

an unconquerable fascination for the theory of medicine—a dangerous fascination for one who has made a business of the healing art.

I mention these facts in order that it may be seen I am not a practical man. In the account I intend to give of Ralph Brabazon's case I do not mean to deal with it as if Mr. Brabazon were merely an interesting subject. I intended to treat of it rather as a student—no doubt a morbid student—of human nature, than as a cut and dried medico.

Though it would perhaps be better I should in the course of my narrative keep in the background the record of my own thoughts, sensations, hopes and fears, of the struggles which unnerved me, of everything which concerns myself alone, still, I cannot resist the temptation of laying bare the workings of my mind. At the same time I will endeavour to enter minutely into nothing which has not in some way direct or indirect bearing on the strange story of Ralph Brabazon.

Of the causes which led to my becoming an old man in spirit while I was a young man in years little need be said. It will be sufficient for me to state that in my youth I had experienced great hardships, endured great neglect. As a boy I had no friends: I did not then desire them. As a student I had no friends: then I did desire them. When I tried to make friends, I was unfortunate in my efforts. Those who responded to my advance proved one by one to be either deceitful, weak, or plainly anxious to cut themselves adrift from