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Original Communications.

SOME OF THE PRESENT ASPECTS OF SURGERY.

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Read before the Medico-Chirurgical Society.

Much of what I am about to read to you has been hurriedly written. Your secretary called upon me three evenings ago, and invited me in the name of the Society to read a paper before you to-night. Here it is, with all the evidences of haste clinging to it:

The aspects of a science or of an art are as the aspects of a country; not being always objective are not always the same—for the subject, seeing, has views of his own, habits of vision as it were, and these, unconsciously to himself, perhaps, change and colour the prospective. I am as one, and only one of those observers, and the field of observation—chiefly ultra mare—is the scene of former and more lengthened residence.

During my recent visit to Europe, after an interval of nineteen years, I perceived, or fancied I perceived among individuals in the higher walks of the profession, whether met with in society or at their own homes, a greater seriousness—a greater earnestness than on former occasions. Or was it that those intervening years had changed the mode of vision in the observer?

The friction of mind against mind is seemingly incessant. The struggle for position is unremitting—rendered the more necessary by the increased and steadily increasing cost of living, and almost

pari passu, the steadily increasing number of votaries to the healing art. The large incomes enjoyed—not always enjoyed, but always slaved for—by a limited few, have caused recruits innumerable, each one hoping to achieve distinction, as in the time of Napoleon the humblest soldier was animated with a hope of one day exchanging his musket for the *baton* of the marshal.

Although great courtesy characterizes the relationship of members of the profession with one another, there are few who are not keenly alive to the necessity of continued effort for supremacy, as well as for its recognition; and self-assertion, though clothed with becoming modesty, is not always absent from the highest and most conservative ranks of the profession.

But—and most markedly in Great Britain—plain, honest thought finds plain, honest expression at all the meetings of societies I attended. Vague statements are unheeded; and if imagination is suspected as a possible source of stated fact, a clapping of hands is an indication of *that fact* having been duly noted. The most imaginative could not devise a readier method of expression than the clapping, graduated on a crescendo scale, which marks distrust or disapproval; and tediousness or irrelevancy receives a quietus in the same way.

The vast strides in the study of minute and morbid anatomy, and in special and general pathology, have opened up newer, and, it is said, more profitable fields of professional labour. The growth and multiplication of specialties are prodigious. The three divisions of physician, surgeon and accoucheur; the subdivision of eye and ear surgery, and afterwards the further separation