

years ago, but they had actually to be removed from our railways because the public would not use them.

I might gather further illustrations of this intensely conservative spirit which governs everything English. I might wander into the regions of politics and religion and hundreds of other sources, but I prefer to take one of which I can speak at length and in detail—one upon which I believe, if I read aright the compliment you pay me by asking me to appear here before you, I can speak with some authority.

In my youth the medical education of a British student was not considered complete unless he had made a tour of the schools of France and Germany, and, like others, I felt of myself as was said of Proteus :

“ ‘Twould be a great impeachment to his age
In having known no travel in his youth.”

But I wish now that the time and money therein spent had been directed to the western instead of to the eastern continent. And I now predict that ere long it will be to the medical schools of America that our students will travel, as did the apprentices of old before they settled down to the serious exercise of their craft.

For many years past I have been visited by numbers of my professional brethren from this side the Atlantic, many of whom have settled down for days and weeks, and even months, to see my work. I have been overwhelmed by the kindest invitations to visit this continent, but till now I have never ventured across. This delay is an instance of British conservatism, for it is very little the fashion amongst us to take long holidays. I have not had a holiday for seven years, and only the most eminent doctors in England take an annual outing ; but on this side I find that none of you think much of a trip across the water, involving leaving your businesses for three or four months, and, from what I have heard, the struggle for existence is as keen as it is with us, perhaps keener.

My American visitors have, one and all, impressed me with the feature of mind which I fear in England we do not possess—the power

of judging any question solely upon its merits, and entirely apart from any prejudice, tradition, or personal bias. No matter how we may struggle against it, tradition rules all we do ; we cannot throw off its shackles, and I am bound to plead guilty to this weakness myself, perhaps as fully as any of my countrymen may be compelled to do. I may have broken free in some few places, but I know I am firmly bound in others ; and my hope is, that my visit to a freer country and a better climate may extend my mental vision.

To come to my intended illustration, let me briefly remind you of the early history of abdominal surgery. The first operation for the removal of an ovarian tumour was performed unwittingly, in 1701, in a Scotch village ; for Robert Houston began there a tapping, and finished by making a successful ovariectomy. It was not till 1809, eighty-six years after Houston's case was published, that his example was imitated, and even then it was not in Europe, but in the fresh soil of the backwoods of Kentucky that the young seedling obtained its first full growth, and from that time and from this country dates the history of abdominal surgery. But how slow the growth ! In 1863 I heard my master, the Professor of Surgery in the University of Edinburgh, settle all this vast field of human progress in these few words : “ Abdominal surgery is abominable surgery.” Syme, the greatest surgeon by far with whom I have ever come in contact, shared the views of his colleague in this matter, and I fear that in both the sentiments originated far less in the merits of the question than in their mutual dislike (almost the only sentiment they had in common) of John Lizars, who, having read Macdonald's manuscript when it was sent to John Bell, was immensely struck by the success of the heroic Kentuckian, and was desirous of following his brilliant example. Most unfortunately for humanity, the success of Lizars was of a very doubtful kind, and abdominal surgery had to wait for the advent of Dr. Charles Clay and Mr. Isaac Baker Brown. The story of the latter brilliant and unfortunate surgeon is now a twice-told tale, and I can only repeat what I have said at length elsewhere—that his disastrous downfall was a misfortune