

Whiskers and foreheads, scarf pins and spectacles,
 Hustles the Class! And they ring themselves
 Round the first bed, where the Chief
 (His dressers and clerks at attention),
 Bends in inspection already
 shoulders .

. serry and shove;
 While from within a voice
 Gravely and weightily fluent
 Sounds; and then ceases; and suddenly
 (Look at the stress of the shoulders!)
 Out of a quiver of silence
 Over the hiss of the spray,
 Comes a low cry, and the sound
 Of breath quick intaken through teeth
 Clenched in resolve. And the master
 Breaks from the crowd, and goes,
 Wiping his hands,
 To the next bed.

I would like to quote in full the series of pictures which ensue of hospital characters: the casualty patient; the weak witted ploughman; the suicide—the staff nurse, old style, with her “antique liveliness and ponderous grace” and “thick Scot wit that fells you like a mace”; the staff nurse, new style, “blue eyed and bright of face but waning fast into the sere of virginal decay” who talks Beethoven, disapproves of Balzac, speaks Latin with the right accentuation and gives at need “draught, counsel, diagnosis, exhortation; the scrubber—each picture touched in so surely that the character stands clear and incisive as in an antique cameo. There are two, however—or three—that I cannot desist from quoting. The one is that of “The Chief”—a noble tribute to, or, rather, a nobly worded delineation of the greatest of surgeons.

His brow spreads large and placid, and his eye
 Is deep and bright, with steady looks that still.
 Soft lines of tranquil thought his face fulfill—
 His face at once benign and proud and shy.

If envy scout, if ignorance deny
 His faultless patience, his unyielding will,
 Beautiful gentleness and splendid skill,
 Innumerable gratitudes reply.
 His wise, rare smile is sweet with certainties,
 And seems in all his patients to compel
 Such love and faith as failure cannot quell.
 We hold him for another Hercules
 Battling with custom, prejudice, disease,
 As once the sons of Zeus with Death and Hell.

This it must be remembered was written when the fight was still raging hot and strong, when Lister and his methods were still on trial. Had ever poet worthier subject to describe, or surgeon finer tribute to his excellence!