

THE OFFICIAL GERMAN ACCOUNT OF THE ILLNESS OF THE LATE EMPEROR FREDERICK III.

ANNOTATIONS BY

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This narrative, which professes to be the official and, therefore, truthful account of the malady of the late Emperor Frederick is remarkable for at least two reasons—1st, the chief consultant, Sir Morell Mackenzie, is not allowed to make any report; 2nd, the whole report is pervaded with a strong animus against Sir Morell. Certainly it is an unique production of medical literature. One is led to think that it has its existence solely in the attempt to decry and defame Sir Morell, and to excuse his German medical attendants. He is accused directly and by implication of almost all the errors of omission and commission a physician could be guilty of. Never was national and professional jealousy exhibited in so concrete a form as in this book of a hundred pages. The main accusation against Sir Morell Mackenzie is that he stood in the way of the proposed “Spaltung des Kehlkopfes” or thyrotomy, to the risks of which operation they were ready and eager to submit the august patient. Dr. Mackenzie opposed this; hence the vials of wrath have been poured out on his head.

Now this operation is a very serious one, and as it was by no means proved, either microscopically or clinically, that the growth was malignant, and as it was, moreover, of very small size, it is not probable any English or American operator would have felt justified suggesting such a procedure. The statistics of results compiled by Mackenzie in his work on the nose and throat (published 1880) are as follows:

Aphonia	40 per cent.
Dysphonia	20 "
Modified voice	11.11 "
Defective voice	6.66 "
Recurrence	38.48 "

No mention is made of any case being cured.
Encouraging results, truly!

Dr. Paul Burns, in his work on the throat, says: “I quite agree with Mackenzie that laryngotomy is only justifiable when an experi-

enced laryngoscopist *has declared the removal per vias naturales impossible, only, I should say, after he has attempted the removal in vain.*”

Lennox Browne* writes of thyrotomy: “It should not be performed except for the relief of vital symptoms, nor until an expert has failed to remove the growth by an endo-laryngeal operation . . . the procedure is not without a certain amount of immediate danger to life. Certain foreign practitioners have not hesitated to divide at one operation two or three rings of the trachea, the cricoid cartilage, the thyroid cartilage, the crico-thyroid membrane, the thyrohyoid membrane, and even the hyoid bone, for the removal of a *small and non-malignant* growth, causing little annoyance; and all this with apparently no thought of such a consequence as perichondritis or caries.”

But then we know German devotion to abstract science overrules such commonplace things as prudence and justice to the patient! Again, the Germans deny that a benign growth may take on malignant action.

Professor Gerhardt writes:† “The great statistics of Felix Semon show that of 8,300 cases of benign growths, 40 *appear* to have changed into a malignant form. Most people see in these statistics diagnostic errors, but not metamorphoses.” He further denies that irritation can change the character of a growth. Perhaps he would *also* deny that prolonged local irritation will cause a morbid growth, or that irritation will increase its activity! It is further alleged by Dr. Gerhardt that Sir Morell Mackenzie lacked the manual dexterity necessary to remove the *obtruding* growth; and that instead of removing the growth from the left cord he tore out a piece of the *right*! He states,‡ Dr. Morell Mackenzie extirpated on the 8th of June two more pieces of the growth. Such an inconvenient observer as I was, must this time be kept at a distance.”

It would seem Sir Morell was able to remove the growth this time, and, no doubt, he was very much afraid of Gerhardt. Still, again, it is alleged by Gerhardt, who seems very sore, that Mackenzie removed a portion of the surround-

*Diseases of Throat and Nose. London, 1887.

†Page 14.

‡Page 11.