

THE CANADA LANCET.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL SCIENCE,
CRITICISM AND NEWS.

VOL. XVI. TORONTO, JULY, 1884. No. 11.

Original Communications.

GLIMPSES OF TRANSATLANTIC SURGERY.*

BY J. P. BROWN, M.D., L.R.C.S.E., GALT, ONT.

GENTLEMEN :—Perhaps it would not be uninteresting while dealing with subjects with which all are familiar to touch lightly upon observations taken at the hospitals of England and Scotland only a year ago, and it is but just before commencing to remark upon the increasing number of graduates of our Canadian Universities, who find it to their advantage year by year to spend a season or more in the time-honored institutions of our mother-land. We, as Canadians, are proud of the position which our colleges occupy, and of the honors and other marks of distinction conferred upon our students when abroad ; yet, we cannot but feel and confess that these old centres of civilization with their crowded populations, their long trained and tried men, their accumulated lore and experience of centuries, open up to us a deeper and a wider field for research, and offer a more thorough knowledge of the art and science of our profession than we can possibly obtain in as limited a time in our own land. Hence it cannot but be a sound policy for our men after obtaining a theoretical training at our own schools, than which few can afford better, combined with all the practical information which our hospitals can give to finish off and prepare themselves for practical life by a season or two abroad. True, I did not follow this course myself, but allowed fifteen years to elapse after graduation before putting the plan into execution, but on the principle of "better late than never," the few months spent in hospitals abroad, will ever be remembered as a bright and profitable period, as well as a happy break in the ordinary routine of regular practice.

My first visit was to Old Edinboro' with its

classic beauty—its halls of learning—its monuments of Art—and to me, above all, its immense complex but complete Royal Infirmary. I will not describe the building, but when I say it is admirably situated, with good drainage, beautiful surroundings, and composed of an elaborate succession of buildings, all well lighted, well ventilated, and connected together by wide covered corridors, I have said enough. It is the only hospital in Edinboro, and is consequently systematically arranged for the admission of persons of all ages, and both sexes when suffering from disease or injury, or otherwise requiring professional skill. The staff of professors and teachers is composed of good men—the majority of them young or in the prime of life, many of them eminent, either as physicians or surgeons, and their clinical lectures in almost every case were clear, logical, searching expositions of the subject matter in hand.

Joseph Bell is among the most uncompromising of the disciples of Lister ; and his many operations that I witnessed, with the exception of one, were all performed under spray. He removed a number of breasts for scirrhus, and the treatment in each case was very similar to the preceding one. After producing anæsthesia, the carbolic spray was turned on—the instruments, sponges, &c., all being taken out of trays containing a one to forty solution of carbolic acid. The incisions were often elliptical ; cat-gut ligatures were invariably used ; also a long drainage tube which appeared to me of unnecessary thickness ; the usual sutures, but no plaster straps ; small oil silk protective placed over the line of union, covered by heavy layers of gauze, the lower ones being soaked in weak disinfectant solution. The cases were allowed to stand over for two days and then dressed daily under spray, the arm being bound each time almost invariably to the side. Although the cases differed much, they all did well. The union was generally rapid, and I was informed that frequently many years would elapse without a recurrence of cancer.

The exceptional case that I mentioned was one of extensive necrosis of the tibia. He refrained from using the spray on account of the deep-seated and wide-spread suppuration. This seemed like a strange argument to be used by an advocate of Listerism. He laid the leg open for two-thirds the length of the tibia, and with hammer and chisel, cut through the sound bone to reach the sequestra.

* Read before the Ontario Medical Association, Jan. 5th, 1884.