

“to venture down
The deep descent, and up to re-ascend
Though hard and rare.”

The operating theatre presented itself to the popular mind as a chamber of execution, over which hung the sign of the dripping blade, while about it lingered the echoes of the last sighs of departing souls. Now this same theatre has assumed, rather, the character of a temple of healing, with the whilom executioner transfigured into the High Priest. That which was a River of Styx, dark and cold, is now a Pool of Bethesda; and the ill-advised and taciturn Charon has been metamorphosed into the angel that troubles the pool as a signal of healing. (*)

This change in the attitude of the public towards surgical operations is not limited to any one class; we find that the intelligent and highly-educated among our patients have a considerable knowledge of what is involved in various operative procedures, and of the attendant risks and after results; and, because they are well-informed, they exhibit a well-reasoned confidence in submitting to operative treatment. On the other hand, the patients that form the greatest proportion of our hospital cases have but little knowledge of what is implied by operation, beyond the fact that they are sent to sleep and something is done; but their readiness to accept an operation as the proper treatment for them is equally great; all they ask is the assurance that it is for their good and that they will feel nothing; and we find that their confidence is born of their experience of what such treatment has done for their friends.

There is no doubt that implicit confidence on the part of our patients imposes upon us an added burden of responsibility in deciding what advice we are to give them, for, if their confidence is small, they will probably seek and obtain several opinions, and then make their own choice; but if their confidence is great, they will accept our opinion without question and act upon it without demur. But when the stage of advice is passed and that of action is entered upon, this confidence is of the greatest value to us, because the success of our operative work is immeasurably assisted

* It may amuse our readers to see the following version of the above passage in the racy language of Western Canada, taken from the report of the address in the "Edmonton Bulletin." "Dr. Arthur E. Gilles whispered to us in a confidential way that a doctor was not honestly represented by the drunken sailor, Charon, who offered to cross us over the river Styx in a topplly dug-out for two bits a head, but was really the patronizing barker for the pool of Bethesda, who called out in a mellifluous tone: 'Come on in, the water's fine.'"