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SIR

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By

W. H. HORROCKS.

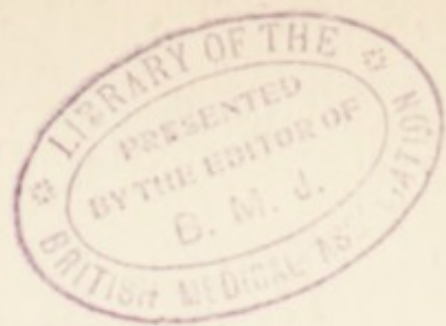
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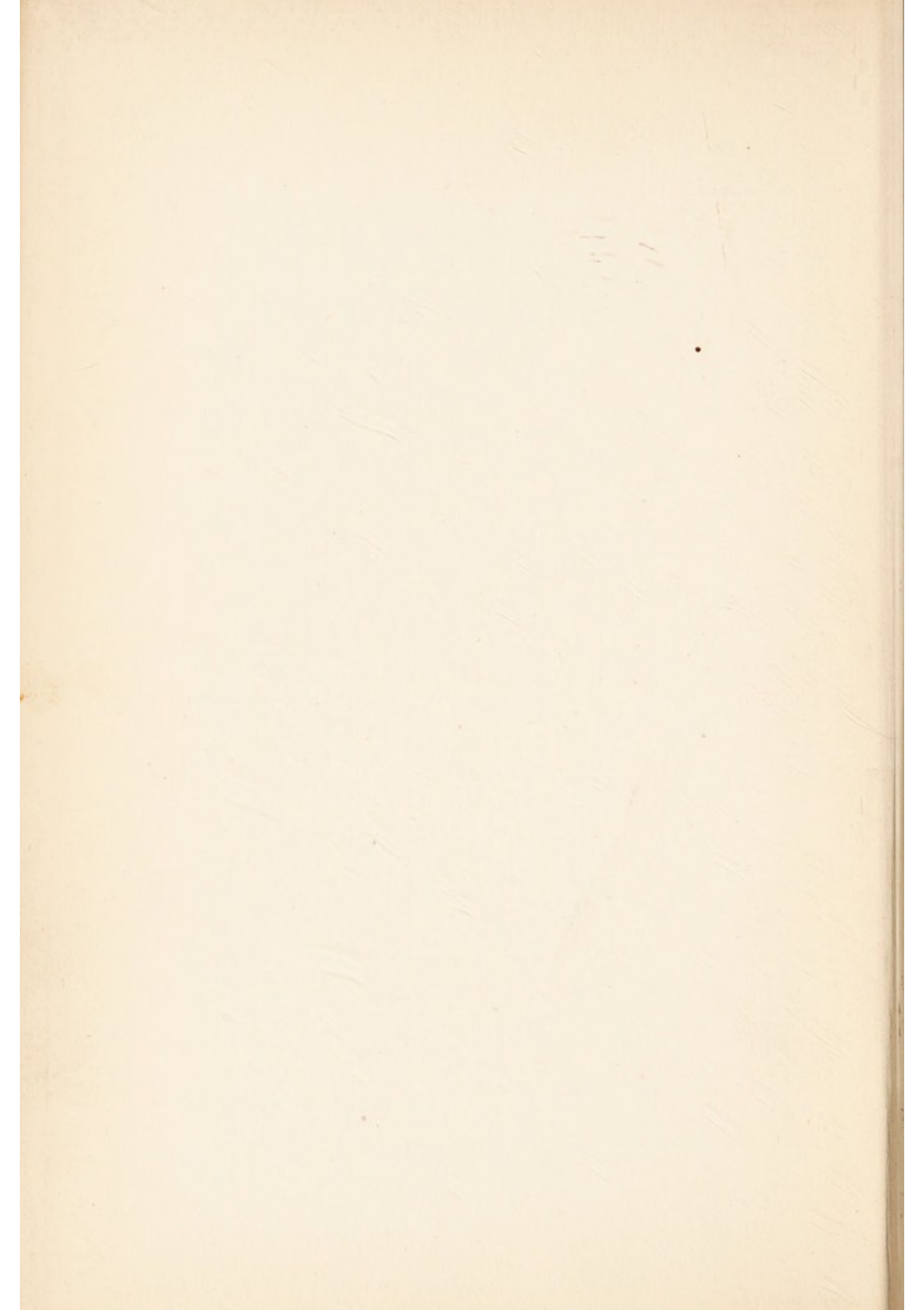
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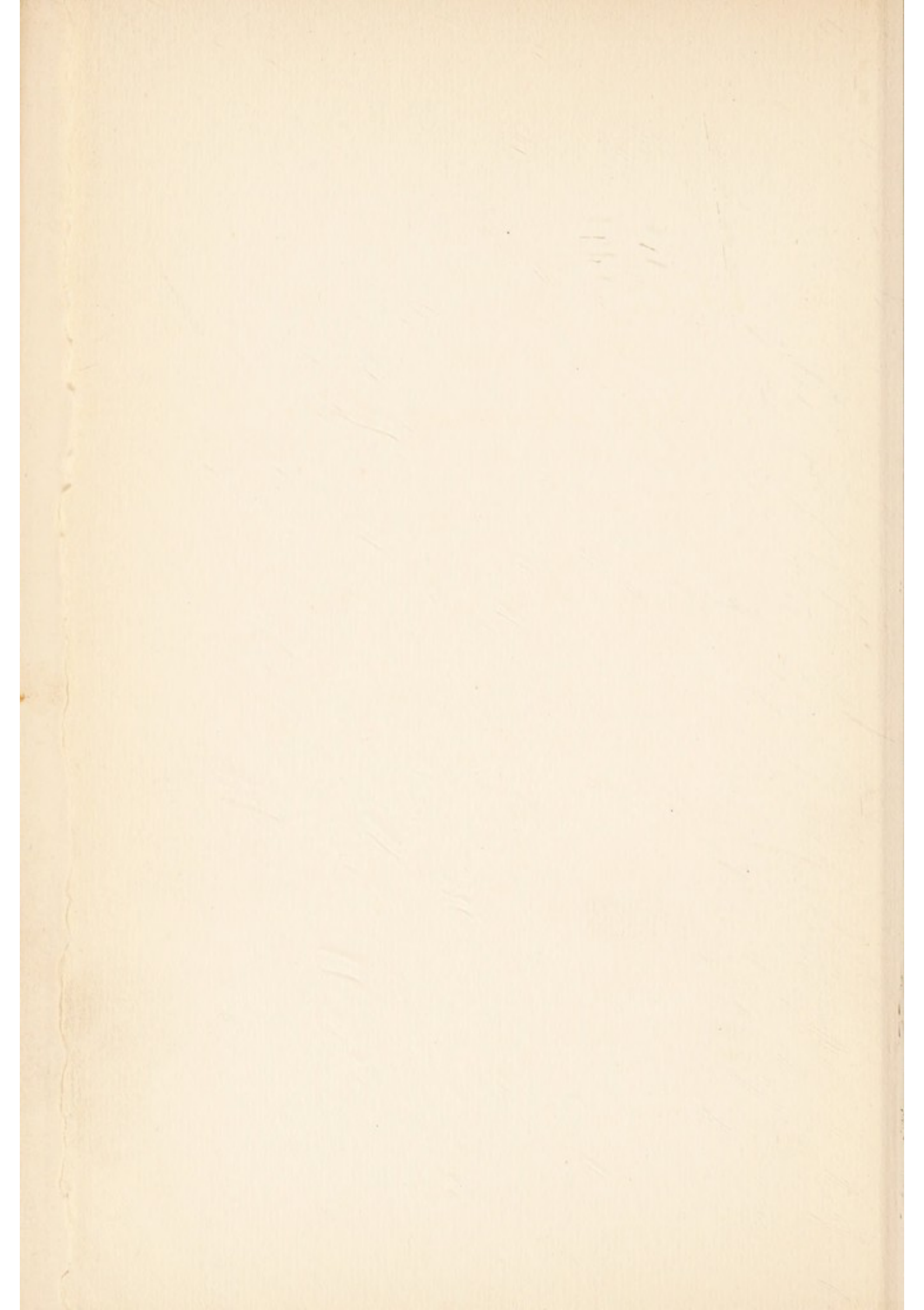






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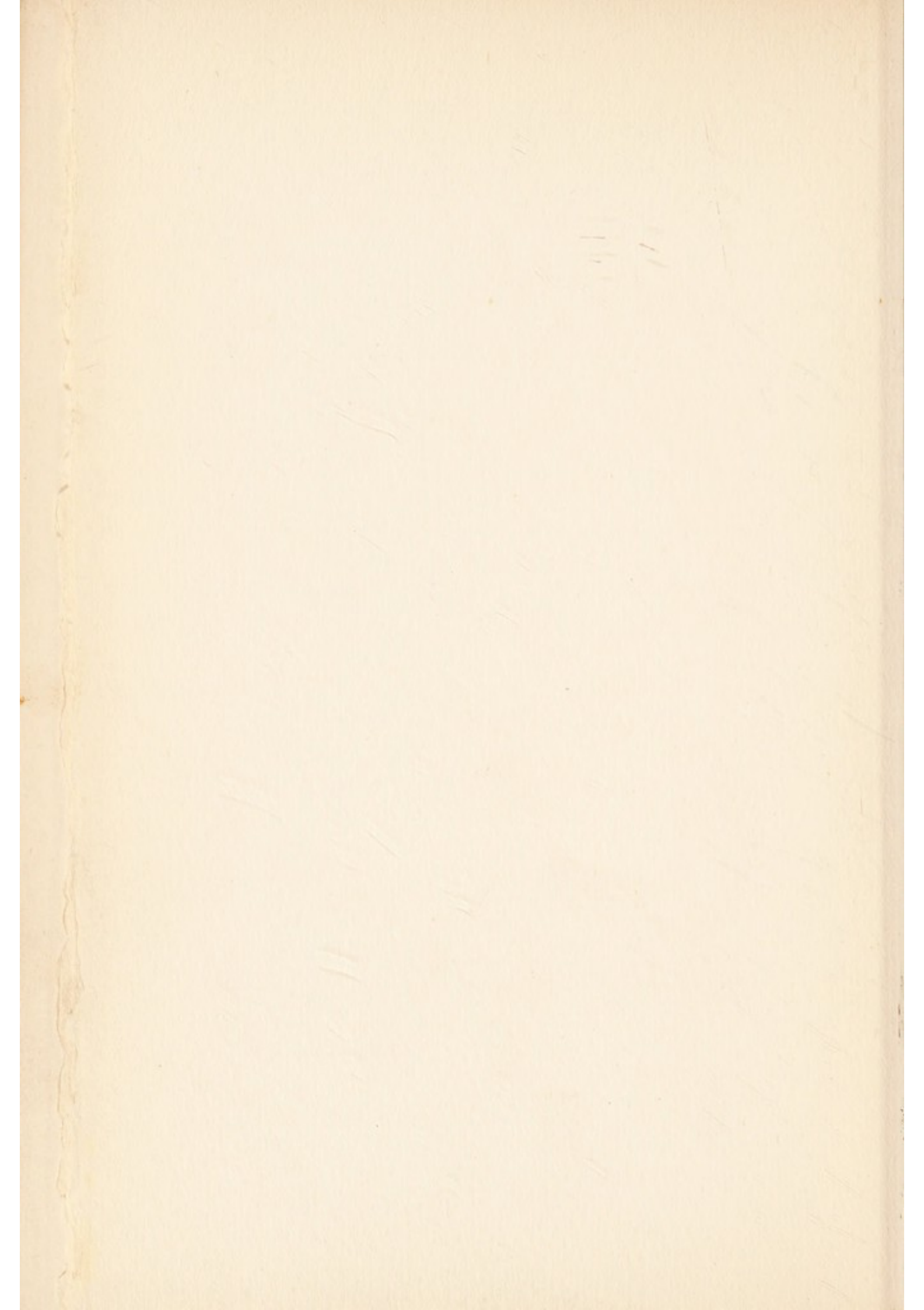
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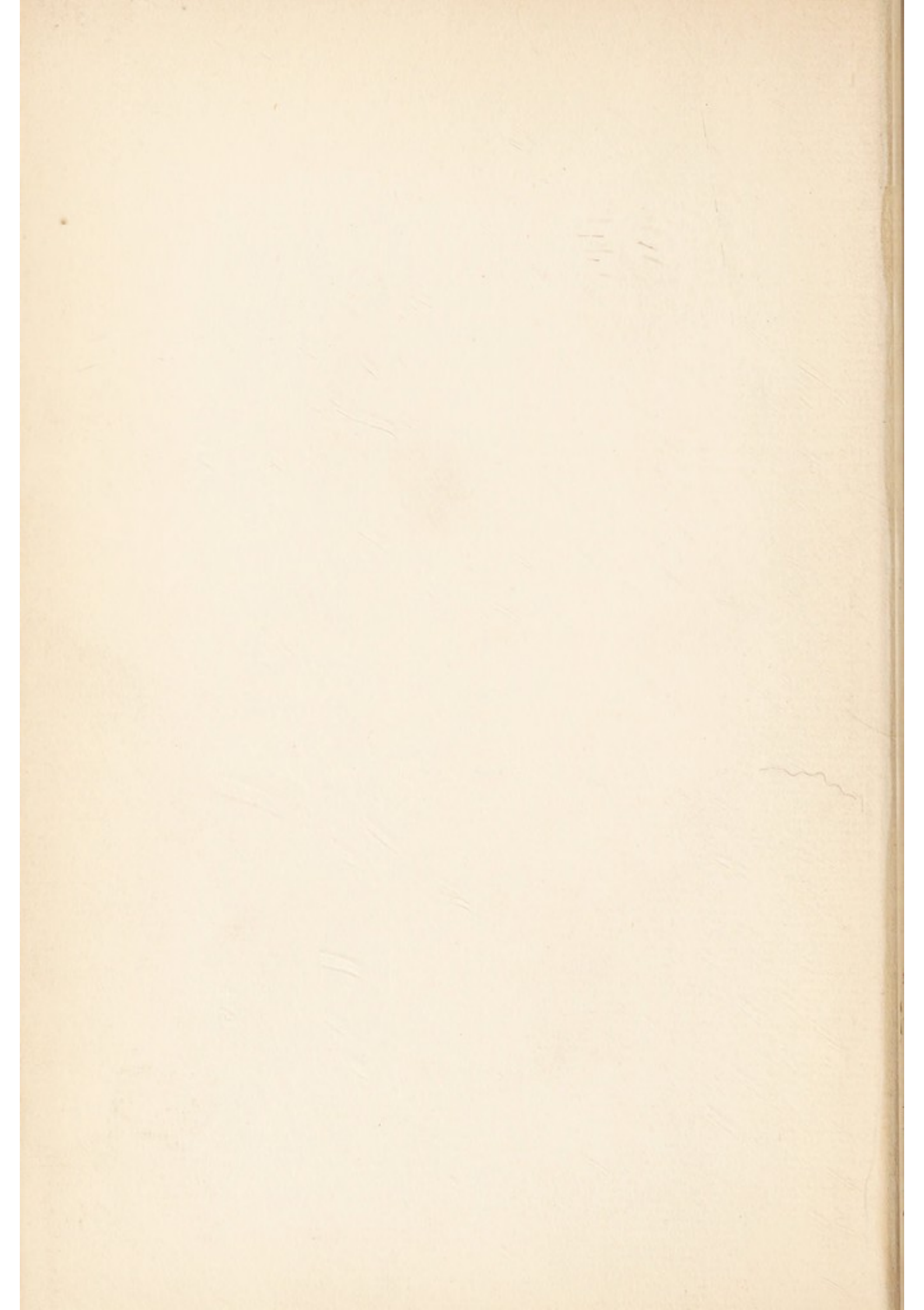
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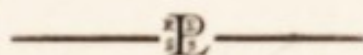


THE LIFE OF
SIR ASTLEY COOPER

BY

WILLIAM H. HORROCKS, F.R.C.S.

*(Presidential Address to the Bradford Medico-Chirurgical
Society, 1899)*



1900

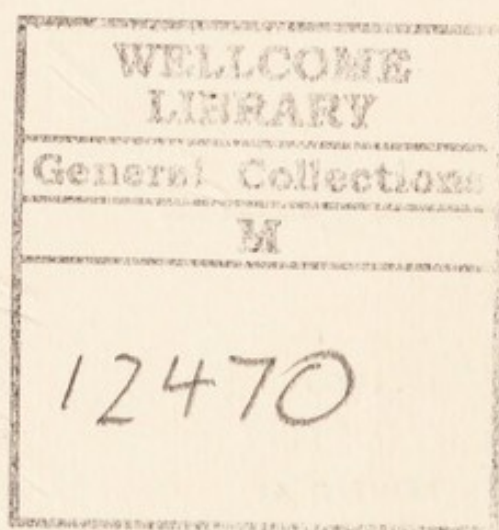
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PREFACE.

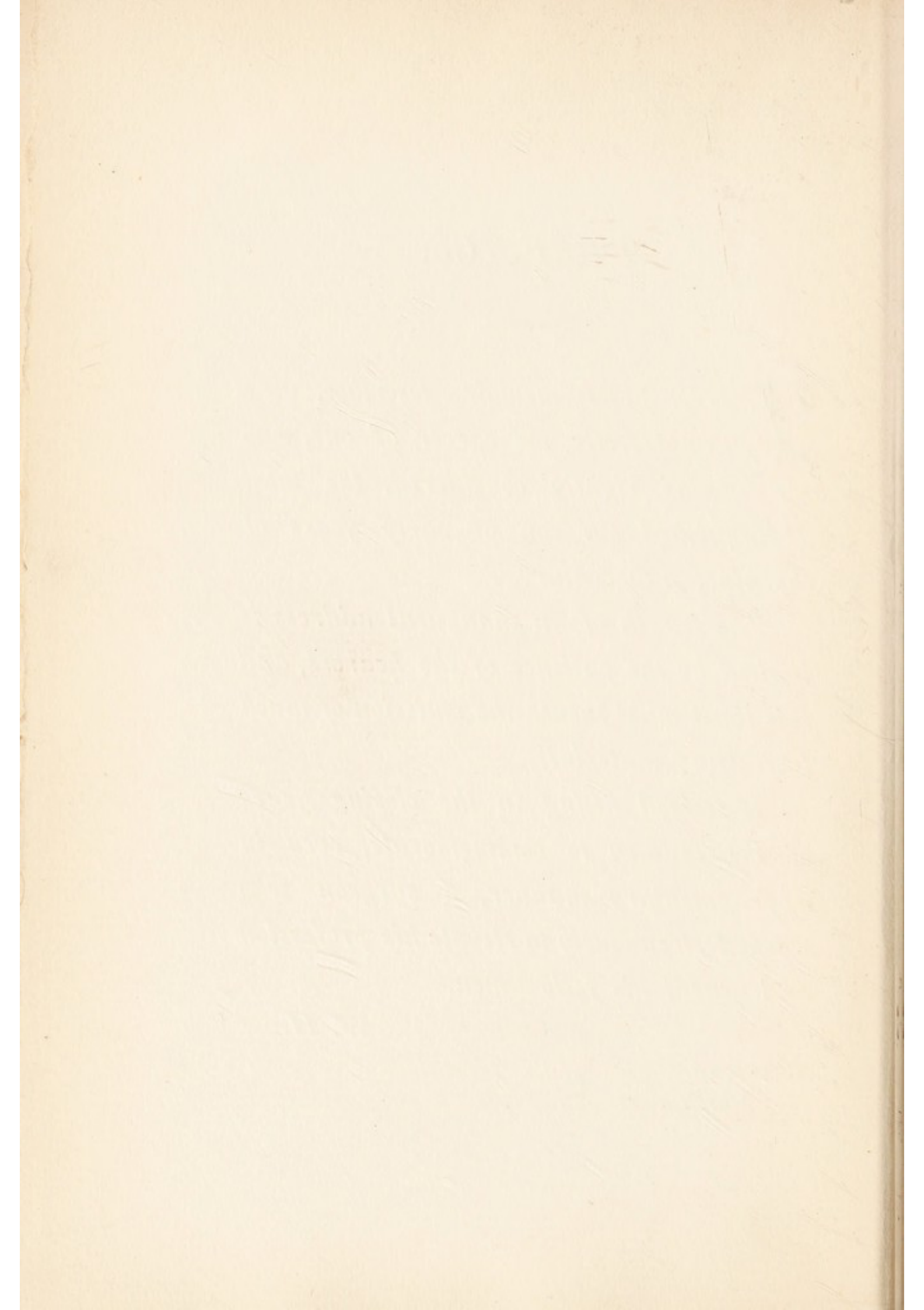
THIS brief memoir describes, very imperfectly, the career of one, who was rightly considered, the most distinguished surgeon of early years of the nineteenth century.

The length of an inaugural address is limited by the patience of the hearers, and this limit must excuse the omission of much interesting material.

It seemed fitting in the closing years of the century to commemorate, even in a fragmentary manner, a surgeon who worked strenuously to elevate his profession and benefit his fellow-men.

W. H.

BRADFORD,
March, 1900.



THE LIFE OF
SIR ASTLEY COOPER.

ASTLEY PASTON COOPER, the fourth son of the Reverend Dr. and Mrs. Cooper, was born at Brook Hall, Norfolk, on August 22nd, 1768. His father, a good classical and theological scholar, was Curate-in-charge at Morley. Astley Cooper's early education was given by his father, assisted by Mr. Leake, the village schoolmaster. His training was neglected, and this neglect, while it left his mind more receptive of impressions, marred somewhat his excellent abilities. When quite a child his presence of mind was shewn by stopping the bleeding

from a wound in the thigh of his foster brother. Cooper affirms that this incident influenced him greatly in determining his future career. The frequent visits of his uncle, Mr. William Cooper, Surgeon to Guy's Hospital, stimulated this desire and enabled his parents more readily to give effect to his wishes.

When sixteen years of age he went to London with Mr. William Cooper, whose apprentice he intended to become. Astley Cooper lived with Mr. Cline, Surgeon to St. Thomas' Hospital, as his uncle had no resident pupils. A brief sketch of Mr. Cline's character may be given, as he had great influence in arousing and stimulating Cooper's best qualities.

Mr. Cline had been a pupil of Mr. Else, whom he succeeded as Surgeon to St. Thomas' Hospital and Lecturer on Anatomy. Cline had good surgical instinct, and although a skilful operator was not a thoroughly

trained anatomist. Indolent of habit, he added little to surgical literature, although he was an original and thoughtful surgeon. His revolutionary ideas, at a time of great political unrest in France, prevented his attainment of that position to which his abilities justly entitled him. The staid respectability and moderate surgical attainments of Mr. William Cooper were a striking contrast to the characteristics of Mr. Cline.

Cooper had a strict sense of duty, and exacted an equal devotion from others. The estimate which the two men formed of the teachings of John Hunter well reflect their characters. Mr. Cline writes: "I had the happiness of hearing the first course of lectures which John Hunter delivered, I had been at that time some years in the profession, and was tolerably well acquainted with the opinions of the most distinguished surgeons then residing in the metropolis,

but having heard Mr. Hunter's lectures on the subject of disease, I found them so far superior to anything which I had conceived or heard before, that there seemed no comparison between the great mind of Hunter and all who had gone before him, whether ancient or modern."

William Cooper took a different view, for he bluntly declared that "Hunter was a blockhead and those who believed him fools."

During the first few months in London, Astley Cooper lived with Mr. Cline, but was apprenticed to his uncle. The genial character and ability of Mr. Cline impressed young Cooper more strongly than the staid respectability of his relative, and led to his indentures being transferred to Mr. Cline after a short time. Mr. William Cooper was rather pleased to be rid of the responsibility of his nephew, who had as yet shewn no great zeal for his work.

Astley Cooper came to London when medical teaching had reached its anatomical and pathological phase. The speculations of the older writers had been proved to be founded in many cases on a faulty basis, and a new school, building its teaching on more accurate observation, was growing up. Naturally the importance of correct knowledge of the normal structure was first appreciated, while the pathological teaching was disjointed and imperfect. Individual workers were industriously collecting specimens of morbid conditions, lecturing on the normal structure of the body, and infusing into the minds of their pupils the great importance of correct pathological observation. The address of Dr. William Hunter, a great leader in this movement, briefly states the claims of anatomy, indicates the lines of advance and the difficulties which beset dissection of human bodies. "Anatomy," he says, "is the very basis of surgery, as

every one must allow. It is dissection alone can teach us where we may cut the living body with freedom and despatch, where we may venture with great circumspection and delicacy, and where we must not on any account attempt it. This informs the head, gives dexterity to the hand, and familiarizes the heart with a sort of necessary inhumanity, the use of cutting instruments upon one's fellow creatures. Were one to guess at the most probable future improvements in physic, I should say that they will arise from a more general and accurate examination of diseases after death. Were one to place a man of proper talents in the most direct road to becoming truly great in his profession, I would choose a good anatomist and put him into a large hospital to attend the sick and dissect the dead. In this country, where anatomists are not legally supplied with dead bodies, particular care should be taken to avoid offence to the populace or to

the prejudices of our neighbours. Therefore it is to be hoped that you will be on your guard, and out of doors speak with caution of what is passing here, especially with respect to dead bodies." This address was given at the opening of the Windmill Street School of Anatomy, founded by Dr. William Hunter, and afterwards carried on by his brother, Mr. John Hunter.

Astley Cooper attended Mr. Cline's lectures on anatomy and surgery at St. Thomas' Hospital.

London medical students at this time were divided into two classes. The great majority of the students had been apprenticed to surgeons in the country or provincial towns. After their apprenticeship of six years they usually came to London for one or two years to visit the hospitals, attend lectures, and dissect. The other section, a small minority, of whom Astley Cooper was one, were apprenticed to surgeons of a London hospital. They usually lived with the

surgeon, helped him with his private practice and had free access to his hospital work. A considerable premium, £500 to £700, was paid on the understanding, that they were to be well instructed during their apprenticeship and their interests forwarded, when it was ended. Hence in time hospital appointments in London were only given to the apprentices of hospital surgeons. In most cases this worked well, as the best apprentices were chosen, and undoubtedly they had better opportunities than the provincial students. At times the ties of relationship or pupilage led to the selection of an unsuitable person, and this was especially the case with the following of distinguished men.

Mr. Cline lectured on anatomy, with its practical application to surgery, in the theatre built for Cheselden, and the students dissected in the room adjoining the theatre. The difficulty in obtaining bodies for dissection was a great obstacle to teaching anatomy

at this time. The law allowed unclaimed bodies of criminals to be handed over for dissection, but the number of executions, although then more numerous, supplied a very inadequate number of bodies. To supply this want there came into existence the resurrectionists or body snatchers. These men stole recently buried corpses from their graves and sold them to the teachers of anatomy. Resurrectionists usually worked in bands of six or eight, and were in league with the vergers and grave diggers of the cemeteries which they frequented. They became very skilful in disturbing the grave as little as possible, so that the robbery was not suspected. They usually worked down on one end of the coffin, then broke the lid and drew out the body. The soil was then quickly and silently replaced and everything left in order. The body was dressed in a suit or placed in a sack to be conveyed to the dissecting room. They usually removed

the sound teeth, which were used at that time to make artificial sets. At the beginning of the session one of the band turned up in the dissecting room and levied black-mail by threatening not to supply any bodies. If he was refused, the empty dissecting room with groups of grumbling students, soon made the lecturer pay the money. Sometimes the body snatchers were surprised at their work, mauled by the mob, or handed over to the watch. As a rule they were drunken reprobates, but some of them were not so vile as others. When they got into trouble the lecturers of anatomy usually feed counsel on their behalf and interviewed the magistrates. The latter generally recognised the fact that the men were performing a necessary although illegal action. Teachers of anatomy had repeatedly urged the Government to improve the first Anatomy Act, as by their transactions with the resurrectionists, the teachers were compounding a felony. No

alteration was made until a series of dreadful crimes in Edinburgh and London caused a scandal and compelled Parliament to take action.

During the first winter session Astley Cooper did not make great progress with his work. The change from the free life in the country to close application in the foul dissecting room probably accounts for this. As an apprentice of Mr. Cline, Cooper became a pupil of the United or Borough Hospitals. Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospitals had arranged that the pupils of each institution should have access to the wards and operations in both hospitals. There was one course of lectures common to both; those on medicine and chemistry being delivered at Guy's Hospital, those on anatomy and surgery at St. Thomas'.

During his first session he was proposed a member of the Physical Society at Guy's by Mr. William Cooper. In accordance

with the rule of that Society he read a paper during his first session. The subject of his paper was "Malignant disease of the breast," of which no record was kept by the Society. It is of interest that when Cooper, many years afterwards, published his work on diseases of the breast, he deferred the consideration of malignant diseases as "he had not yet formed a decided opinion and awaited further experience." This part of the work was never completed. The last monograph published by him was on the anatomy and physiology of the breast, a book which still retains its position as a standard work. Throughout his life he retained great interest in this subject, on which he wrote his first paper and published his last work.

During his second session Cooper worked more industriously, attended with Mr. Cline at St. Thomas' Hospital and took notes on the cases. Having good powers of observation and a retentive memory he began to lay

up that immense store of facts which was the foundation of his success as a surgeon and a teacher. He worked hard in the dissecting room, and became so proficient in anatomy, that he was able to help the junior students, who preferred him to the unpopular demonstrator, Mr. Haighton.

During his third session Cooper attended the lectures of John Hunter, given at the Windmill Street School of Anatomy. Although Cooper had now acquired a fair knowledge of anatomy and general surgery he made the following remark: "It was no easy task to follow the lectures, as Hunter delivered them with little method, in obscure and confusing language. His views of pathology and treatment were opposed to those of the leading authorities of his day." Mr. Hunter seems to have found difficulty in conveying his information in a clear manner to his hearers, and followed no systematic plan in his lectures. At the end

of the session, after visiting a friend in the Old Bailey, Cooper contracted jail fever. Mr. Cline and his family tended him kindly during his illness.

In October, 1787, he went to Edinburgh, where he studied during the winter session. In his journal he makes comments on the teachers at that time. To Dr. Gregory, then lecturer on medicine, he expresses his indebtedness for much information and kindness. "Gregory was a large uncouth man, who resembled Dr. Samuel Johnson. As a lecturer he was eloquent and powerful, but often diffuse even to tediousness. He had a very violent temper, and once thrashed a fellow professor." While in Edinburgh Cooper frequently attended the debates of the Royal Medical Society. At one debate a young Irish doctor maintained that carcinoma uteri never occurred in parous women. His opponent quoted the case of a woman who had twins and afterwards died

of cancer. To this the Irishman replied, that this was an exception to his rule, but an example of the fact that cancer follows the gemini.

During the following session Cooper again attended Mr. Hunter's lectures in London with Coleman, who was afterwards Surgeon-General to the British Cavalry. Speaking of the lectures, he says: "Hunter was very irritable; his outbursts of temper frequently brought on attacks of palpitation. After his lectures Coleman and I frequently talked with him, but he would not tolerate the least doubt or objection to his opinions. If criticised he manifested the greatest impatience, clasping his hands over his head and moving uneasily in his chair. Yet he always treated us with great kindness."

Cooper had already shewn such aptitude for his profession that Mr. Cline appointed him assistant lecturer and demonstrator of anatomy the following session. For his ser-

vices he received £120 per annum, his salary increasing by £20 each year, until he received half the fees. This was a great advance as it gave him a position, which his ability turned to good account. He separated the lectures on surgery from those on anatomy. Mr. Cline at first opposed this step, but afterwards gave way. During his first course he followed the method of Mr. Hunter, but Cooper was ill fitted for the philosophic treatment of surgery, and his class fell off in numbers. During the following session he lectured more directly from the cases in hospital, and delivered lectures which were extremely popular and increased in value as his experience grew greater. As a lecturer he was a great success. Mr. South, in his memoirs, thus describes a lecture at a later period :

“A few moments before two, Astley Cooper, who was to deliver the first lecture, came briskly through the crowd, his hand-

some face beaming with delight and animation. He was soon overwhelmed with recognitions and hand-shakings. He was dressed in black with knee breeches and silk stockings, which displayed his handsome legs, of which he was not a little proud. In the theatre he was greeted with loud and continued applause. His clear silvery voice and cheery conversational manner soon exhausted the conventional hour devoted to the lecture. All who heard him, hung with silent attention on his words: the only sound which broke the quiet was the subdued scratching of the note-taker. He had no pretensions to oratory, spoke with a rather broad Norfolk twang, often enlivened by a short Ha! Ha! When he said anything which he thought droll, he would give a peculiar short snort and rub his nose with the back of his hand. When he referred to any particular matter he pulled a small red note-book from his pocket and read it. He

was the most attractive lecturer I ever heard. As he only talked of what he really knew from his own experience he was implicitly trusted. He was an example of one who knew his subject well and did not fail to impart it to others. After lectures he usually remained for a short time to answer any questions. He always seemed pleased to reply to the students and often made valuable remarks." The anatomy lectures were delivered at two each day, those on surgery at eight in the evening three times in the week.

Soon after coming to London Mr. Astley Cooper was introduced by Mr. Cline to his relative Mr. Cock, a wealthy Hamburg merchant. Towards the end of 1791 Cooper was married privately to Miss Cock, delivering his usual lecture on surgery the same evening. He continued his work during the winter, lecturing, attending hospital, and doing such private practice as fell to him.

He now resided in a house which his wife's father had furnished as a home for his daughter. In June, 1792, Mr. Cooper and his wife visited Paris, then in the early throes of its great revolution. Mr. Cooper, from his association with Mr. Cline and his friends, had developed democratic ideas, his sympathies being with the revolutionary party.

In Paris he attended the meetings of the National Assembly, and heard the stirring speeches of Brissot, Robespierre, Danton and Marat, whose faces became "almost fiendish as they urged on the populace." He attended the lectures of Desault and Chopart, then the leading surgeons in Paris. "Desault," says he, "was a good anatomist and mechanical surgeon, but wanted that surgical judgment which is essential to a surgeon of distinction. Chopart was a good kind of old woman with little firmness of character." Cooper was in the theatre where Chopart

was operating when the cannons fired by the Swiss Guards brought matters to a crisis. He ran into the street, which was crowded with excited people, cannons were firing constantly, and tocsins sounding the alarm from every turret. On the way to his hotel he was pointed out as an aristocrat, and narrowly escaped death. From the hotel window, with his wife, he watched the crowd of infuriated people, hunting to death the Swiss Guards, carrying their wounded on litters, and yelling with rage. Every moment they expected the hotel to be attacked and its inmates murdered. The absolute want of control and mad ferocity of the populace terrified Mrs. Cooper and made a lasting impression on Cooper's mind. During the days they were compelled to remain, he went to the hospitals wearing a tricolour badge. In September, having with difficulty procured a passport, they escaped. Years afterwards he wrote in his notes, "A revolu-

tion may sometimes be a good thing for posterity, but never for the existing generation, for the change is too sudden and violent." Cooper wrote this when time had shewn the effects of the revolution of which he was an unwilling spectator.

The fortune of £14,000, which Mrs. Cooper inherited from her father enabled Cooper to continue his student life without that anxiety usually attendant on the beginning of a career. "For three years after my apprenticeship expired, I did not seek business, but devoted myself entirely to the study of my profession and the teaching of students. I went to the hospital before breakfast to dissect for lecture. I demonstrated to the students before the lecture. I injected their subjects and lectured on anatomy every day. On three evenings a week I lectured on surgery. I attended cases of interest in the hospitals and took notes." In the early mornings he saw

patients gratuitously at his house, familiarizing himself with the treatment of minor surgical diseases and selecting cases for hospital treatment.

Such was his course of life until 1800, when Mr. William Cooper resigned his surgeoncy to Guy's Hospital. Mr. Astley Cooper became a candidate for the post, but his uncle favoured the claims of another applicant. Mr. William Cooper had never been closely attached to his nephew, who had not failed to shew his preference for Mr. Cline. It is alleged, that the growing reputation of the young surgeon excited the jealousy of his relative. Undoubtedly Astley Cooper was the strongest candidate. His hard work, his reputation as a teacher and surgeon fitted him for the position. Shortly before the election an unfair attempt was made by an anonymous writer to prejudice Mr. Benjamin Harrison, the Treasurer

of Guy's Hospital, against Mr. Cooper. The letter was as follows :

"Sir,

"The candidates proposed for your choice at Guy's Hospital on Wednesday are three gentlemen of tried abilities, who have served their king and country, and an associate of the celebrated Thelwell. By the nomination you may judge the sense of the present Committée.

"(*Signed*) CAUTION."

Mr. Harrison shewed the letter to Mr. Astley Cooper and explained the difficulty of his position. Mr. Cooper frankly met the charge. "If you think me professionally competent to perform the duties of surgeon to your Institution, you may rest assured, that my politics, whether in thought or action, shall never interfere with my discharge of them : in fact, a regret has spontaneously arisen in my mind not only that I have been prominent in political excitement

at all, but that I have espoused the opinions of those with whom I have been connected." This explanation satisfied Mr. Harrison, who obtained so many promises, that his election was assured. Mr. Cooper was elected surgeon at the Board Meeting in October, 1800. From this time he was the mainstay of surgery at Guy's Hospital. His surgical colleagues were Mr. Forster and Mr. Lucas, neither of whom had Cooper's anatomical knowledge or technical skill as a surgeon. "I have always been of opinion, that Mr. Cline and myself gained more reputation at the hospitals by assisting our colleagues than by our own operations. They were always in scrapes and we were obliged to help them." The presence of Mr. Cooper in the theatre gave confidence to the operator, who welcomed his ready and kindly help. After his appointment his reputation as a surgeon was greatly increased and his professional aid was much more sought.

Mr. Cooper was a hard worker, as the record of his day's work shews. He rose every morning at six and went straight to his dissecting room, where he worked until half-past seven o'clock. Searle, the hair-dresser, then dressed his hair, and afterwards Mr. Cooper saw any gratuitous patients who attended at his house. His breakfast was two well-buttered rolls and tea allowed to cool and taken at a draught. The meal took very little time, and he rose from the table with alacrity to begin the work of the day. His consulting rooms had now begun to fill, and he was occupied seeing private patients until one o'clock. At this time his carriage came to the door, and Mr. Cooper frequently made his escape by a side-door to avoid the observation of waiting patients. He then drove rapidly to Guy's Hospital, where frequently a hundred students awaited his arrival. In a moment he was out of his carriage and skipping up the steps with the

energy of a school-boy. Surrounded by students, whom he towered above like a Saul, he went up the ward staircase, chatting with his dresser about the cases, as the students hurried to get places around the bed. He was soon at work questioning the patients, examining their condition and directing their treatment. His manner with patients was always encouraging. Mr. South writes : "I never recollect him losing his temper or treating a patient roughly. His visits seldom lasted longer than half to three-quarters of an hour, but he got through three times as much work as most men. If he had a lecture on anatomy, he walked across the street to St. Thomas' where he lectured after spending a few minutes to select specimens to illustrate his lecture. At half-past three the lecture was over and Mr. Cooper drove away to visit his private patients, usually reaching home between six and seven. A loud knock an-

nounced his arrival, and he was soon ready to dine heartily and chat for an hour."

Directly the cloth was removed, if it was his evening for a surgical lecture, he would take out his watch, swallow two glasses of port and settle himself for ten minutes sleep. From this short rest he would start up, get into his carriage and drive off to lecture. On evenings, when he had no lecture, he enjoyed a pleasant chat with his family, but he had frequently to pay night visits which kept him until eleven or twelve o'clock. This was the daily course of his life for many years, broken by brief holidays. One is interested to know how he kept himself in health, and one of his lectures informs us on this point. "The methods by which I preserve my health are temperance, early rising and sponging the body with cold water each morning after getting out of bed, a practice which I have adopted for many years. Although I go from the hot theatre

into the square of the hospital on severe winter nights with merely thin silk stockings on my legs, I scarcely ever have a cold. If I feel indisposed, my never-failing remedy is one grain of calomel with cathartic extract at night and a basin of hot tea two hours before rising in the morning."

In 1808, when going to lecture one winter night, he slipped and fractured the right fibula above the ankle. With difficulty, by walking on the inner side of the foot, he managed to reach a neighbouring house. He was driven home and visited about an hour afterwards by Mr. Travers, who wished to examine the part. Cooper smilingly refused, saying, "that he was satisfied that the bone was broken, and felt no further curiosity about the matter." He was not detained long in bed, but in a few days was able to see his patients.

Mr. Cooper's early success was due chiefly to his personal charm of manner and

his reputation as a reliable teacher. The spread of his fame beyond the area of personal influence was due to his work as the writer of several standard books. As early as 1801 he contributed a paper to the Royal Society on the effect of the loss of the membrana tympani on the sense of hearing. In the following year he proposed puncture of the membrane for the treatment of deafness with a concave drum. For these contributions he was awarded the Copleian medal, and shortly afterwards elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

In the following year he began to write his treatise on Hernia. The work was suggested by the sad death of Francis, Duke of Bedford. While staying at Northampton the hernia, from which he suffered, became strangulated. Mr. Carr, the surgeon, who was called in, diagnosed the condition and recommended operation, but from want of confidence the patient waited until Mr. Earle

arrived from London. The operation was then performed but, from long delay, with a fatal result.

The death caused much attention to be drawn to the subject, and it seemed desirable, that a reliable book should be published, which would be helpful to those whose anatomical knowledge was somewhat imperfect. The work was in two volumes, of atlas folio size, illustrated with numerous carefully-drawn plates. The first volume was published in 1804 and the second in 1806. The cost of publishing the work was so great, that Mr. Cooper lost £1,000, although every copy was sold. A second edition, in a single volume, edited by Mr. Aston Key was published in 1827.

In 1818 Mr. Cooper, in conjunction with Mr. Travers, published a volume of essays on cases of interest occurring in the United Hospitals. The work contained essays on dislocations and fractures, a subject on

which he afterwards wrote a standard work. There was a full account of the case of ligature of the abdominal aorta, an operation with which Cooper's name will always be associated. A second volume was published in 1820, containing an essay on exostoses, in which class Cooper included periosteal and myeloid sarcomata. There is also an essay on sebaceous cysts, a subject which shortly afterwards did great things for Cooper.

King George the Fourth suffered from a wen on his scalp, which occasionally became inflamed and gave him considerable trouble. Like many other sufferers, he shewed the tumour to several surgeons, and when the pain was severe wished them to remove the cyst. Mr. Brodie tells us, in his autobiography, that he was asked to see the King with a view to operation. Sir Benjamin Bromfield was despatched from the Pavilion at Brighton to bring Mr. Cooper from

London ; on his arrival, at three in the morning, the King wished him to operate at once. This Mr. Cooper refused to do, rightly considering that an operation, which endangered the King's life, should be only done after consultation with deliberation. The King then consented to return to town in a few days for further consultation. Mr. Cooper suggested as a consultant Mr. Cline, as one whose opinion he greatly valued ; but the King demurred, saying, "that he and Mr. Cline did not set their horses together in politics." "Perhaps not," replied Mr. Cooper, "but the best policy will be to have him." Accordingly, on the King's return to London, Mr. Cline was consulted and agreed as to the necessity of operation. Mr. Cooper owed his introduction to the King to the good offices of Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, whom he had treated successfully shortly before this time. Cooper was not altogether anxious to undertake the

operation, as he feared erysipelas, a lady of title having lost her life from this cause after a similar operation. A stout and gouty Monarch was not, in pre-antiseptic days, an inviting subject on which to stake a surgical reputatish. According to Court etiquette Sir Everard Home, the Sergeant-Surgeon, was the proper person to perform the operation. Mr. Cooper called on Lord Liverpool to request him to persuade the King to let Home do the operation. Lord Liverpool, who had already advised the King regarding his surgeon, replied, "that it is difficult to interfere regarding the choice of a medical man." On the day of operation Sir Henry Halford, Sir Matthew Tiernay, Sir Everard Home, Mr. Cline, Mr. Cooper and Mr. Brodie assembled in the ante-room, still uncertain who was to perform the operation. Sir Henry Halford was called into the King's presence and returned in a few minutes, saying to Cooper, "You

are to operate." Mr. Cooper had not brought his instruments and had to borrow from Home in the few minutes, which elapsed before the King entered the room. The King sat under the window and Mr. Cooper, assisted by Mr. Cline, incised the cyst and evacuated its contents. The cyst walls were very adherent and required much dissection for their removal, but the King remained quiet and begged them not to hurry unduly. When the operation was finished, he asked Cooper what was the nature of the tumours? Mr. Cooper told him it was a "Steatoma." "Then I hope it will stay at home and not bother me again," the King replied. The wound went on well for two days, but on the third day the King complained of great pain in his head, and passed a restless night. Mr. Cooper was very anxious, dreading the onset of erysipelas with its serious consequences. On the following morning, when Mr. Cooper was speaking to his pupil of

the King's critical state, a royal messenger arrived and requested his immediate attendance on the King. Mr. Cooper hurried away, fully expecting to find the wound erysipelatous. He was, however, greatly relieved to find, that the King had developed an attack of gout in his great toe, and from this time the head symptoms were relieved and the wound healed quickly. Sir Everard Home was appeased by his appointment to a surgeoncy to Chelsea Hospital, while his son was made a commander in the Navy before his turn. Mr. Astley Cooper was created a Baronet, the official notice appearing in the *Gazette* of July 21st, 1821. Mr. Cooper told the King "that the honour would lose much of its value, if it did not devolve on his nephew, whom he had adopted and educated." The King willingly granted his request. Later the King presented him with a valuable silver epergne, which he had himself designed. Sir Astley Cooper after-

wards attended the King occasionally, and was appointed Sergeant - Surgeon on the death of Home.

In 1822 Sir Astley Cooper published his great work on "Dislocations and Fractures," a book which ran through ten editions in his life-time and was re-edited by Bransby Cooper after his death. The subject is more thoroughly and systematically treated than in the Essays, and the writer embodies a large amount of information, collected from surgeons practising throughout the country. The importance of the subjects treated was especially felt at this period for two reasons. Locomotion at this time was almost entirely by coach or on horseback over roads at times almost impassable, unlighted during the darkness in the country, and very imperfectly lighted in the towns. One cannot fail to notice the great number of travelling accidents recorded in the work. The second reason of its value was the wide-

spread reputation of its author as a skilled surgeon, who embodied his experience in a manner useful to inexperienced practitioners in the country. One of the letters in the book tells, how the surgeons in a doubtful case waited a few days, until they could procure a copy of "your most invaluable work on Dislocations and Fractures." Sir Astley Cooper appreciates correctly its mission by dedicating it to his "past and present pupils practising throughout the country"—and expressing the wish that it would help them in their treatment of cases. The book had a very large circulation and continued to be a standard work for many years. One cannot read it without being struck with the pains, which the author took to make it complete and reliable.

Besides his ability as a writer, Sir Astley Cooper was an excellent operator, his accurate knowledge of anatomy gave him perfect confidence, and his extensive pathological

work enabled him to anticipate the difficulties, which he was likely to meet. Mr. Chandler, Surgeon to St. Thomas' Hospital, says : " It is of no consequence what instrument Mr. Cooper uses, they are all alike to him, and I verily believe he could operate as easily with an oyster knife as the best bit of cutlery in Laundy's shop." Mr. South, in his memoirs, writes : " For operating with quickness and precision I never knew his equal. His great anatomical knowledge enabled him to operate without the least fear of getting into scrapes. I never saw him make a fault except once, when a ligature slipped, after he had tied the femoral artery. His maxim was, that a surgeon should have an eagle's eye, a lady's hand, and a lion's heart." His kind and encouraging manner enabled patients to endure their sufferings without complaint.

Mr. Cooper was the first to ligature the common carotid for aneurysm, publishing

the cases in the proceedings of the Medico-Chirurgical Society. The first case terminated fatally. "The result of the second case," says Mr. Cooper, "afforded me a great degree of pleasure, as from a professional point of view it is highly desirable to ascertain the possibility of saving life in cases, which usually terminate fatally. The patient, although he well knew that the trial was new and attended with considerable risk, never betrayed the smallest sign of apprehension."

In 1816 Mr. Cooper tied the abdominal aorta. A patient was admitted into Guy's Hospital with an aneurysm of the common iliac, the swelling increasing in size after admission. An attempt was made to apply pressure to the vessel above the swelling, but this led to sloughing of the skin over the aneurysm. At first the hemorrhage was slight and easily controlled by pressure. One day there was a profuse hemorrhage, and Mr. Key, who chanced to be in the

ward, stopped the bleeding by plugging. Mr. Astley Cooper saw the patient a few hours afterwards and made a small incision into the sac, with the intention of tying the vessel through the sac wall. This he was unable to do. He plugged the opening with a dossil of lint. On going away from the bed, he expressed his sorrow at leaving the patient to his fate, and feeling that it was the only chance, decided to tie the abdominal aorta. The patient willingly consented, and the operation was performed by Mr. Cooper, assisted by Mr. Key. Through a medium incision the abdomen was opened and the posterior layer of the peritoneum scraped through with the finger nail on the left of the aorta. The finger was then passed behind the aorta and through the peritoneum on the other side passing out to the right of the vessel. This was withdrawn, followed by the point of an armed aneurysm needle, which was unthreaded and withdrawn. The

ligature was now tied, care being taken to avoid inclusion of intestine or omentum. The ends of the ligature were brought out through the abdominal wound, which was brought together with quilled sutures and adhesive plaster. The pulse after the operation was 144. The patient passed a fairly quiet night. At noon next day, when visited by Mr. Cooper, he was sitting up in bed and arranging the bed clothes. In the afternoon he had a fit of coughing and became much alarmed, lest the ends of the ligature had slipped into the abdomen. From this time he became rapidly worse. The left leg, which had not regained its temperature, became cold and the skin below the aneurysm livid. He died forty hours after the operation. At the *post mortem* examination there was no sign of peritonitis. The aorta was ligatured half an inch above its bifurcation. The iliac vessels contained clots, that on the left side reaching as far as the aneurysm.

The sac was of great size and contained a large amount of clot blood. Mr. Cooper considered that death was due to the pressure of the sac on the main vessel of the limb, which stopped the circulation in a large part of the body. Mr. Cooper's courage in undertaking, and his skill in carrying out successfully, this operation cannot be praised too highly. The dread of interfering with the peritoneum, the difficulty of leaving the ends of the ligature long, and the necessity of quickness, owing to the collapsed state of the patient, all increased the difficulties of the operator.

In 1825 Sir Astley Cooper delivered his last regular course of lectures, which were published *in extenso* in the *Lancet* and in two volumes by Mr. Tyrrell. "Cooper's lectures may be truly stated to have consisted of an enormous mass of facts, which his large opportunities of practice had enabled him to collect and his powerful

memory to retain and pour out at will. His teaching was empiric in the true sense of the word. The facts were almost entirely his own, and were more or less sequentially arranged into lectures. He had read little, and therefore knew little and cared less for the opinions of others. He had indeed attended Mr. Hunter's lectures on surgery, and occasionally talked about them, but he neither knew nor understood Hunter's peculiar views. Sir Astley Cooper lectured in so clear a manner, and with such evident truth, that the stupidest pupil could hardly fail to understand him. The students followed him with careful attention and crowded round the lecture room door before it was opened."

On the subject of ligatures he writes: "It would be an extremely desirable thing, if any person could invent a ligature composed of a material, which would admit of solution. I thought that a catgut ligature would dissolve, and tried it on an old man

of eighty, whose femoral artery I tied for popliteal aneurysm. The ligature was cut close to the vessel. The wound healed and no bad symptoms followed. I have used this ligature in three other cases, but in all these cases the ligatures came away with ulceration and suppuration. In old persons there is less tendency to suppuration."

In the lecture on Hernia, Sir Astley says : "When I was sixteen or seventeen years of age, on hearing a lecture in this theatre, I discovered, that I was myself the subject of this complaint. As soon as I felt satisfied of this fact, I could attend no more to the lecture.

"I went home, threw myself on the bed with my legs elevated against the bedpost, and remained in this position until Mr. Cline returned. I requested to see him the moment he entered. I then told him, that I had had a swelling for some time, and after hearing his lecture I was sure, that it was a

hernia. Mr. Cline laughed and gave me a common truss. I wore it continuously for three years, at the end of which time there was no appearance of the hernia. I would not leave it off, but wore it for two years more, and from that time to this I have never had the least appearance of this complaint. The truss should be worn night and day, if not it cannot produce adhesions of the walls of the sac." The cure of inguinal hernia in the adult is so unusual, that one is tempted to doubt the accuracy of the diagnosis. The fact is however confirmed by the *post mortem* examination of Sir Astley Cooper's body. A very narrow tube was found in the right inguinal canal connecting the peritoneum and the tunica vaginalis. The walls of the tube were thrown into folds and its calibre extremely narrow.

Speaking of tapping ovarian tumours, Sir Astley recounts the following anecdote.

“A gentleman from my native county was dining with me and asked me, if I had ever performed the operation of dry tapping. ‘No, sir,’ I replied, ‘and hope I never shall.’ ‘Well,’ said he, ‘it is an operation which I have seen and I will tell you the particulars. A surgeon in my town asked me to accompany him to see the operation of tapping an ovarian tumour, and I gladly consented. The woman was seated on a stool with the abdomen exposed. The surgeon plunged in a trocar and cannula, then, holding up a basin, withdrew the trocar. No fluid came from the cannula, at which the surgeon cried, “hum!” After deliberating a second, he withdrew the cannula and re-inserted the trocar. He then stepped back a pace, pointed it towards the abdomen and charged as with a bayonet. The trocar was again withdrawn, but no water escaped. This time he said, “Oh!” instead of, “hum!” paused and then withdrew the cannula. Turning to those present,

he said, "Gentlemen, this is an operation, which you have probably never seen before, it is the operation of dry tapping." He then directed the nurse to do her up. In faith,' said the gentleman who related the affair, 'I think he had already done her up himself.'"

"As regards the removal of ovarian cysts I think it may be accomplished, at least when the cyst is small, but large cysts cannot be removed. A gentleman, whom you all respect, attempted it. After opening the abdomen, he passed in his finger, but found the cyst so firmly adherent to the abdominal wall, that it was impossible to carry the operation into effect."

In the lecture on paracentesis he thus expresses his opinion : "Paracentesis is occasionally performed to remove serous fluid from the chest, but I have never known a case operated on, which has not died. The operation is not so unsuccessful when matter has formed. Among the means of ascertain-

ing the presence of fluid on the chest, I need hardly allude, as you have no doubt seen the instrument, to the stethoscope, which is used by a physician of this hospital. I have not sufficient experience of this instrument to say exactly how far it is available for this purpose."

The next extract is interesting, not so much from its surgical importance, but rather because it brought to a crisis the strained relations between the two hospitals and led to their separation.

"In the first place, gentlemen, let me observe to you that no greater folly, and indeed cruelty, can be conceived than that of giving mercury for the cure of urethritis. A man, who does it should be flogged, as he must be quite ignorant of the principles by which the disease is cured. To give mercury is unpardonable. You are aware, gentlemen, that I seldom enter the foul wards of the other hospital. When a

particular case requires my attention I have the patient removed to a clean ward. I will tell you why I do not enter these wards, it is because the patients with urethritis are compelled to undergo so infamous a course of treatment that I cannot bear to witness it. To compel an unfortunate patient to undergo a course of mercury for a disease, which does not require it, is a proceeding which reflects disgrace and dishonour on a medical charity."

Sir Astley Cooper had expressed the same opinions during previous courses of lectures, with no result but his own righteous indignation and the sympathetic applause of his hearers.

This session, however, the *Lancet* reporter was present, and the observations were published shortly afterwards. The attack was so pronounced, that it quite astonished the happy family party who formed the surgical staff of the two hospitals. They

held staff meetings and expostulated with their respected senior. A few lectures afterwards, before closing, Sir Astley Cooper makes the following apology: "The feelings of my colleagues have been hurt by the observations, which I made on the abuse of mercury in the treatment of urethritis. The observations, having been made for many years in these lectures, are not applicable to them. Who are the men, gentlemen, against whom it is supposed the observations are directed? Are they men I could possibly feel disposed to injure? Mr. Travers was my apprentice, Mr. Green is my godson, Mr. Tyrell is my nephew, Mr. Key is my nephew and Mr. Morgan was my apprentice. I feel proud of having such men around me, and I believe that at no former period have the surgical departments of these hospitals been so well filled as by them. I do not wish to disparage the abilities of former surgeons, but what I say is, that there never has been

a time when persons officiating as surgeons have been so properly educated to the profession. It is my wish to uphold the profession, I believe that much good has already resulted from my observations on the abuse of mercury, and I am happy to state that the present surgeons of St. Thomas' and Guy's Hospitals have never pursued the course of treatment, which I deprecated. The venereal wards of Guy's Hospital are to be opened within a week under new and improved regulations. I have spoken to the gentleman who rules that hospital, and I am happy to state that the custom of making patients spit three pints a day will no longer be a part of the system, as the wards will be open under new auspices. I trust that harmony and unanimity will ever be preserved among the members of the profession. It is essential for our mutual advantage and the advantage of the public. It shall not be my fault, if that harmony is ever disturbed."

If Sir Astley Cooper meant to express a pious opinion, that mercury is not useful in the treatment of urethritis, without reference to the practice in the United Hospitals, why did he not visit the foul wards at Guy's? and what necessity was there for his colleagues to feel hurt? Lastly, why was it necessary to open the venereal wards under new auspices? It is evident that the treatment had been in vogue, which the lecturer rightly condemned, and the *Lancet* published his remarks with malignant delight. The editor of the *Lancet* adds a brief note. "It is impossible that Sir Astley Cooper should be actuated by other than friendly motives towards a family party connected to each other not only by the amiable ties of consanguinity, but by the no less delightful vinculum of £3,600 which they extract annually from the students!" The remaining lectures of the course were not delivered

at St. Thomas' but in the operating theatre at Guy's Hospital.

During this session Sir Astley suffered more frequently and severely from attacks of giddiness, and Mr. Key had frequently to deliver the surgical lectures and Mr. Bransby Cooper lectured on anatomy. At the end of the session he sent in his resignation to the Board of St. Thomas' Hospital. The Board, irritated by the observations referred to, at once accepted the resignation and appointed Mr. Flint South his successor. This treatment was harsh, considering Sir Astley's long service. There is much to be said in favour of his right to appoint his own successor. He had contributed £1,000 towards the building of the new theatre in 1814. He had paid Mr. Cline £1,000 for his specimens and diagrams, besides the numerous additions he had himself made. Lastly, his ability as a teacher had made the reputation of the United Hospitals. Sir

Astley Cooper was perhaps reasonably annoyed, as he intended Mr. Key to succeed him as surgical lecturer and Mr. Bransby Cooper as teacher of anatomy. Sir Astley wrote to the Board withdrawing his resignation, but the Board replied, that his resignation had been accepted and his successor appointed. Their reply greatly irritated him. Mr. Benjamin Harrison, the Treasurer of Guy's, saw that this was an opportunity for establishing a separate medical school for Guy's. He obtained the desired appointment for Mr. Key and Mr. Bransby Cooper, and promised to build a suitable lecture theatre. The withdrawal of Sir Astley Cooper's name from St. Thomas' was very damaging, and his influence made Guy's from the beginning a prosperous independent school.

In January, 1826, Sir Astley lost his old friend and teacher, Mr. Cline. The high opinion he had of Mr. Cline's surgical ability

was equalled by a friendship founded on many acts of kindness and good fellowship. Unfortunately the quarrel between the hospitals estranged the two friends, and Mr. Cline died without the happiness of being reconciled with his eminent pupil. Sir Astley felt his death keenly and at once sent sympathetic messages to his friend's family.

Later in the same year Lady Cooper died. The loss of his amiable wife, who had shared his early struggles and given pleasure to each success and honour, was a great blow. He felt his loneliness so much, that he induced his adopted son and his wife to share his country home.

His failing health led him to resign his surgeoncy at Guy's in the following year, and with this his public career ended. The attacks of giddiness at times were very troublesome and compelled him to give up work, but when rest had alleviated his con-

dition, his returning energy carried him back to London. At one time he sold his London house, with the intention of retiring permanently into the country, but in a few months he took another and was busy with practice again.

During these years he wrote several valuable monographs, and he worked almost incessantly dissecting specimens for his private museum.

As he grew older his difficulty in breathing increased and the attacks of giddiness became more severe and frequent. Before visiting a patient, his attendant had sometimes to count the steps, and if they were too numerous arrange for the removal of the patient to a more convenient position. For many months before his last illness he had occasional attacks of dyspnœa in exertion, and the peculiarity of his complexion indicated some serious impediment to the circulation. It was not until six weeks before his

death that he found difficulty in assuming the recumbent position, and began to pass the greater part of his nights in a chair. He still continued to see a few patients during the day, both at home and at their own houses. During all this time he refused medical aid, and it was not until January 22nd, 1841, that he consented to see anyone to whom he might state his symptoms. When visited he was sitting in a chair with his body inclined forwards, so that his chin nearly rested on his chest. The pulse was accelerated, but there was not the slightest bruit heard over the heart. The beat was extensive. There were numerous bronchitic *râles* heard over the lungs, but they filled the chest cavity and shewed no sign of consolidation. The medical remedies more than once gave temporary relief, but on the whole the disease advanced. On February 10th he was seen by Dr. Bright, Dr. Chambers and Mr. Bransby Cooper, who told him the

opinion they had formed and the change of treatment, which they wished to be carried out. "My dear sirs," said Sir Astley, "I am fully convinced of your excellent judgment and of your devotion to me, but your good wishes will not be fulfilled in my case, and you must excuse me, for I will take no more medicine." The old surgeon, who had seen so many die, knew too well his own approaching end and naturally refused to be further troubled with useless drugs. He grew gradually weaker, an attack of cardiac dyspnœa being the immediate cause of death on February 12th, 1841.

He was interred at his own request beneath the Chapel of Guy's Hospital.

The early life of Cooper has much resemblance to that of John Hunter, both spent their boyhood in the country, neglecting the ordinary education and only developing their untiring industry later in life. Hunter's bent was more speculative and his mind

seemed confused by the abundance of his facts. Cooper, on the other hand, was more utilitarian and had his facts clearly differentiated and arranged in an orderly fashion. Hence Cooper excelled as a teacher. His systematic arrangement of cogent facts with the direct inferences which he drew, made his discourses useful to the ordinary student, while Hunter gave lectures only suitable to those who were willing to leave many facts unlinked to form theories and many problems unsolved for want of sufficient proof.

As a surgeon he is best compared with Sir Everard Home. "He was a great practical surgeon. His mind went directly to the leading points of the case before him, neglecting all the minor details which perplexed and misled minds of smaller capacity. Hence his views of disease were clear and such as were easily communicated to his pupils, and his practice was simple and decided."

In two characteristics Cooper stands out above all his fellows. His truthfulness, which made him hate deceit, and his cheerfulness, which insensibly spread itself to all around him, truly indicating his kindliness and good feeling towards his fellow men.

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