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Royal College of Surgeons

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Some Neighbouring Institutions.**II. THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.**

THE early history of the Royal College of Surgeons of England is the history of two companies, which were for a time united into one body corporate. One of these, the Barbers' Company of London is first mentioned in the records preserved at the Guildhall in 1308, and the other company, known as the Fellowship or Guild of Surgeons, is mentioned in the city records in 1369. Between these two companies there was for many years a keen rivalry and jealousy, each trying in turn to supersede the other in all matters relating to the practice of surgery. The outcome of the mutual animosities of the two companies was a confirmation by the mayor and aldermen, in 1424, of the surgical privileges of the barbers. Meanwhile the surgeons sought an alliance with the physicians, and, mainly through the influence of John Morstede, a surgeon who accompanied Henry V. to Agincourt, a college of physicians and surgeons was formally sanctioned by the mayor, and power granted to it to examine and control persons practising medicine and surgery in the city of London. It had but a short career. Freed from opposition the Barbers' Company continued to grow in importance, and in 1462 the right of its members to practice surgery was definitely established by Letters Patent granted by Edward IV. In 1493 the Guild of Surgeons entered into an alliance or composition with the Barbers' Company, by which the two companies agreed to act together in all matters relating to surgery and to the examination and government of its practitioners. In 1540 the two companies were formally united by Act of Parliament. Four masters or governors, two to be surgeons and two to be barbers, were appointed annually; barbers were forbidden to perform any surgical operation except the drawing of teeth, and surgeons were not to exercise the craft of barbery and shaving. Provision was also made for the study of anatomy by giving the company the right to claim four bodies annually of persons executed for felony. The united company shared the possession of Barbers' Hall, which is known to have occupied its present site in Monkwell Street since 1490. The Hall, subsequently added to by Inigo Jones, is still standing, having escaped destruction in the Great Fire of London. Charles I. granted a further charter to the company, providing that ten of its freemen should be constituted examiners of surgeons in London. No one was to practise surgery in London, or within seven miles of it, except members of the College of Physicians, unless examined and approved by these examiners, and every person so approved might practise surgery anywhere in England. Apprentices were to serve for not less than seven years, to be sound in body and limbs, and to read and understand Latin.

After more than two hundred years of union, during which the two companies appear to have worked in harmony, there were signs that the surgeons began to find their association with the barbers irksome and inconvenient; moreover, several surgeons had by this time attained

great eminence in their profession. The surgeons resented the presence of barbers at their examinations and objected to the signatures of barbers appearing upon surgical diplomas. In 1745, notwithstanding the protests of the barbers, the surgeons petitioned Parliament to dissolve the union between them. The dissolution was accomplished, but the barbers were allowed to retain the whole of the corporate property, including plate, pictures, and library. The surgeons had to find a new home, and, after holding their first meetings at Stationers' Hall, eventually secured premises in the Old Bailey, and there built Surgeons Hall in 1751. The first masters in anatomy appointed were Percival Pott and John Hunter, and no more brilliant selection could have been made. It is said that immediately after this election a discussion arose as to how the authorities should dispose of the bodies of three persons who were shortly to be executed for murder and then sent to the surgeons for dissection. Amongst the bodies brought in this way was that of Lord Ferrars, executed in 1760 for killing his steward. It was not, however, dissected, but buried in old St. Pancras Churchyard. The business of the company was transacted at the Hall in Old Bailey until 1796 when it was found that the building was in need of substantial repair and that their tenure of the premises would terminate at the end of fifty-five years. The property was therefore sold, and a freehold house purchased in Lincoln's Inn Fields, on the site of which a part of the present buildings of the Royal College of Surgeons now stands. In December, 1796, two murderers were executed, and were the first malefactors conveyed to the new Surgeons' Hall. They were taken in a cart, their heads supported by tea-chests for the public to see. This fact throws some light on the opposition raised by the Bishop of London and others against choosing Lincoln's Inn Fields as the future home of the surgeons, one of the main objections being, that the bodies of criminals, who had been executed and consigned to the surgeons, would have to be carried through the streets a considerable distance, to the offence of all respectable people. The difficulty was overcome, however, by a member of the college giving up his stable in Hosier Lane, Smithfield, for the purpose of the dissection of malefactors' bodies.

By a somewhat curious accident the company came to a premature end in 1796. The Act of Incorporation decreed that the Court of Assistants, the governing body, should consist of a master and two wardens, with other members. In order to form a properly constituted court there should be present the master and one warden, in addition to two or three members. But a court had been held at which neither of the wardens was present. One of them had recently died, and the other, blind and paralysed, was in Warwickshire. Efforts were made to bring the sick one to London; the state of his health was, however, so bad that this was found to be impossible. The meeting was nevertheless held, but, on taking counsel's opinion, it was found that the corporation had come to an end by the holding of this illegal court. It was about this time that the company disposed of their property in the Old Bailey and migrated to Lincoln's Inn Fields. An attempt was made to legalise the irregular proceedings by a Bill in Parliament, but there was so much opposition from those

who were practising without the diploma of the corporation that the Bill, after passing safely through the Commons, was thrown out by the Lords. Lord Thurlow, who was bitterly opposed to an eminent surgeon of the day, declared, "There is no more science in surgery than there is in butchery." To which the surgeon in question replied, "Then I heartily pray your lordship may break your leg, and have only a butcher to set it, and my lord will then find out the difference between butchery and surgery." Finally it was decided to apply to the Crown and not to Parliament for a new charter, and, although opposition was again offered, it proved unsuccessful, and on March 22, 1800, the Royal College of Surgeons was established by charter of George III. This charter gave the college its former rights on condition of resigning its municipal privileges, and its members were no longer freemen of the city of London and no longer under the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor. The original college building was designed by Dance and completed in 1813. It was considered a fine though somewhat heavy building of the Ionic order, with a lofty and handsome portico. Curiously enough the building suffered from dry rot. This was stated by Sir Anthony Carlisle, an eminent surgeon, in evidence before a committee appointed to inquire into a patent for the prevention of dry rot. The patent process consisted of corrosive sublimate on the timbers, and Sir Anthony informed the committee that he had chewed a mouthful of sawdust from timber so treated, and could distinctly taste the sublimate. After some twenty years the building proved inadequate to display the addition of preparations to the museum, and as more space was required for the rapidly-growing library, the greater part of the college was demolished and the present building erected on its site by Sir Charles Barry. In 1847 there was further enlargement of the museum, and in 1888 it assumed its present dimensions. The museum is considered, by those in a position to judge, to be the finest of its kind in existence. It stands in some respects in a peculiar position, differing perhaps from any in the world in its origin, its scope, its method of maintenance, and its relation to the profession and to the State. Its inception was due to the genius of John Hunter, whose mind, far in advance of his age, comprehended intuitively the necessity of a museum as a means to further the study of biological science. To his end he devoted his life and his fortune, and his museum is said to have cost him upwards of £70,000. Surgery, as he learnt it, was but an empirical art; at his death he had made it a science.

Hunter came of an old Scotch family, the Hunters of Hunterston, in Ayrshire. He was born in 1728, at Long Calderwood, a small estate near East Kilbride, and about seven miles from Glasgow. From his own account it appears that he acquired little knowledge at school, but was strongly disposed towards natural history pursuits. In 1748 he came to London and joined his brother William, who afterwards attained fame as a physician. William had by this time founded a school of anatomy, and he placed John in the dissecting room. Here it was that Hunter laid the foundation of his reputation as one of the most brilliant exponents of medical science. He subsequently studied surgery at Chelsea Hospital under Cheselden and

Pott, and in 1754 he entered St. George's Hospital, where, in later life, he became lecturer and surgeon. Here, too, he met his death, for it was after a Board meeting at the hospital that he fell dead in the arms of a colleague. After he had been in practice about ten years the state of his health obliged him to make a change in his mode of life, and he joined the army as a staff surgeon, and saw service at Belleisle, and in the Peninsula. Upon the establishment of peace he returned to London and rapidly acquired a lucrative practice. He was elected F.R.S., was appointed Surgeon-Extraordinary to George III., and surgeon-general to the army. Meanwhile he had begun the collection of his famous museum, which was to form the nucleus of the present museum of the college. His industry throughout his career was most extraordinary, as is shown by his correspondence with Jenner, the discoverer of vaccination, for whom he had a great regard. At his death there were over 13,000 specimens in the museum, which included, in addition to human anatomy, stuffed animals and birds, osteological, physiological, and zoological preparations, fossils, calculi, malformations and microscopic preparations, and many important manuscripts. By his will Hunter directed that his collection should be offered to the British Government; but in 1794 Pitt, the Prime Minister, was in no mood to spend money on anatomy. "What! Buy preparations!" said he, "Why I have not money enough to purchase gunpowder." Pitt had already made a grant of money to Mrs. Hunter, who had been left in comparatively straitened circumstances. However, in 1799 Parliament voted £15,000 for the purchase of the Hunterian Museum, and an offer of it being made to the Corporation of surgeons it was accepted on the terms proposed by the Government. During the first six years after the collection came into the possession of the College it remained in a gallery in Castle Street, which had been built by Hunter for its reception; but in 1806, the lease of the premises having expired, it was removed temporarily to a house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, adjoining the College, while the museum in which it was destined to be lodged was preparing for its reception. This building, towards the erection of which Parliament contributed the sum of £27,000, was completed and first open to visitors in 1813. The Museum was greatly enlarged entirely at the expense of the College in 1835, and twenty years later a large additional room was added. Towards the cost of this Parliament contributed a further grant of £15,000, the whole of the rest of the expenses of the purchase of the site, the building and the annual maintenance of the Museum, having been borne by the College.

Since the Hunterian Collection was first entrusted to the College of Surgeons it has been largely added to, and the number of specimens now on exhibition is over 50,000. Still it is but an expansion of the Museum which Hunter left, being arranged on the plan which he himself indicated. The Museum is intended rather as a place of study than a place of exhibition, though access to view the collection is readily obtainable. There are some few objects of curiosity, among which may be mentioned the Egyptian Mummies; the skeleton of Jonathan Wild, the thief catcher; the Sicilian dwarf, who, at the age

of ten, was only twenty inches high; and Charles Byrne, or O'Brien, the Irish giant, who was eight feet in height; the skull of Eugene Aram is also to be seen. Another interesting specimen is the skeleton of the racehorse "Orlando," winner of the 1844 Derby.

One of the striking ways in which medicine has developed during the last quarter of a century is through the increase in the number and efficiency of medical libraries. There is no doubt whatever that libraries are increasingly used, and that much work requiring references to literature is produced which would be quite impossible were books of reference not readily accessible. The library of the Royal College of Surgeons dates from the year 1800, when a grant of £50 was made for the purchase of books, and for many years this modest sum was all that could be annually set aside for library purposes. The donations were as meagre as the purchases, and the progress of the library was very slow. In 1827, however, great efforts were made to put the library on a better footing, and in that and the two subsequent years a sum of over £5,000 was spent in the purchase of books. Upon the rebuilding of the College in 1835-6, a very handsome room was allotted to the library, and additions of considerable extent were made in 1888. At the present time another room is being fitted up for library purposes. It is almost impossible to give trustworthy figures as to the growth of the library from year to year on account of the various modes adopted for counting the books at different periods. The number of volumes added annually is now about 1,000, and the total number of the separately bound books as they actually stand upon the shelves is a little over 60,000. But included in this number there is a collection of, approximately, 40,000 pamphlets, tracts, reports, theses, etc., which are bound on an average ten in a volume. The number, therefore, of distinct publications contained in the College Library cannot be less than 100,000. To have periodical literature well represented has always been a constant aim, and the library is particularly rich in this class of literature. Journals are indispensable to research work, and it is only in large libraries that workers may expect to find the sets complete, and easy of access. The maintenance of the library from its start to the present time has involved a very considerable expenditure of the funds of the College: but it has been the object of those to whose care it has been confided to ensure the completeness and excellence of the collection, and great facilities of reference have been provided by the preparation of a catalogue of authors and subjects and the arrangements of the shelves. The College administers many trust funds which are expended in lectures and prizes. The Hunterian lectures are given in accordance with the conditions under which the Hunterian collection was entrusted by the Government to the college. Mention must also be made of the munificent bequest, upwards of £200,000, of the late Sir Erasmus Wilson, without which the latest alterations and improvements of the college buildings could not have been made. In addition to a large and valuable collection of engraved portraits which is housed in the library, the College possesses many valuable busts and painted portraits. Chief among the latter is Sir Joshua Reynolds' life-sized picture of John Hunter,

which hangs in the council-room. Scarcely less valuable is Sir Thomas Lawrence's portrait of Sir Astley Cooper. A fitting close to this brief notice are the words of the late Sir William MacCormac at the centenary celebration in 1900. "During the century of its existence the college has witnessed discoveries which have profoundly changed the character of surgical practice and the scope of surgical aspirations. An immense development has been effected in the operative surgery of every region of the body, and the victories of the surgeon over disease and death are without end."

CHARLES R. HEWITT.

Non-Proportional Return: An Aspect.

PRODUCTION requires the union of two factors, labour and material. This distinction corresponds to that between the objective and the subjective. Wherever matter is present, we cannot with certainty deny the presence of mind; and contrariwise, we have no conclusive evidence of the existence of mind apart from matter. Accordingly our distinction is one between those things whose mental aspect is the more important, and those in which the material side is dominant. As is usual with classifications of this nature, there is a continuous gradation from one extreme to the other. Moreover, this distinction applies not only to the factors, but also to the results of production. When these are material, we have material production; when personal or mental, immaterial production.* From another point of view, the contrast is between activity and passivity. This leads us naturally to the conclusion that, for general purposes, the present division corresponds with that between man and things other than man. We have man, the active initiator of action, and material, the passive sufferer of that action. Yet it must be recognised that exceptional conditions may cause the line of demarcation to move either up or down. For example, to the manufacturer of shaving brushes beavers are undoubtedly material, but to the naturalist studying the economics of these interesting animals they constitute labour. Indeed, it would be interesting to ascertain whether, like man in the past, they unconsciously act with due regard to the law of non-proportionate return in conducting their building and other economic operations. Again, the sugar planter treated his slaves much in the same way that a present-day English farmer treats his horses, and accordingly the economist studying the sugar industry of those days must take cognisance of this fact. Indeed, for some purposes it might be well to treat the unskilled, merely mechanical labourer of modern European civilisation as material. This is, however, a more doubtful case, for even he is left to seek his own interest as best he can.

The aim of economic activity is the welfare of the human factor in production. No doubt there are a small number of people who believe it possible that other animal species may be capable of great mental development, and therefore think it man's duty to help such

* See Nicholson, "Principles of Economics," Vol. I., Bk. I., Chap. II.



