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THE SURGICAL RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC.*

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IN accepting the courteous invitation to address your Association to-day, I realize deeply the compliment that you bestow not only upon myself, but upon the great number of American surgeons that are your friends and neighbors. A political boundary divides your people and my people, but in our profession there is no dividing line, for the medical and surgical property of one people is, or ought to be, that of the other. The customs and the methods of education of the Canadian differ in minor details from those of my own countrymen, but there are grievances, slight wrongs, and evil tendencies that crop up equally in both our peoples, and it is to call your attention to and to enlist your sympathy in some of these that I venture to express the results of observation extending over a period of twenty years.

While listening some time ago to an interesting address by Prof. Muller of Munich, on the German system of insurance of the laboring classes against sickness and death, I was impressed by the fact that the insurance was established not as a charity, but because the poor have the right to be protected against the various accidents and illness incident to our complex modern life. At that time it occurred to me that against unnecessary suffering, disease and death the public, both rich and poor, has an equal right to be protected by means other than that of insurance. In other words, if modern surgery can lengthen life, can protect against malignancy, can nullify suffering better than can be accomplished by other therapeutic measures, the public has the right to know accurately when and to what extent this is possible.

It is not assumed for an instant that protection and alleviation in the case of many diseases cannot be obtained by means that are not surgical. We have merely to witness the results of vaccination, serum inoculation in diphtheria, and a host of similar remedies. As a matter of fact, it is interesting to note that the public has practically asserted its right to be protected against smallpox, diphtheria, malaria, yellow fever and other well-known diseases.

During the extraordinary surgical advances that have been made in the last decade our profession has been so busily engrossed in grasping the new developments that come crowding one upon another that it has

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