

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 many 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 business 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 tumor 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