

The Society of Medical Officers of Health was, they stated, of opinion that administrative action was desirable for the purpose of providing facilities for the recognition and treatment of venereal diseases. They recommended that the local authorities should be required to place at the disposal of medical practitioners facilities for diagnosis by bacteriological and other methods, and that accompanying any such request for examination the practitioner should supply a statement showing the age, sex, condition as to marriage, number of children, and leading features of the disease present, but not including the name of the patient. They did not recommend the adoption of a system of notification in the ordinary sense. They advised that local authorities should also be prepared to arrange for the treatment of persons suffering from venereal diseases either

venting unprofessional treatment of venereal diseases by reason of the severity of these diseases and their effect upon the population.

Nova et Vetera.

SOME MSS. AND BOOKS IN THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY ILLUSTRATING THE EVOLUTION OF BRITISH SURGERY.

A Demonstration by Sir William Osler before the Association of Provincial Surgeons on the Occasion of its Visit to Oxford (March 27th).

THE Bodleian, as it may surprise some to learn, is one of the great medical libraries of the world, particularly rich in MSS., Greek, Latin and Arabic, in Incunabula, and in early English works. Including the Radcliffe collection at the Museums it probably outnumbers any of the special medical libraries of this country, and ranks in importance close after the British Museum.

The history of surgery in Great Britain may be roughly grouped into three periods. The first begins with John of Arderne, an army surgeon of the fourteenth century, whose treatise on *Fistula in ano*, issued in 1376, is the earliest known English surgical work. There are many manuscripts, which have been collated, and the work edited by Mr. D'Arcy Power in 1910. From those in the library there is on exhibition a beautiful fourteenth century example. There are many contemporary and even earlier English manuscripts with surgical references. Pembroke College has lent the *Breviarium Bartholomei*, written in the fourteenth century by John Mirfeld, who was connected with St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Priory, Smithfield. This magnificent manuscript formerly belonged to the Abbey of Abingdon. Four of the fifteen books are devoted to surgery.¹ He gives an account of a case of hydrocephalus tapped by his master with a cautery, in front and behind, and cured. Mirfeld was a pupil of Nicholas of Tyngewick, Fellow of Balliol and physician to Edward I, who practised in Cat Street near where we are now standing. Mr. Madan and Mr. Craster have very kindly put out two other interesting English manuscripts, one of which shows an illuminated figure of a body marked in different regions with the signs of the zodiac, and at the margin directions for venesection. The other is a manuscript written in England, of the Latin translation by Gerard of Cremona of the works of Albucasis, the Arabian surgeon of the eleventh century. From this author was very largely derived the practice of actual cautery, and a drawing in the manuscript shows various instruments for this purpose. The Bodleian possesses two of the earliest known Arabic manuscripts of Albucasis, which were translated by Channing in 1778, and published by the Clarendon Press. One of the volumes is opened to show examples of the cauteries.

In the Middle Ages the art of medicine was largely in the hands of the clergy. Surgery began to be formally separated from physic about the end of the thirteenth century, when the priests were forbidden to practise it; but they kept control by utilizing their barbers to do the minor surgical operations, particularly bleeding. In this way arose the close connexion between barbers and surgeons which persisted for many centuries. From the thirteenth century there were men who practised only surgery, and were known as Master Surgeons, of which there was a small guild in London as early as 1369. The majority of these men were army surgeons. For a short time, early in the fifteenth century, the Guild of Surgeons united with the physicians, forming a conjoint Faculty, under the control of a Director of Medicines. In 1540 the barbers and surgeons merged into the United Company of Barbers and Surgeons, and Holbein's great picture shows Henry VIII giving the charter. The union persisted, in spite of many attempts of the surgeons to break away, until 1745, when the Surgeons' Company was formed, which became in 1801 the Royal College of Surgeons.

In the century following Arderne there is not much to report in English surgery, but in Tudor times there arose

¹ Moore, *Medicine in the British Isles*, 1908.

a remarkable group of surgeons, and the writings of Clowes of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, of Gale, and of Vicary are shown. These Master Surgeons, usually associated with the army, were, as Power remarks, men of good education, wide experience, and sound judgement. Mr. Craster has found a most interesting manuscript of one John Harvy, an army surgeon in the reign of Henry VII, and it is open at the place where he gives directions for making splints. The following is his account of an army surgeon of the period:

He that wyll be a surgyan yn the war muste electe & chuse hym a capteyne or some noble lyberall man that lovyth well men, & know what he wyll lowe hys surgyan a dey. Yff he be a Nobyll man that ys your capteyn he wyll lowe you as other noble men do, that ys iis. a day unto the cheuyfte surgyan unto the second surgyan xxd a day the thyrd surgyan xvid. a daye, the iiii surgyan xiid hys seruant vid and a grote a pece of euery sowdyar euery moneth And hys banderyke muste be of hys masters colers a boutte hys necke with a spatyll before and be hynd with the kynges armys in lyke manar be sydis the curys that ye shall have a brode amoung nobull men & other sowdyars yff he be parfyt in hys syens & be well acquentyd gentyll, close honeste & mery. And also knowe what your master wyll lowe you unto your cofer. Some Nobyll men wyll lowe hys surgyan yff he be lyberall xx nobyls some v some v markes some xls.

Mr. Craster has also put out a parchment with the seal, and attached to it a urinary calculus, oval in shape, about an inch in length, removed without cutting by John Hubbart from the bladder of Beatrice Shrove in 1593—an enduring memorial of his skill. The description is worth quoting:

John Hubbart did take the sayde stone owte of her blather whiche stone being here shewed and measured was confessed by the sayd Beatrice as the sayde Elizabeth Sheringham and also by a sonne of the sayd Beatrice Shrove to be the very stone that the sayde Hubbert did take from her without incision or cutinge any parte of her body.

The direct successors of these men in the next century were two very distinguished surgeons—Woodhull and Wiseman—whose works are shown. Wiseman was a very strong character, who did for English surgery much that his contemporary, Sydenham, did for medicine. The volumes are open at cases, which are admirably described. A contemporary of Wiseman's was Lower, an Oxford man who wrote the well-known tractate on the heart. With Boyle, Christopher Wren, and Willis, he made many experiments upon transfusion. His book is opened at that chapter, and the plate shows the various cannulae. After Wiseman come the three well-known eighteenth century surgeons—Sharp of Guy's, Cheselden of St. Thomas's, and Pott of St. Bartholomew's—whose important works are on exhibit. There is also the report of a remarkable case by Robert Houston of Glasgow—the first operation upon an ovarian tumour, which he freely incised and cured (1701). There is here also the first account of the flap operation in amputation, by James Yonge of Plymouth, a sketch of whom, written some years ago, is opened at a description of his hardships as a naval surgeon. Two famous contributions by Charles White of Manchester, the first descriptive of the resection of the head of the humerus, and his pamphlet on *Phlegmasia Alba Dolens* are here for inspection. There are also two communications of the distinguished Dublin surgeon, Abraham Colles, in one of which he announces his law of the immunity of the mother who has borne a syphilitic child; the other contains the description of the fracture which bears his name.

The second period opens with one of the immortals in our profession—John Hunter, the founder of scientific surgery. His masterpieces are here: *A Treatise on the Venereal Disease*; *On the Blood*; *The Human Teeth*, and *Observations on Certain Parts of the Animal Oeconomy*. William Hunter's description of arterio-venous aneurysm, and his folio on the gravid uterus will interest every one. John Hunter left a group of splendid students. There is here to be seen the description of Sir Astley Cooper's greatest operation—ligation of the abdominal aorta. Beneath it is a letter from my uncle, Edward Osler, describing the operation which he saw while a student at the United Hospitals in 1817. Abernethy, Parkinson, and Blizard were all distinguished pupils of Hunter's—Abernethy probably the most famous. I have put out his description of his ligation of the external iliac artery, and also a work of the well-known surgeon, Benjamin Bell, who contested Hunter's views on the unity of gonorrhoea and syphilis; and the account of Parkinson's first operation on appendix abscess (1812).

The first half of the nineteenth century saw an advance in surgical technique, but there were no developments to be compared with the demonstration of ether anaesthesia in Boston in 1846, and the work of Florence Nightingale in the Fifties, in revolutionizing nursing. I have put out Simpson's pamphlet dealing with chloroform, which he used a year after the employment of ether, and Florence Nightingale's *Notes on Nursing* (1859).

The third and final period was introduced by the work of Joseph Lister. You will find on exhibition his first account of antiseptic surgery in the *Lancet* in 1867; two other very interesting early pamphlets describing his early methods, and vol. i of his *Collected Works* which were issued a few years ago from the Clarendon Press.