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Contributors

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BRADFORD

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Memorial.

CHARLES FAYETTE TAYLOR.

Bradford E. H.

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C. Fayette Taylor



MEMORIAL.

CHARLES FAYETTE TAYLOR.

AT the close of the Civil War in this country the medical profession of New York confronted a great opportunity; in reality, it faced a new era. There was to be an enormous growth in commerce, wealth, energy; the professions were to share in this progress.

Among the group of unusual men at that time in the medical profession in New York, when this development was at its greatest, was one to whose memory this Association wishes to pay its tribute. Dr. Charles Fayette Taylor was largely influenced, according to some private notes left by himself, to turn his attention to the branch in which he distinguished himself, by a humanitarian desire to attempt a cure in a child suffering from what was regarded at the time as an incurable disease—caries of the spine. To this effort he enlisted himself with all the energy and ingenuity of a fertile and persistent mind, regarding the supposed impossibility of successful treatment as a challenge for strenuous endeavor.

There was at that time but little pathological knowledge as to the diseases of bone, and Dr. Taylor, working under a sound hypothesis, before pathological data could be collected to demonstrate its value, developed in its details thorough and efficient treatment by the protection of the inflamed and diseased bone. In this work he made use of everything which seemed of service, adding whatever of value the thought of his own original mind could suggest, regardless of tradition. All who are familiar with his work will testify that what he attempted mechanically was done as far as human ingenuity made it possible.

The apparatus used was never an appliance which appeared to, but did not, do what was required, and there was always an object

in his effort. Thoroughness was Dr. Taylor's best quality, and added to this was an extraordinary self-reliance and enthusiasm which attracted patients, and led them to persist during the long years that were necessary for cure under the direction of a masterful intelligence.

The great lack at the time of Dr. Taylor's first efforts was in efficient appliances to meet the surgical indications. Surgeons, as a rule, paid but little attention to such details, leaving these to instrument-makers. It is not strange, therefore, that instruments were furnished to unsuspecting patients that were practically useless in their great inefficacy. Supporting apparatus were worn which did not support, protection apparatus which did not protect, and traction apparatus which did not pull. In short, expensive "make-believes" were used by patients who were ignorant of their uselessness. Dr. Taylor always held firmly to the principle that an apparatus was to fit the patient and not the patient the apparatus, and that each case needed especial and particular attention, success being won only by a thorough mastery of detail.

In many respects Dr. Taylor bore a resemblance in traits to a remarkable contemporary, Hugh Owen Thomas, whom he did not meet and by whom he was uninfluenced, differing, as they also did, in many characteristics. There were in both the same originality of thought, self-reliance, energy, directness, and fertile intelligence. It was to the exercise of these traits that we are indebted so much for the rehabilitation of our branch—orthopedic surgery—from a condition in which it was found thirty years ago, when it was practically a commerce of instrument-makers, an affair of straps and buckles, relieved from the status of a trade chiefly by a belief in the diathesis and struma, which were to be watched. How much humanity were in debt to Dr. Taylor can be seen by an examination of the long record of cases treated by him; the notes of ultimate cures in hundreds of cases of Pott's disease, secured after long years of treatment, showing a success, the difficulty of attainment of which those of our specialty know. We owe him a debt for the foundation of a hospital and dispensary where there has been so much for the profession to learn; for writings of stimulating value; for the device and perfection of appliances original and effective, and for an example of energy and thoroughness which those who knew him felt

and will never forget. A meeting of this Association can never take place without an unconscious tribute to the influence of Charles Fayette Taylor.

Emerson says that young men rarely pay what their youth promises—"They die and dodge the account"—but the promise of our honored associate seems to have been fully met.

E. H. BRADFORD.

