

For our complete emancipation from the dreadful evils of those dark days of surgery and for no small part of the remarkable advance made also in the domain of the physician, we are indebted to the life and work of that great man, Lord Lister, who died only last February, and whose career has since been commemorated as the boast and the blessing of our profession in every civilized land and nowhere more heartily and warmly than in this city of Toronto. Great in character, as well as in achievement, he will ever remain an exemplar for all of us; and I feel inclined to suggest to you one or two lessons—we have no time for more—to be derived from facts, lessons which may have special interest for you now and may be of value hereafter. And first, I should like to recall and to relate to you a little chapter of medical history, which concerns him and must always be of interest to every teacher and student of clinical medicine, surgery and midwifery.

I have indicated to you the awful mortality which occurred in surgical hospitals at the time of which I have been speaking. Equally appalling was that to be met with in all maternity charities. At least one other than Lister was working actively and earnestly, although in a very different direction, with a view, if possible, of furnishing a remedy. I refer to the late Sir James Simpson, the celebrated Professor of Obstetrics in the University of Edinburgh.

He had been long struck by the great maternal mortality then prevalent among the patients of the lying-in hospitals, as compared with that which obtained in the case of women delivered in their own homes, and knowing how analogous were the circumstances of the newly-emptied uterus with that of the newly-inflicted wound, and how similar were the dangerous and often fatal sequelae of each, he was prepared to find a little disproportion between the number of deaths of those operated on in private practice and those treated in what he spoke of as "palatial hospitals." It was the unfavorable environment, therefore, of the patient which he regarded as the real cause of disaster, and it was the practice of collecting together many wounded persons under one roof of which he set himself, with all his accustomed energy, to denounce, and, if possible, to alter and supersede. He wrote and spoke on the subject with the frequency and force of an earnest agitator, so that much attention was aroused by his views and not a few influential converts adopted his creed. In a pamphlet entitled "On Our Existing System of Hospitalism and Its Effects," he wrote as follows:

"Above twenty years ago in speaking of the effects and evils of our large hospitals—as these hospitals are at present constructed—I took occasion to remark: 'There are few or no circumstances which