relief of suffering humanity, and are less liable to abuse, than any other species of eleemosynary endowments. How often do we find the most industrious, in the labouring classes of society, arrested in their laudable career by severe accidents, by fever, or by dangerous internal disease? and what situation, at such a moment, can be so fitted for their treatment as an hospital? where, I hesitate not to say, they enjoy advantages from which those in a higher rank of life are precluded.

At what period, these noble institutions began first to be erected, I can no where find; but, shortly after the christian era, they began to attract notice, and it is to the spirit of christianity, that we are indebted, for their progressive increase and improvement. During the dark ages, the convents, and those establishments connected with them, were occasionally employed for the dispensing of medicines, and the reception of diseased poor; and, had this been their principal aim, little objection might have been made to them; but, unfortunately, in process of time, these religious dormitories became the pest houses of moral and religious corruption, and the abodes of all that was profligate and abandoned in society. Thanks to the reformation, which swept away this nuisance, and, in its place, has reared hospitals, asylums and infirmaries in our land, as splendid, in their endowment, or annual support, as praiseworthy and economical, in their management.

But it is not so much in a philanthropic as surgical point of view, that at present, I would wish to call your attention to these receptacles for our diseased poor; for, while the more humble members of the community receive from them

direct relief, they, at the same time, prove of incalculable benefit to society at large, by the advantages which they present for the cultivation of surgical science.

I can no where ascertain at what period, in the history of hospitals, pupils were first admitted to observe the practice of the attending surgeons; but, from the fact of almost all the advancement which surgery has made, during the last two centuries, having been effected through the instrumentality of these talented individuals, who were invariably to be found in attendance upon them, it must be evident that, at a very early date, they were regarded as the best practical schools for the improvement of both masters and students.

Take a survey of the great surgeons of the last century—of Cheselden, Pott, Hey and Hunter, in our own country, and of Sabatier, Petit, Desault and Scarpa, on the Continent—and who among them would have been regarded as standard authorities in their profession, unless they had enjoyed that extensive experience, and those numerous opportunities of performing surgical operations, which hospitals alone are calculated to confer? And, in our own times, this superiority in skill, and this dexterity in operating, is still more confined to hospital surgeons than at any previous period of our art; for, whether we look to France, and there see Dupuytren monopolizing operative surgery, both public and private, or to Great Britain, and here follow in the footsteps of a Cooper, an Abernethy, or a Lawrence, the fact must be admitted that, while the rich make choice of those men who, on all hands, are acknowledged as the highest in the scale of professional attainments, the poor in our hospitals are at the same time the recipients of their attentions, and the instruments by which all their well-earned fame, and highly valued skill, has been acquired.

But, while hospitals have in all ages been the best stepping stones to private practice and celebrity, have they, either at home or abroad, been the means, in the hands of the attending surgeons, of conveying to the minds of the students all that instruction for which they are so well calculated, or for correcting all those erroneous notions which lectures and

books so often disseminate? I fear not—else, why should I have found, in my researches on this subject, that the first year of the French revolution was that in which Desault first taught the medical world the superiority of clinical instruction at the Hôtel Dieu? and, in spite of obloquy and reproach, continued to lecture at the bed side of his patients, or, immediately after his visits, in the operating theatre, on those cases, which, from their delicacy, he was prevented from commenting on in the wards. Since his time, the same valuable course of practical surgery has continued to be given not only in the Hôtel Dieu, but in almost all the other hospitals on the Continent, which, not very long ago, I had the opportunity of visiting; and, perhaps, before adverting to the state of matters nearer home, it may not be out of place, in me, here, to give you a very short account of some of those institutions, and their surgical attendants; as, in my opinion, it is to the former that we are indebted for the best specimens of surgical arrangement, and to the latter, as exhibiting the best examples of clinical lecturers.

Almost all the hospitals in the French metropolis are supported and directed by the government of the country, differing, in this respect, from similar establishments here, where, with few exceptions, they are endowed and managed by the public at large. In Paris there is a central board of administration, where patients must first apply, and from which, lines of admission are granted them, to the various hospitals, judged most adapted to their respective diseases. If we compare this arrangement with the indiscriminate admissions, which prevails in all the London hospitals, the advantages must appear very obvious; for, by this means, the medical or surgical attendants, attached to the various hospitals, and who may wish to follow out any train of investigation, are put immediately in possession of those cases most suited to their purpose. It is to this admirable arrangement, I think, that the medical world are, in a great measure, indebted for the admirable works of Corvisart, Laennec, Alibert, Bayle and Broussais, whose hospitals, containing all the choice cases, the object of their individual and undivided

research, have thus furnished them with the ground work upon which so goodly a fabric of medical and surgical observations has been erected.

Attached to each hospital, are a certain number of permanent and temporary medical officers, the former consisting of the physicians and surgeons, and the latter of the clerks and dressers. In regard to the permanent situation of the chief medical attendants, I am of opinion that the practice, both in Paris and London, has many advantages over that which prevails in this institution, where, at first, the attending surgeons only remained at their post for three months. This was latterly extended to six months; and, last year, the Directors very judiciously extended the period of attendance to one year, proving, if any proof were wanting, that the longer the attendance the greater will be the skill acquired, and the more complete and matured the practical knowledge to be communicated.*

All the medical officers in attendance on the hospitals in Paris are elected, to their various situations, in a manner so admirable, and so much superior to that system of patronage and cabal, which unfortunately too frequently prevails in our own country, that I cannot refrain from adverting to it for a moment. When any vacancy occurs, candidates, by public advertisement, are called on to enrol themselves before a certain day, when a jury of medical men, after a great variety of trials of the respective aspirants, both in public and private, confer the appointment. This practice of popular election renders the various public offices, either in schools or hospitals, of much more importance in France, than any similar ones in this country, where, generally, it is money more than talents, and interest rather than diligence, which obtains the victory.

* From the scarcity of what is called *pure* physicians in this city, as well as from the skill and experience of those in attendance at present in this infirmary, the above office has been monopolized, or rather I should say has been pressed on the acceptance of a very few individuals, who have attained the highest medical honours; the remaining M. D.'s choosing occasionally to handle the lancet. *Ought this pure exclusive system to continue?*

I do not think however that the Directors of this popularly-managed institution would, for one moment, object to their being relieved of the patronage which they now enjoy, in the appointment of dressers at least; and, if so, it is my intention, in the above respect, to follow in the footsteps of our continental friends and rivals, and to petition for free and open competition among all the candidates for this situation. Thus, it will be seen who are the talented and industrious, and, at the same time it will place at the elbow of the attending surgeons a phalanx of young men who will greatly expedite their labours, and conduce much to promote the interests of the charity.*

Most of the hospitals on the continent, which I had the opportunity of visiting, were remarkable for the appearance of cleanness and comfort which they presented to the eye of a stranger. In the former respect, they are, in my opinion, much indebted to the peculiar character of their female attendants, those "*Sœurs de la charité*," as they are called, a religious order of women, whose whole pleasure seems to be the temporal as well as spiritual benefit of those intrusted to their charge. These monastic-dressed and interesting female attendants, I found invariably at their duty; and whoever has visited those abodes of poverty and disease, and observed their assiduous and devoted attentions, and respectable appearance, must have been struck with the superiority which they exhibit to the hired and careless menials at home.

For the comfortable appearance of these hospitals, and those in London, I think, they are much indebted to the unlimited use of that, which in this establishment, in many respects so superior, would be a great addition. I mean bed curtains, which, in both medical and surgical cases, particularly in the females wards, would prevent many unpleasant and disagreeable exhibitions, tend much to quiet the fears of

* Though the patronage as to dressers is still in the hands of the Directors, yet I have always found my recommendation of those deemed the best qualified for this office, a sufficient guarantee, for preferment. On this account I think the above change less necessary.

the nervous and irritable, and, in many cases, prove a soporific of a far more agreeable kind, than all the anodynes in the *materia medica*. That there are objections to their use, both in an economic and healthful point of view, I am well aware; but the advantages which I observed to result, from their use, more than counterbalanced any expense or risk of contagion which, by some, might be dreaded.*

In most of the continental hospitals I remarked also that convalescence was much more attended to than in this country; and, for promoting this desirable object, there are, in many of these establishments, such as those of Paris, Milan, &c. galleries round the wards, the roofs being of immense height, and, in many others, as those of Pavia, Bologna, Naples, &c. covered walks, where, at all times, the patients may have the advantage of recreation. Now, if on the continent, and, particularly in Italy, where the weather is so dry and genial, and the barometer so steady, it is thought of so much advantage to the recovery of the inmates that every hospital almost has its gallery or covered walk, how much more necessary must it be here, where, during the year, we have such continued rain and storms, and where such a variation of atmosphere prevails, as to preclude the inmates from taking that inhalation of pure air, and that salutary recreation, so indispensable to their convalescence, and so essential to their perfect recovery? I feel convinced that the advantages of these measures need only to be pointed out, to the liberal managers of this Infirmary, to be immediately complied with.

But, not to detain you any longer with the general management of continental hospitals, I proceed to say a few words as to their surgical state; and here I must admit, at the outset, that there was nothing which impressed me so much as the superior industry, at least of the attending surgeons, compared to that exhibited by those of my own

* Since the above was delivered, I have memorialized the Directors on the subject of curtains; and I rejoice to say, that I found them unanimously favourable to their limited use; but irresistible opposition was encountered from a quarter from which I least expected it.

native city, or indeed native country, and at the same time of the great utility of that uninterrupted and interesting series of clinical lectures which all the hospital students, without fee, had the opportunity of enjoying. Figure to yourselves the first surgeon in France making his appearance, pointedly and regularly, at six o'clock A. M. (which by the bye is rather too much of a good thing) at the bed side of his first patient in the Hôtel Dieu, calling all his dressers before him, and receiving from them a summary of the cases under their charge: now, follow him (with turned-up sleeves and dressing gown thrown round him) to the wards, and there observe him going his rounds, of sometimes upwards of three hundred patients; but this is not all; for at nine o'clock, (by which hour in general the whole of the above number of patients had been visited by him,) he marched into the operation room; and there I have frequently seen him perform operations, and thereafter give a clinical lecture till well on to mid-day. Search our schools and hospitals here, and see if any such enthusiasm is any where to be found, or any such information by those in attendance is to be obtained !

But it is not only in a surgical point of view that I would wish to call your attention to the importance of the hospitals of France and Italy; for I look upon the advantages which the student derives from them, in regard to anatomy as of superior moment; for such is the law that any dead body which remains unclaimed, in any of the hospitals, after a certain number of hours, is removed for the use of the students of anatomy, and may be obtained at an expense which the poorest among them can always defray.

It may be very well to talk about the surgeons of our own country being as able, and our schools and hospitals as well supplied with teachers, as those of the continent; but where I would ask, is practical surgery so explained and enforced, or at what school is a knowledge of anatomy so easily obtained? I can safely say not in this country, where, in general, I have observed that he is accounted the most expert who gets through his work the fastest; and, as for explanation of what is going forward, or any thing in the shape of clinical lectures,

these last, so far as I could observe, were quite unknown. Yet, notwithstanding all this, we observe our Royal Colleges, our Faculties, and our Army and Navy Boards, issuing edicts daily concerning "the necessity of clinical surgery and practical anatomy," and some learned bodies, nearer home, have even gone the length of parenthising "actual dissection" as necessary before being taken on trials; but never one word is said all the while about the impossibility of the poor student obtaining such a qualification; or, if so, at what a price, or at what hazard of life and reputation.

Now, I feel quite convinced that unless there is a change of a very decided kind effected, and that speedily too, upon the laws of this country with regard to dissection, the student will find it much more beneficial, and even more economical, at once to acquire a knowledge of the language of our rivals, and betake himself to their capital, where he can obtain, without cash, all his classes and hospitals; and as for dissection he may have as much as he can make a good use of for a trifle,* but which in his own country would amount to a sum equal at least to his whole expenditure. I speak not unadvisedly; for it was the method I myself took to obtain that which I in vain attempted at home, and which I deem indispensable, that frequent dissection of every part of the human body, which an abundant supply of subjects can alone furnish.† This is a very dismal state of matters; but I sincerely hope that brighter prospects are awaiting you all, and that the time is not far distant when prejudice shall yield to science its proper objects,

* The price of subjects in Paris is generally about 7 francs; and, if the blood vessels are injected, 3 francs more is charged; in all about 8s. The price of subjects in this country is quite arbitrary: sometimes I have known them *ad valorem* as high as £10, 10s. at other times they are not to be procured for either *love or money*.

† The law at present denounces it as felony either to resurrect, or encourage those who engage in this infernal occupation: yet, as has often been strongly stated, this law must be violated, before the laws above alluded to, and enforced with the greatest severity on those medical men entering the Army or Navy, or indeed the profession generally, can be complied with! A more striking absurdity than this, or a more anomalous piece of legislation, I feel convinced, does not exist in the whole of our criminal code.

and when a cautious and enlightened legislature will afford to the student that which at present is the desideratum of all our medical schools. Meantime, as matters stand, I think the only plan to obviate, in part, the difficulties, which lie in your way to practice, is to make provision, in the manner the Directors of this institution have lately done, for your enjoying regular courses of lectures on clinical surgery and medicine.

That it should have been made imperative upon you to attend these courses may, to some, appear arbitrary and extrajudicial; but, if investigated a little more attentively, I feel convinced those enactments will ultimately tend to your advantage, and prove, even if looked to in an economical point of view, a great saving. Permit me, for one moment, to take a glance of matters as they now stand. All the Royal Colleges, the Army and Navy Boards, and the Faculty of this city, have decreed that separate courses of both clinical surgery and medicine, with corresponding hospital attendance, are indispensable to the passing for a diploma.* Now, suppose that the Directors of this hospital had been so near-sighted as not to have, in part, anticipated these arrangements, what would have been at this moment your situation? Why, instead of having your two years' hospital ticket, including that for clinical surgery and medicine, for the small sum of six guineas,† you might have found yourselves under the necessity, as in Edinburgh, of paying three times that sum; and where lectures are delivered on clinical surgery by one,‡ who, though respected and esteemed, yet, strange anomaly! never is allowed the treatment of a case, nor the performance of an operation, but—still more ridiculous—is only permitted

* There is a surgical diploma, which can be obtained from the University of Glasgow, of what has been called *Chirurgiæ Magister*, or C. M. without attending either clinical medicine or surgery.

† Of this sum £4, 4s. is appropriated to the support of the Infirmary, and only 10s. 6d. goes into the pockets of each of the four medical and surgical lecturers.

‡ Though an old pupil of Professor Russell, and one of his staunchest admirers, I felt myself obliged to state my impression as to the above glaring defect in the constitution of my Alma Mater.

to approve or condemn the practice of his hospital professional brethren.

Let me again repeat, therefore, notwithstanding all the outcry which has been made here on this subject, that the Directors of this institution are gentlemen who have your interest sincerely at heart, and are determined to persevere in the good cause which they have so honourably commenced. They are not any of your crown-presented legislators, who can only allow of their own aggrandisement at the public expense. On the contrary, the managers of this hospital are, by its original charter—and a more liberal and valuable one does not exist—annually elected to their responsible situation by means the most open and honourable—that of the votes of their fellow citizens; and they, on all occasions, prove themselves worthy of the trust committed to them, by the personal sacrifices which they are ever ready to make on its behalf.

I cannot therefore sufficiently reprobate the language, and hold up to scorn the attempt, last year, made, in a certain quarter, to prevent you entering this hospital; as if, by such sinister means, to mar its usefulness, and thus frighten the Directors into a change of regulations. I hold all such schemes, more particularly when emanating from those who had previously characterised the new enactments as judicious and commendable, to be the effect of nothing but halucination, and the persons who thus fulminate their denunciations as more to be pitied than despised. What their objections amounted to I could never properly learn; but why were all their observations made only to those who could not be proper judges? And at a time and place the most inappropriate? If any new light had broken in on their benighted understandings, why did they not manfully come forward before these very Directors, and state their reasons of dissent, and at the same time acknowledge from whence they were borrowed? But it lies not with me, or with any of those who proposed the change, to say one word more on the subject. The Directors have done their duty, and it now remains with us to do ours: heedless of the

clamour of those who are wilfully blind to the result likely to arise from their salutary measures.*

As to the importance of the study of clinical surgery, and the advantages attending its cultivation, these are so obvious that the very youngest, now hearing me, must be immediately impressed with them. Compare, as you will soon have the opportunity of doing, the surgery which you may have read in books, or even heard in lectures, with that which will be brought under your observation at the bed side of the patient, and the difference will not fail to strike the most careless. Many of the publications which have issued from the press, both in former and more modern times, upon the most important points in surgery, are so confused and contradictory that I have often been led to think that the student would do better not to trouble himself with them at all; but read at first only in the great volume of nature, where alone correct information is to be obtained. Indeed, without this observation of nature's processes at the patient's bed side, and the reasoning which must of necessity follow on every case which meets your view, and where your feelings in every scene of affliction are so much interested, the lessons attempted to be enforced, elsewhere, must fall, I fear, with listlessness on the ear. Without this careful study of the variety of symptoms, and modifying circumstances, of each particular case, arising from their causes, their combinations, constitutional peculiarities, progress, &c. your future practice will be stained by empiricism, and your success in after life, in proportion, problematical.

As to lectures on surgery, as they are sometimes delivered in the schools, they are, in my opinion, of very little advantage, consisting as they have done, of theory manufactured in the study, the fruit perhaps of a brilliant imagination, than drawn from real life, and the result of careful

* The revenue to the hospital from the above source, so far from diminishing in consequence of these enactments, as some supposed, has increased beyond any former period since the foundation of the establishment; and this, in a great measure, from the additional number of pupils attracted by the great blank in the medical and surgical education in this otherwise celebrated school being now filled up.

induction. Well do I remember, when a student at a university not far distant, that the learned professor began his course of surgery with stone in the bladder, delivered some twelve or fifteen lectures on this (it must be confessed) very important disease, and finished with hernia, and those two subjects occupied almost the whole of the surgical course in those days. At present, matters are very much changed, under the talented and experienced professor of surgery in our university, and many more topics are introduced. Still however I am of opinion that the student, who is well directed, will learn more in one week in the wards of an hospital, such as this, than during a whole session of attendance on surgical lectures, however ably written, or amusingly, or eloquently, enforced. Surgery, to be well taught, ought, I think, to be less a treatise, than a demonstration of disease, rather a descriptive lecture, than an assemblage of precepts or theories. Better would it be for the student to know nothing of surgical diseases than have to correct his impressions, received in the lecture room, by those in the hospital.

You may be told in the class room, of inflammation, and its consequences; and, as is generally the case, much of your valuable time, may be taken up, with fine-spun theories on this all-engrossing subject; but only present to your eye, a patient, who has just made his appearance from some of our magnificent manufactories, and lies in our accident ward, with his leg, it may be, shattered by some steam engine gearing, and what now are your sensations? what your interest? and what, in fine, the instinctive reasoning on the case; here, you must have inflammation, and perhaps in all its stages, and all its varieties, and tell me now whether what is seen, touched and properly commented on, at the bed side, does not ten thousand times more strongly rivet your regards, than all which you may previously have heard on the subject?

Again, as to the diagnostic department of our art, in the university, you may be told, with all the eloquence of a Demosthenes, what hernia is, what are its causes, what its symptoms, and what are its *bottled* or dried morbid appear-

ances, &c. and this is all very well; but let a patient make his appearance in our waiting room, for advice only, let him retire behind the ominous screen, down stairs, and there uncover his disease; who among you, that has only heard cut-and-dry lectures on surgery, will now be able to say what disease the poor sufferer labours under, and what ought to be done? You see that there is swelling of the scrotum, some appearance of obscure fluctuation, some pain, and bowels rather constipated, you take him to the ward, and with your trocar and cannula puncture what, in your speculative notion, you supposed hydrocele, when, behold, no water flows: you get confused, agitated and alarmed; and so you may! you have got into a herniary sac, you have dashed into the intestine, and the miserable sufferer is doomed, if not to death, at least to a fate more horrible—to an incurable and loathsome artificial anus.

With respect to operations on the dead subject, as performed in the class room, I shall add, that you require to be present in this amphitheatre, for only a few moments during an operation on the living, to be instantly struck with the difference. In the lecture room, all is smooth, all natural, and it may be beautifully dissected, all calm and steady as a rock. On the other hand, here, all is agitation, the parts about to be the subject of operation, confounded, displaced, and irregular, all the frame of the unfortunate and sensitive sufferer, is unsteady, and cries, which would melt the most obdurate, too often pierce the heart, and unnerve the hand of the most skilful and determined. All our ideas of external objects are vague, until they are presented to our senses, until the animated picture of real existence is exhibited; then, but not until then, can we, with any degree of accuracy, say what this or that disease is; and, in proportion to the magnitude of the gallery which you have the advantage of attending, and the number, variety, and importance of the living plates of disease which meet your observation, if I may so express myself, so will you be able afterwards to advance to the practice of your profession, with comfort and satisfaction to yourselves, and advantage and success to those intrusted to your charge.

Theory without practice you will very soon find to have only a short-lived existence—that of to-day giving place to that of to-morrow, and both soon forgotten—but observation of nature, and her processes, must ever prove useful, and instructive; and her laws admit of no change. Surgery may, in this respect, be aptly compared to some gigantic pyramid, reared amid the ages which have passed, whose base and centre, founded and cemented by the observation of facts, have withstood the torrents of time, but whose sides and summit, loosely joined and crowned by crude speculation, have gradually crumbled into dust, leaving no vestige of the hands which formed them.

But though I have thus spoken of theory without practice, I must at the same time inform you, that principles, carefully deduced, and well digested, are equally indispensable to the proper practice of your profession. Without those lights to guide you, empiricism must characterise your whole conduct, and rotinism, with all its evils, stamp your every abortive effort at cure. The rectifying of both these blunders is the great object of hospital surgery, in which your attention will be pointed to diseases as in nature they are to be found; and, thus, taking it for granted that you know something of the rudiments of your profession, theory and practice are, in our wards, made to assist and correct each other. Every patient who enters under our charge will thus, in a manner, be a natural book, in which you will be able to read for yourselves what actually occurs, to think and judge for yourselves what remedies ought to be had recourse to, and the result to be expected; and when you do at last enter upon practice, you will find yourselves, as it were, at home—little presenting itself either strange or difficult, your previous diligence in nature's school, having stamped in your mind, that, which no system of oral instruction, can ever communicate.

With respect to the advantages of this infirmary as a school of practical surgery, I think they are both numerous and important; for, whilst in the great capitals, such as London, Paris, &c. the surgical patients are distributed over many hospitals, they are here concentrated into one. The

variety and magnitude also of the manufacturing and mining establishments in this city, and the vast plebeian population in the surrounding counties, engaged in similar employments, giving rise to accidents often of the most appalling description, and requiring all the intrepidity and skill of the surgeon to decide upon, in my opinion, render this establishment, in many respects, superior to any which I have seen either at home or abroad.* But, besides these cases, which you have the opportunity of observing, and hearing commented on daily, either in the wards, or at the regular clinical lecture, there are others, of a no less interesting description, which make their appearance, in the waiting room, as you enter the house, for advice only. These, though often cursorily examined, and hurriedly prescribed for, are well worthy of your attention; and I know of no better sample room in the world, for an enlightened observer of human nature.

There is one great advantage also attending the surgical practice of this infirmary, which I believe exists no where else, and that is, the election, from among the students, without fee,† of ten dressers each quarter, to assist the surgeon. It has been said that the duties attached to this very important situation do not resemble those of a similar office in the London hospitals, where the premium for its possession is so exorbitant; but, from my knowledge of both, I hesitate not to assert that the difference is a matter of moonshine. I appeal to all those who have acted as dressers in this house for sometime past, whether or not the duties and responsibility, attached to their situations, is of so meagre and trifling a nature as by many it is supposed, and, if somewhat inferior to metropolitan functionaries, let the comparative cost of each

* Lest it be said that too much of the pupil's attention is taken up with "accidents" in this infirmary, I may mention as an instance of the great variety of surgical diseases, occasionally under treatment, that within these last eight months my colleague and me have admitted eleven cases of stone in the bladder. *Nine* of these we have operated upon, and with a success unparalleled in the history of this institution—not one single death having occurred.

† I understand that this is not literally the case, 5s. being exacted from all those who require a diploma as having served in the above capacity; but even this is optional. Contrast the above with the £52, 10s. premium of St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

situation be considered. One thing I am certain of—the dressers in this hospital, having, as they do, alternately, the charge of the waiting room orders, do more execution, in their curious little sanctum sanctorum, on Sunday, (as to those minor surgical operations, formerly monopolized by the gardener, barber and blacksmith,) than their brethren in London, are called upon to perform in a month.

Much might be said, as to the care with which the cases admitted into the hospital are recorded in the journals, and the daily reports taken at the bed side of the patient, often of themselves a good clinical lecture. These you not only have an opportunity of seeing in the hands of the clerk, who accompanies me in my round, but from the hours of 11 to 12 A. M. and from 4 to 7 P. M.* they may be perused by you in the room, appropriated for your use, on the right hand as you enter the house. The operations and inspections you will find also most punctually advertised, in a conspicuous place, in the above mentioned room, the day before they occur; and, for the advantage of those of you, who are only birds of passage in the wards, and are satisfied with surface work, at the top of every bed, will be found, the patient's name, the date of his admission, his disease, his diet and treatment. And now, Gentlemen, let me in a very few words, explain what you are to expect from me, as your instructor, and what I look for, on your part, as pupils. In the situation which I hold, many attainments are necessary, besides a thorough knowledge of every branch of the healing art; and, on this account, conscious of my own inability and imperfection, I feel that I shall require much of your forbearance. I shall however, by punctual attendance, by constant assiduity, and, in fine, by at all times maintaining

* The visit hour is from 1 o'clock till 2 P. M. Sunday as well as Saturday; but, in consequence of the distance of the hospital from the university, and other medical schools, nearly twenty minutes of this valuable hour is lost to the pupil. Could not an arrangement be made, by which, two hours of hospital attendance might be obtained? The student would then be enabled to observe every case of interest, and also be present at all the operations and inspections, which, as matters now stand, can rarely be accomplished by him, the business of the hospital being seldom finished by me till 3 o'clock P. M.

such a candour and ingenuousness, as that, cost what it may, truth shall be told, to make up for any deficiency under which I may labour. On your parts, I shall look for the same open and straight-forward conduct, whether as regards myself, or the patients placed under my charge. I am sorry to observe it so much the practice, in the present day, particularly at this school of medicine and surgery, for the student to rest satisfied with a smattering merely of his profession, acquired by book-reading, or lecture-attending; and the question, how short a time shall suffice to my passing? or what number of classes shall be just enough for my engaging in practice? is that, which too often occupies the mind of the student; and I do not judge too severely, when I declare, that many pupils of the present day, are contented to learn this most difficult of professions by intuition, and whose period of hospital attendance is trifled away, by literally walking the wards, unconscious of all that is going on around them. Is it for this purpose, think you, that your parents and guardians, have, at great expense, and it may be, at no small sacrifice, sent you thither? Is it in this manner, do you imagine, that hereafter, you will dare to treat those intrusted to your charge? or be suffered, for a moment, to sport with the lives of your fellow creatures? Depend upon it, in proportion to your diligence and close application now, so will, in future life be your comfort and success. You have already, I presume, attended lectures on the various branches of the healing art. These are all of them necessary, for the right understanding of what you are about to see and hear in this great practical school; but, be assured, these university attainments will avail you nothing, unless you now, tax all your powers of observation, and put forth all your talents, to obtain, that practical knowledge and experience, which cases are alone able to convey.

During the last two years, it has been a most painful duty for me, I do assure you, whilst officiating at Surgeons' Hall, to reject many young men, who, in consequence of carelessness alone, were unable to answer, even the most obvious and important questions in practical surgery. But what would

have been the consequence, if, by a slovenly examination, ignorance such as I have described, had been allowed to pass? Why, the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons would have been disgraced, the candidate, would, through stupidity, and, which is worse, presumption, have been rivetted to his follies, and the public would, in the long-run, have been the miserable dupes and sufferers. To obviate, in some measure, therefore, such like scenes, to make all those pupils who go the round with me, conversant with my cases, I propose to give certificates of attendance to those only who deserve it, after individual and private examination, at the end of each quarter, as during last summer. By this means, though more laborious and fatiguing to myself, the most modest, as well as the most confident, is stripped of a single apology for absence, and, I at the same time, by this procedure, not only save the trouble daily of calling the catalogue, but, which is of greatest moment, command your mental as well as bodily presence, at the bed sides of my patients.*

In the practice of this hospital, as of all others, you will find, that the daily visit is by far the most useful, and the regular duties the most important; for it is to be presumed, that he who can operate with dexterity, will also be the person, who with most success, can perform his minor and more laborious duties. Yet, sorry am I to say, such is the rage for operations, such the importance which seems to attach to them, that, though the least part of the profession, they seem to take a firmer hold of the public mind, and strike a deeper impression on the pupil's senses than the daily cures performed; they in fact usurp an importance in education which does not belong to them; the surgeon, instead of being valued according to his talents, sense and general information, is praised only in proportion as he operates with boldness and dexterity.

* A great majority of the above have lately availed themselves of the opportunity of waiting upon me, and submitting to this test, not so much of their abilities as of their industry; and I rejoice to say now, without in the least flattering their vanity, that with one or two exceptions, I have found much, both to praise and admire in the acuteness of observation, and the uniform assiduity, which has been displayed by them, during their clinical course.

Let me therefore again warn you of the necessity of examining for yourselves every case, and at the same time, with the greatest circumspection. Let not one single sinister observation escape you, calculated either to hurt my own feelings, or to upset that confidence in the minds of my patients, so necessary to their cure. As to your conduct in this amphitheatre, during the performance of surgical operations, I hope that it will continue to be characterised by that decorum, so becoming the place, and which I have found so necessary, to the operator's composure of mind, and steadiness of hand. For the accomplishment of this very desirable object, I shall take as much care as possible, that no obnoxious *head*, or obtrusive *body*, be interposed between you and the patient; the neglect of which sympathy, for the laudable curiosity of the pupil, has, I believe, been the main cause of those disgraceful scenes, too often exhibited in our metropolitan hospitals, and the fertile source, of much of the vituperation and abuse displayed in some of our periodical journals.

I do not mean however, by what I have above advanced, in the least to muzzle you in the expression of your sentiments, either with regard to the conduct of the Directors of this institution, the medical or surgical officers, or any of its other official servants. I know and feel that the task devolved upon me, is one of great responsibility; and, in those days of surgical reform, it requires that one has no small degree of fortitude, and conscious rectitude to withstand the lashes which have, of late years, so fearlessly, so unmercifully, and so ignorantly, been applied to hospital surgeons in mass.

No man more admires the liberty of the press than I do—none more venerates it as the palladium of our rights, and the guardian of our liberties—but remember, that there is a point, beyond which I feel convinced none of you would wish to see it extended. I mean, when, instead of the banner of truth, that of falsehood is unfurled, when licentiousness, rather than liberty, is adopted as its motto, and when calumny and slander, instead of candour and fair dealing, are wielded as its weapons. I may indeed be told that truth is great, and it shall prevail; but how often do we find that varnished

falsehood takes its place? For I fear that no situation, however arduous, and no conduct, however straight-forward, will shield their possessors from the malevolence of those whose only amusement seems to be the laceration of the most amiable and exalted of natures. I most sincerely hope, however, that those days of darkness have gone by, and that hospital medical men, as they have all along been, will still be characterized as the most liberal of their brethren, and the foremost in the ranks of charity and philanthropy.

In conclusion, I have only to remark, that if any of you should, at any time, think yourselves aggrieved, or have the least fault to find, either with the regulations of the house, or the servants belonging to it, you have only to make your complaints to me, or any of my colleagues, and we shall do all in our power to find you redress; for, in my opinion, nothing conspires so much to mutual good will and improvement, as candour, and frequent kindly intercourse, between all parties.

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W. H. T. U. N.

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