

ON THE SYMPTOMATOLOGY OF ACUTE ABDOMINAL DISEASES.*

By JOHN PATRICK, M.A., M.B.,
Assistant Surgeon, Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

GENTLEMEN,—My first word must be one of thar's to you for the honor you have done me in selecting me to preside over the meetings of the Society this the fifteenth session. I suppose there is no man amongst us who does not cherish some ambitions. It is not given to us who work and live in the east-end of Glasgow to let our ambition direct itself towards being the Prime Minister of the country, or winning the Derby, or becoming President of the Royal Society, no matter how prominent our position in local politics, or how enthusiastic our sporting inclinations, or how keen our scientific insight. But every man of us ought to be ambitious to do something for our own Society, and in due time gain his promotion to the President's chair. I feel, therefore, that in occupying this position to-night I have satisfied one, and that not the lowliest, of my ambitions. And I hope that in the new session the conduct in the chair will be quite worthy of its former occupants—men whom we all love and honor—and that the enthusiasm and energy of the chairman will be supported by like qualities in the members, coupled with due forbearance for mistakes and faults which will inevitably occur.

I have chosen for the subject of an address to open the session a study of some points in the symptomatology of acute abdominal diseases for several reasons. The first and main reason is that the variety of the symptoms is so great, their vagaries sometimes so extraordinary, that no attempt to reduce them to uniformity seems worth while, and if now it appears a hopeless task to make them conform to type, perhaps some day clinical surgery will become an exact science, and diagnosis will be as precise as in phthisis, and diphtheria, and cerebro-spinal meningitis. A second reason is that, both in private practice and in hospital, I have blundered in diagnosis and treatment, so that my motives have not been altogether disinterested. And the third reason is that a true appreciation of the nature and significance of abdominal symptoms by the family practitioner is of vital importance in diagnosis, and an absolute necessity if a reasonable chance of success is to be given the operating surgeon. For the surgeon, in a large proportion of such cases, is completely dependent on the observations of the doctor, who generally sees the patient before he becomes too ill to give an accurate account of his symptoms, and he often possesses valuable information gained in his previous acquaintance with the patient. Not only is the dependence of the surgeon on the observations of the doctor complete, but the surgeon may often too

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