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OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROGRESS  
OF SURGERY IN OUR  
OWN DAY.\*

BY DONALD MACLEAN, M.D., DETROIT.

The multiplicity of associations for the study and advancement of the many departments of science is one of the most striking and, I may add, most valuable features of the age in which we live. The marvellous improvements in the facilities for travelling have rendered this possible; so that surgery, not less than many other departments of modern science and art, is deeply indebted for its unprecedented advancement in our day to the practical applications of that particular form of motion commonly called steam.

Not to do more than mention the production and dissemination of surgical literature thereby made practicable, the possibilities for personal contact and the interchange of opinions and experience, supplying and sustaining in ever-increasing degree the mighty stimulus of emulation which have been secured to us through the beneficent power of steam, even we of the very generation who have seen and known all about it sometimes, I think, fail to fully realize. Medical associations, as we have them, were not possible in former generations; and while many and various influences have combined to secure

the unprecedented advance which, no one can deny, surgery has made in our day, my firm belief is that the union and communion between different men, and different schools, and different nations rendered possible by the means referred to is one of the greatest of all the powers which have worked together for the development and improvement of this the most directly humanitarian of all the arts and sciences.

But while claiming for such associations as the Canadian Medical the most unstinted credit as a means of advancement, I am far from being so certain that such functions as the one which your kind and generous partiality has accorded to me are to be regarded as the most effective or profitable mode of using the time and energies of the members.

I am an ardent advocate of such meetings as the present one. The reading and discussion of original papers, the reporting of cases, the exhibition of instruments and specimens, the congenial gathering of ourselves together, sometimes from long distances, the recalling of old associations and the forming of new, the hospitable and convivial breaking of bread and drinking of water in each other's society, the after-dinner speech and all that it implies, I approve of with all my heart.

But when it comes to didactic addresses even on surgery, and the progress, and the wonder, and the glory thereof, I am not quite so clear; unless, peradventure, the orator happens to have the power, genius, and courage of a Tait to electrify his audience and the whole profession with

\* Read before the meeting of the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa, Sept. 22nd, 1892.