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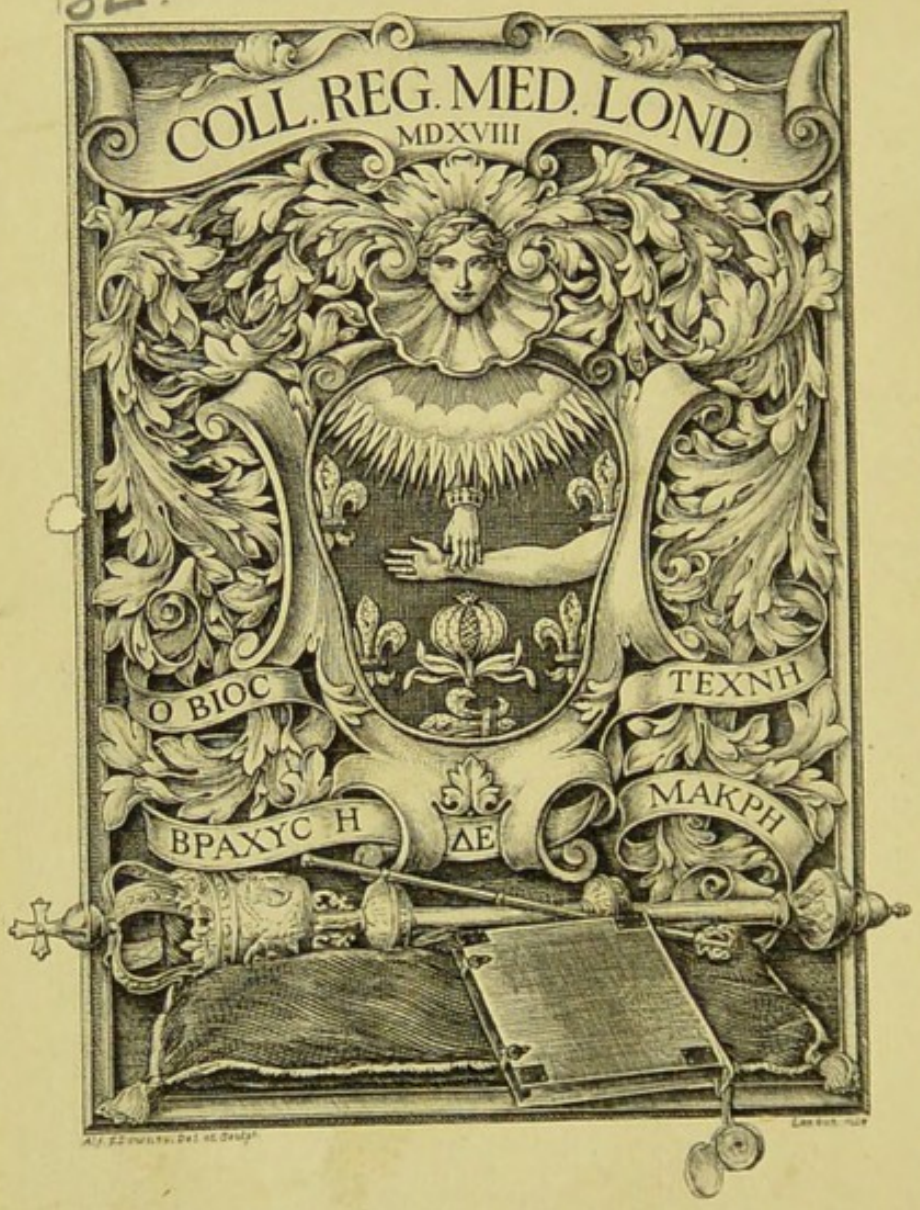

With kind regards

A CENTURY OF PROGRESS:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL SOCIETIES.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

TO THE

LEEDS AND WEST RIDING MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY,

BY THE PRESIDENT:

CHARLES J. WRIGHT,

Senior Surgeon to the Hospital for Women and Children at Leeds;

Professor of Midwifery, Yorkshire College, in the Victoria University.

DELIVERED OCTOBER 20TH, 1899.

[*Published by request.*]

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

It is not surprising that a survey of the century so rapidly drawing to a close has formed such a favourite theme for most of those who for the past few months have had an inaugural address in prospect. The Presidents of the British Association and of the British Medical Association—and, only last week, the President of the Medical Society of London—have each in turn been unable to resist the temptation. I trust that in some of its aspects the text is not yet entirely exhausted.

For what a century of progress it has been! And especially of scientific, and medical and surgical advancement—a century which has seen the blessings of anæsthesia originated and developed, the enormous and priceless benefits to mankind of surgical cleanliness and asepticism, and the use of antiseptics—known for all time to futurity as "Listerism"—the untold comfort to the patient and vast advantage to the medical attendant of the system of trained nursing, has indeed a great deal to be proud of.

1st.—The magnificent conception originated by Florence Nightingale in the Civil and Military Hospitals of Paris as early as 1844, and further developed ten years later in the Hospitals of Scutari amongst the wounded during the Crimean war, has indeed borne good fruit, in the careful and systematic training of our nurses, and in the prodigious boon conferred upon suffering humanity by our numerous Nursing Institutions and our Medical and Surgical Homes for the reception of patients for treatment or operation.

2nd.—The names of Horace Wells, the dentist of Connecticut, who first took nitrous oxide as an anæsthetic; of William Morton, of Massachusetts, also a dentist, who first gave ether; and of Sir James Simpson, of Edinburgh, the pioneer of chloroform, will indeed live for ever—the results of their experiments and investigations being made known within a few years of each other, viz., from 1844 to 1847.

3rd.—In speaking of the crowning triumphs of the brilliant labours of Lord Lister, let us not forget the earlier work of Semmelweiss, of Buda-Pesth, whose persistent efforts in defining and diminishing sepsis so immensely reduced the mortality from puerperal fever in the Maternity Hospitals of Vienna, about 1841 to 1850; also the early workers in surgical cleanliness, like Callender, whose premature death cut short a career of much promise.

How could many of our operations of the present day be attempted, or even contemplated, without those three developments of the past fifty years—anæsthesia, Listerism, and professional nursing; and how could even these be utilised in the hands of the experienced without the present facilities of railway transit, of electric telegraphs and telephones, bringing the best of help at the shortest notice to the bedside of a distant patient, or conveying the latter within reach of the former, in one of our splendidly organised modern hospitals? Add to these the work of a Huxley, of a Pasteur, and a Koch, the development and rapid strides of bacteriology, and the magnificent results of preventive medicine, and of sero-therapeutics, with the use of the various antitoxins, and we indeed sum up a record of beneficence.

We can hardly imagine that, as Dr. Byrom Bramwell remarked in his recent address to our Medical Department of Antiseptic Surgery, "we have yet almost reached the utmost limit of its possibilities." We must still hope it is possible that one hundred years hence advances and improvements upon our present methods will render the success of those who follow after us more brilliant than ever.

And yet let us not forget how much we owe to those who lived in the early years of this century, and even before its commencement. Permit me for a moment to glance at this period.

The immortal John Hunter had died suddenly in 1793, in the zenith of his fame; and, although it took Sir John Banks six years to convince the Government of that day that the grand collection upon which Hunter had expended £70,000 was a thing to be possessed by the nation, the College of Surgeons, who obtained their charter in 1800, became custodians of the Hunterian museum, and still enrich its store. How many of us who so well remember these halls under conditions of tension and suspense ever think of revisiting and enjoying their evergreen treasures under present conditions of greater freedom, if not of less responsibility?

Vaccination had been discovered by Jenner in 1796, and here let us blush for what has been correctly termed the "retrogression" (in legislation) of the close of this century, and pause to express the fervent hope that the vagaries of the "conscientious objector" may be restrained ere the frightful ravages of former ages be reproduced.

The communications to the Royal Society of Joseph Priestley—whom we are all proud to claim as a Leeds man, although born, I believe, near Wakefield—had announced the discovery of nitrous oxide, 1772, and of oxygen in 1774. He was also the first to prepare and study sulphurous acid, carbonic oxide, hydrochloric acid, and carried out important researches on the properties of hydrogen and other gases previously but little known.

It is just one hundred years since the famous meeting took place at which the Royal Institution had its birth (in Albemarle Street), in the laboratories of which Davy and Faraday made their great discoveries of the electro-magnet and of induction. Where would our present applications of electro-therapeutics be but for the splendid work of these men:

of Volta, the inventor of the electric cell and electric pile, to whose memory a Congress is now doing honour; and of Galvani, whose experiments on frogs now bear such abundant fruit in so many of our Physiological Laboratories?

Sir Humphry Davy, originally a medical student, lived at a time when there was no Act of Parliament restricting experiments on animals. With a true spirit of research, while he was Superintendent of the Pneumatic Institution at Bristol he experimented on animals and plants, and, to his great peril, upon himself. He nearly killed himself more than once while inhaling nitrous oxide and carbonic oxide gas. He only took nitrous oxide—"dephlogisticated nitrous air," as it was called—to the stage of exhilaration, and quotes in his book verses worthy of his great friends, Southey and Coleridge, which he composed while he was under its influence. It is singular how nearly he arrived—at this time, 1800—at the discovery of its anæsthetic effects. This, however, was left for the Connecticut dentist, Horace Wells, to demonstrate upon himself whilst having his own molar extracted forty-four years later.

It would be tempting, did time permit, to dwell upon the labours of those "Heroes of Medicine" who flourished about this period; of Addison and Bright; of that handsome, polished, and accomplished surgeon, Sir Astley Cooper, the story of whose life abounds in subjects fresh for discussion even at the present time; of Lister and Abernethy, and Syme and Aston Key; and, rather later, of Sir Thos. Watson, of Stokes, and Sir Benjamin Brodie, who, by the way, became within a week both President of the Royal Society and of the first General Medical Council.

Anatomy was enriched by the writings of Sheldon and Scarpa; and, although in consequence of the Burke and Hare atrocities, public odium was fixed upon Robert Knox, however undeservedly, as Professor of Anatomy in Edinburgh, he lectured, in 1828, to a class of 504, filling his old class-room three times daily, often at consecutive hours with the same

lecture, having a staff of seven assistants, of whom William Fergusson—afterwards Sergeant Surgeon to Her Majesty, as Sir William Fergusson—was one.

Across the Channel, Dupuytren and Lisfranc were familiar names. Laennec's discovery of "mediate auscultation," with the introduction of the stethoscope, was published in 1814, and before this he was active in the field as an Army Surgeon; and at the head of the French Medical Department was the renowned Baron Larrey.

The Science of Obstetrics, a necessarily much more ancient art than the more modern gynæcology, was enriched by Denman and Blundell; and Rigby's essay on "Unavoidable uterine hemorrhage" (4th ed., 1789) is still a standard work, dedicated to Charles White, F.R.S., of Manchester, whose writings are still profitable reading.

Sir Charles Mansfield Clarke's and Gooch's books were amongst the earliest on Diseases of Women, but what a field of labour and a flood of literature on this subject have we now! Witness the life-history of a single individual, *e.g.*, Sir Spencer Wells (1818–1897), an old Leeds student, with the evolution and development of an operation with which his name will ever be associated. Or glance at the work on the other side of the Atlantic, of a McDowell, a Marion Sims, a Lusk, or an Emmett!

As regards our own city, the town of Leeds, an important event ushered in "the first day of the present century" in the birth of Thomas P. Teale, January 1, 1801, so largely identified afterwards with the medical history of Leeds, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and one of the first Crown members of the General Medical Council. According to the census of 1801 the population of Leeds was 53,162.

* The "Old" Infirmary, which so many of us remember in Infirmary Street, now barely recognisable, was originally built in 1771 (as a solid block) for twenty-seven beds, in an airy

* I am indebted to Mr. Blair, the present manager, for a reference to a volume of reports of the Infirmary from its foundation.

situation, free from other buildings, to the west of the town. The wings were added, and another storey, so that in 1800 we find it had eighty-eight beds occupied, and with the following staff:—Physicians, Drs. Walker, Hird, and Thorp; surgeons, William Hey, F.R.S., Mr. Logan, and Thomas Chorley; apothecary, Anthony Cass.

It is impossible to look at the medical history of Leeds without observing how much was due to the influence and personality of the first William Hey. A friend of Priestley, who proposed him as a Fellow of the Royal Society, a magistrate, and twice Mayor of Leeds, a devout supporter of religious institutions, he was withal a great surgeon and skilled accoucheur, and was attached to the Infirmary for forty-four years. His early efforts at teaching are interesting. In 1801 he gave a course of twelve anatomical demonstrations at the Infirmary, the last being upon the eye and the theory of vision. To this ladies were admitted. In 1809 he gave a fourth course; the "subject" he dissected was a woman of atrocious character, I believe a notorious poisoner, executed at York (Mary Bateman). Her skeleton hangs at this moment in our general lecture theatre at the Medical School, and has been used for many years in my lectures and those of my predecessors. In 1809 Leeds and its vicinity was visited by a fearful epidemic of "puerperal fever," a treatise describing which was published by William Hey the second. The treatment then consisted of copious bleeding, and the mortality was very high.

MEDICAL SOCIETIES.

In reviewing the events of the past century, nothing perhaps is more remarkable than the growth and development of Medical Societies throughout the United Kingdom. As discoveries were made and improvements in methods of treatment arose, interchange of ideas and opportunity for discussion of varied views became a necessity. Empiricism

and the ancient system of profiting by secret remedies, of which the early use of the midwifery forceps by the Chamberlens was an example, became the attribute of the charlatan and the patent medicine vendor.

Unlike a manufacturer of the present day working profitable patents, who shrinks from the inspection of his machinery, members of a liberal profession like ours vie with one another to be the first to make known what is useful or new.

In the Metropolis, the "Medical Society of London" was founded as early as 1773, the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society in 1805. Scotland seems to have been but little behindhand, for we find the Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society was founded in 1789; Glasgow followed suit in 1814, and Edinburgh not until 1821.

Now we find in London alone not only the headquarters of the "British Medical Association," but nearly thirty other medical societies, representing every branch of medical science, and every division of practice and of specialism, besides innumerable smaller societies, almost every hospital of importance having its own admirable Students' Medical Society.

We find the Provinces were early in the field in founding Literary and Philosophical Societies—Manchester in 1781 and Newcastle in 1792.

The Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society was started in January, 1820. In 1821 the inaugural address was delivered by Charles Turner Thackrah, an eminent medical practitioner and investigator, cut short in early life (æt. 38), who gave a course of lectures on anatomy in Leeds in 1827, and assisted five years later in founding the Leeds School of Medicine. He was chosen president of the Philosophical Society, after competition with others, who sent in essays. Many local leaders of our profession have since occupied the presidential chair of this Society, though I imagine *not* with the adoption of the same method of selection.

We read, too, of a Philosophical and Literary Society being formed in 1783, with William Hey, F.R.S., as president. He contributed to it many papers of scientific and medical interest. The records of its meetings, however, do not extend for more than three years.

Although we find medical societies were started in Plymouth (1794) and Colchester (1774) before 1800, none existed in Yorkshire, I believe, until that founded in York, in 1832, a period which gave birth to so many modes of progress, medical and otherwise.

It is interesting to observe how this era of peace and prosperity, rather than of regal influence, was marked by events of intellectual advancement. It was in 1831 that science received such an impetus in the formation, at that memorable meeting at York of the British Association, which still flourishes annually as the "Parliament of Science." We have reason to feel proud that its presidents have three times during the last few years been drawn from our profession, viz., Lord Lister, also President of the Royal Society; Sir J. Burdon Sanderson, Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford; this year, at Dover, Sir Michael Foster, Secretary of the Royal Society, and next year in Bradford its deliberations are to be presided over by Sir William Turner, President of the General Medical Council.

The Anatomy Act of 1832 having legalised the supply of subjects and facilitated the teaching of anatomy without the disgusting barter, crime, and blackmail of former years, provincial Schools of Medicine were started—our own in Leeds amongst them.

After the Reform Act (1832), too, came the first Factory Act (1833), a measure of vital importance to the rising generation, which owed much to the efforts of medical men, and notably to our late beloved townsman, Samuel Smith, who was for forty-five years Surgeon to the Leeds Infirmary (1819-1864).

It was at this time (1832) that the "British Medical Association" was founded as the "Provincial Medical and Surgical Association," by Sir Charles Hastings, and held its first annual meeting in Bristol in 1833. District and country branches soon began to be formed, the earliest being the Bath and Bristol (1836) and the East Anglian (1840). In 1843 the "Provincial Medical and Surgical Association" held its first meeting in Leeds. The presidential address of William Hey the second (æt. 71), was read by his son (in consequence of declining health). The following clause culled from this address is worth quoting :—

> Having briefly traced this ancient borough from a farming village to the large smoky town which you now see, I must not pass unnoticed one of the latest, though not the least important, of its public works, and which, among other agreeable effects, has that of enabling this great Association to meet together from various parts of the kingdom, with so little comparative expense of time and money. You will readily suppose that I allude to the railway. How different the time when the following advertisement appeared in a Leeds newspaper, dated Oct. 2nd, 1764 :—
>
> "Safe and expeditious travelling in machines on steel springs, in four days to London, from the 'Old King's Arms,' in Leeds, every Monday and Wednesday." (Laughter.)

Apparently our Yorkshire Branch had its origin in the preparation for this first Leeds meeting (1842), Mr. W. D. Husband being the hon. secretary. I find from the minute-book (which Dr. Bronner has kindly lent me) that its meetings were more or less spasmodic until the second Leeds annual meeting, in 1869, since which the branch has met regularly. The British Medical Association, with a membership of 18,185, now numbers altogether 38 branches—23 in England, 7 in Scotland, 5 in Ireland, 3 in Wales, besides 32 Colonial, many in a state of great activity.

Leeds was early, too, in starting a Medical Society of its own. I have a circular, dated October 8th, 1834, calling a meeting of the profession at the Scarborough Hotel, Leeds, recently demolished, "to organise a district branch of the North of England Medical and Surgical Association."

This circular was signed, amongst others, by Drs. Williamson, Hunter, Garlick, Teale, W. Price, S. Smith, S. Hare, Wm. Hey, jun., Morley, and Nunneley.

The idea of this society was suggested, I find, at a meeting of the West Riding Medical Charitable Society at Pontefract, July, 1833. A committee was formed, with Dr. Williamson, of Leeds, as chairman, and the late Dr. Wright, of Wakefield, as honorary secretary. Members joined from all parts of Yorkshire. Four district associations, including the Manchester District Association and those of the counties of Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmorland, were afterwards amalgamated with it. It apparently, however, did not flourish for long. Since that time nearly every town and city of importance has formed its own Medical Society.

Coming more to our own time, we find that on November 24th, 1862, at a meeting at the house of the late Dr. Hardwick in Park Square, was founded the Leeds Medical Club. Of the eight members enrolled on that evening, two are now no more —Dr. Hardwick himself, whose death took place soon after the formation, and the other the late Wm. Nicholson Price.* The others have all in turn since been Presidents of this Society, viz.: Dr. Allbutt and Messrs. Atkinson, Jessop, Scattergood, T. Pridgin Teale, and Wheelhouse. Those who afterwards became members of this select circle included Mr. William Hall, Dr. Eddison, and myself. Meeting once a month at each other's house during ten years in a more or less informal way, many very pleasant evenings were spent, experiences were exchanged, and much good work was done. Dr. Clifford Allbutt acted throughout as hon. secretary.

The limited conditions of the "Medical Club" encouraged some of us in 1867 to start the "Leeds Medical Society," which met monthly at the Medical School in Park Street, Mr. Charles Richardson being the first honorary secretary. It was joined by a large number

* Since the above was written the name must now be added of the late Thomas Scattergood.—*March*, 1900.

of local practitioners, including most of the members of the Medical Club. I have a list of over 40, containing many familiar names. The two societies held several combined meetings, and the success of both was celebrated by a dinner of both societies, Dr. Allbutt being in the chair.

The necessity, however, for a representative society, having a more extended basis, and open to the profession of Leeds and the surrounding districts, had long been felt. The result was that in November, 1872, a large and successful gathering took place at the Great Northern Station Hotel, the late Dr. Chadwick in the chair, when it was resolved that this Society be formed.

One hundred and thirteen members were enrolled on that evening. A few days afterwards (Dec. 2nd, 1872) the final meeting of the "Medical Club" took place in Mr. Wheelhouse's new house, amid a somewhat mournful interchange of valedictory condolence. The "Medical Society," too, ceased to exist. Thus was formed, 27 years ago, our present flourishing society.

Our first annual report recorded 148 members; our second annual report (1874) recorded 154 members. A balance then of £217 enabled the Society, by an arrangement with the Council of the School of Medicine, to commence the formation of our most valuable combined library—containing now about 3,000 volumes, which also comprises (chiefly from the old Leeds Infirmary library), many treasured old works.

We now have a membership roll of 340—considerably more than double our original number.

Of the 28 Presidents, elected annually, eight have now joined the majority. Seventeen have been Leeds men, and 11 leading practitioners from various parts of the country.

Looking back, then, upon my brief sketch, I have reason to feel proud in occupying a chair held by so many men of mark before me, and I take this opportunity

of expressing my hearty thanks to my fellow-members for their confidence in placing me in this post of honour and responsibility for the coming session. I assure them that no effort of mine shall be wanting to promote the success of this the 28th session of our society.

Death has unfortunately removed four of our members during the past year.

1. *Charles Arthur Dixon*, a brilliant student and able practitioner, cut off at the commencement of a promising career.

2. *Matthew Corri Halton*, practising in Barnsley, where he took a public position, and was twice Mayor of his borough.

3. *Maurice Aloysius Kenny*, of Selby, a successful practitioner, and genial companion, with the characteristic wit of his countyrmen.

4. *Henry Bendelack Hewetson*, a most able contributor to our meetings. A man of varied tastes, an amateur artist himself, and a lover of art and of natural history, he had gathered round him an extensive and varied collection.

Our last session showed an excellent record of work done, and we have every reason to look forward now to a year no less prosperous.

Owing to the success of the experiment of devoting an ordinary meeting to a special subject—"Diphtheria," it is proposed that an evening this year be assigned to the discussion of the modern views and treatment of tuberculosis. It is probable, also, that one evening may be devoted to sanitary matters specially interesting to medical officers of health.

Has not the time arrived when a Society as large and important as ours should have something more than its mere "minute" record in the "Reports of Medical Societies" in the weekly journals? A member who expends considerable time in compiling his paper—whether there is time for him to read it *in extenso* or not—has some

claim upon the Society to preserve at least a fair abstract of his work; and it would be an immense advantage for us to preserve for reference some report of our discussions.

The issue of reports of "Transactions" to members at intervals, as the work of the Society proceeds, would help to keep up the current interest in its work, and need not, I think, prevent the publication by members of their communications elsewhere if they wish.

The matter, which was considered by the Society a few years ago (1892), will probably be again taken up by your Committee at an early date. I know that there are many difficulties in the way, and that these impose much labour upon hon. secretaries, but other societies have overcome these. Why should not we try to do the same?

Gentlemen, I have already detained you too long with my desultory ramblings. It only remains for me now to thank you for your patience, and in conclusion to express the hope that with your aid and our Hon. Secretaries' generous support, I may be enabled to conduct to your profit and satisfaction the business which comes before us.