

# Proceedings of the McGill Medical Society of Undergraduates.

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## THE EARLY HISTORY OF AUSCULTATION.

ADDRESS BY

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Gentlemen,—

The present century has been marked by a remarkable growth in all branches of scientific knowledge. During the past quarter of the century, in particular, discoveries have poured in so rapidly as to require constant application to keep abreast of the times in any one department of knowledge.

In the medical sciences advance after advance has in many subjects completely altered our point of view, and we now regard many morbid processes from a vantage ground not enjoyed by our predecessors. I need only refer to the knowledge gained by the study of bacteriology, how completely this science now dominates our views of pathological processes, and to what brilliant results it has led in the prevention and in some instances in the cure of disease.

Immersed as we are in the study of the medicine of to-day, we are, perhaps, a little apt to underrate and lose sight of the work of our predecessors. To-night I purpose tracing briefly something of the lives and work of some of the great masters of the earlier half of the century which has just passed, and in doing so I shall confine myself to a few of those whose labours served to establish the methods of physical examination in diseases of the chest. To their great credit it may be said that they discovered practically everything which the auscultator of to-day uses in his daily work.

Percussion was discovered and practised to a limited extent by an Austrian physician named Auenbrugger long before Laennec introduced auscultation.

Auenbrugger was born in Graz in Styria in 1722, and after graduating in Vienna he became physician to the Spanish Hospital of that city. After seven years patient investigation he published an account of his researches on percussion in a modest pamphlet. This obtained but little notice at the time and soon fell into oblivion, from which it was rescued by Corvisart in 1808, thirty years later. As the originator

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