

Dr. Abbe, of New York, recently made the following statement:—
 “I believe there is considerable amount of grave surgery done to-day
 “by practitioners whose temerity is stimulated by inflated statistics of
 “small mortality under modern surgical practice; and whose feeling
 “that they would like to do serious surgery is entirely unjustified by
 “their training. Such novices in the larger field of work are rightly
 “called amateurs.”

The most conservative must subscribe to the comments made by a prominent medical journal on the above sentiments when it said that
 “Such limitation does not debar the young practitioner from his proper
 field of work and experience; nor does it close one’s eyes to the fact that
 every one must have his first case in every field of surgery upon which
 he may enter; but the justification for this first essay must be found in
 proper preliminary training, and a due sense of the sacredness of human
 life and the responsibility of the operator.” A qualification which
 perhaps may be worthy the consideration of the expert as well as the
 amateur.

However well merited these warnings may be in some instances I
 hold that in our Province, at least, the rank and file cannot justly be
 charged with over confidence, and the sin that lies at our doors is one of
 omission rather than commission. This opinion is no doubt largely
 formed from personal experience. In my sixteen years practice I can
 recall instances where over-conservatism has brought regret; and it is
 not perhaps too much to claim that this experience is not unique. There
 is a pleasure in realizing that we have a lively conscience and a proper
 respect for human life; but it is well to ask whether we best honour our
 conscience or prove our faithfulness by inaction. There come to every
 member of our profession times when a fatalistic trust to nature is as
 certainly wrong as too hasty interference, and no amount of self-justifi-
 cation can remove the responsibility from our shoulders if we fail to
 give a patient in the most unpromising surroundings the benefit of
 operation when it is required. Why is it then that so often cases are
 allowed to drift along trusting to nature where circumstances prevent
 their being placed in the hands of the expert?

It has already been stated in the quotation referred to that “The
 justification for this first essay must be found in a proper preliminary
 training.” Quite true, but the same truth applies with equal force to
 the treating of the first case of pneumonia, the delivery of the first
 woman, or any other of the cases with grave possibilities that fall into
 the hands of the Doctor.