

MEMOIRS—JOHN I. HUNTER

APPRECIATION OF DR. JOHN HUNTER

IN the sudden death of the young anatomist, Dr. John Hunter, the science of medicine has lost an outstanding exponent, a man of vision, a dreamer of true dreams. At the early age of twenty-seven, Dr. Hunter had done work of such character as to entitle him to the chair of anatomy at the University of Sydney, Australia, an achievement of which a man of any age might well be proud.

Dr. Hunter received his early education in Australia. His graduate studies were pursued with some of the eminent physiologists and anatomists of the English universities. I do not recall a man who has more brilliantly fulfilled the promise of his earlier student years.

I visualize Hunter as I saw him first in the beautiful auditorium of the University of Sydney, addressing a thousand members of the profession and medical students in a clear, convincing manner, in beautiful English, with a pleasantly modulated voice which could be clearly heard in every part of the hall. The epoch-making work which he did in connection with Dr. N. D. Royle, which so accurately related muscle tone to the sympathetic nervous system, was but one of a number of great scientific researches which he carried on. During the days our little party spent in Sydney in April, 1924, we followed the work of Dr. Hunter and Dr. Royle with the greatest interest, and were impressed with the scientific accuracy and knowledge of the fundamental sciences which were Dr. Hunter's contribution to their splendid joint effort. Whatever the ultimate practical results of this work, as an addition to pure science, it is of the greatest value. Hunter combined the physiologist and the anatomist. With the eyes of the master, he related form to function. The medicine of the next generations is becoming clear to us in this generation. We see that the remaking of medicine will be based on the fundamental sciences. As the eye goes, so goes the mind,—from the microscope to the ultramicroscope, from the colloids to the molecule and the atom.

Hunter's brilliant appearance at the last meeting of the American College of Surgeons will never be forgotten by those who were so fortunate as to be present. It was an inspiration to the medical profession of America, who now extend their sympathy to his family and friends, and to the medical profession of that great commonwealth which has the distinction not only to be the birthplace of John

Hunter, but also to claim him as the product of its training. Australia may well be proud to have produced such a man. Great Britain lives again in the scientific achievement of Hunter, of Banting, and of the other young men in her colonies who have so ably upheld the scientific traditions of the English school.

William J. Mayo

JOHN HUNTER

In the midst of life we are in Death

JOHN HUNTER is dead. The youth who won the love and admiration of all by his modesty, his charming personality, and his brilliant mentality, has slipped beyond our ken, and we are left stricken and wondering. Why should one who had the power to compel the respect and the awe of the keenest savants of our profession drop on the threshold of so promising a career? Why were so much ability and such great genius bestowed if they were to be cut short of their fruition?

To none can the shock of this untimely death come with greater force than to the Editors and the Editorial Staff of SURGERY, GYNECOLOGY AND OBSTETRICS, at whose invitation John Hunter came to America to collaborate in the presentation of the John B. Murphy Oration in Surgery before the Clinical Congress of the American College of Surgeons in New York.

During our travels in Australia and New Zealand, Dr. William J. Mayo and I were met constantly with accounts of the fame of this brilliant young anatomist. When we reached his home city, we were keen to visit him and his confrère, Dr. N. D. Royle. The afternoon we spent in their workshop in the laboratory of the University of Sydney was one of the most inspiring half days of our lives. This young professor of anatomy of far-off Australia looked into our eyes, shook our hands, and modestly but forcefully, in a too short three hours, told us the story of the vision, the experiments, and the clinical studies which resulted in forecasting a great scientific discovery. We immediately realized that we were in the presence of a master. Then this youth, with the charm of a boy and the wisdom of a sage, led us on to the stage of the great hall of the University. The six hundred students, young men and women, who were assembled greeted him with enthusiastic cheers, and it was apparent that they were a unit in the pride, the confidence, and the love they bore this inspiring and honored teacher.

Meditating upon the experiences of that afternoon, we felt that we had been in the presence of the spirit of another John Hunter, whose mantle had worthily fallen on these youthful shoulders. We realized that all of the world would be interested to share our experience, and we therefore asked this new John Hunter

to tell the story of his work to the surgeons of America at the October meeting of the American College of Surgeons.

At our earnest solicitation, the University of Sydney loaned him to America. His reception in the United States and Canada, I am sure, left no disappointment for him and his confrères, nor for those of us who had invited him. Professor Hunter and Dr. Royle met with a veritable triumph as they went from city to city, told their story, and enacted their demonstrations.

Finally the climax was reached in the presentation of the theme—formally, impressively, and convincingly—to the two thousand surgeons and their guests in the annual John B. Murphy Oration in Surgery. Those who heard and saw the masterful presentation of these theses will not soon forget the feeling of admiration they experienced. The opinion, I am sure, of those who carefully followed, listened, and judged was: "We have been witness to an epoch-making event in the history of surgery."

Franklin H Martin

The many friends of John Hunter, who were shocked by the news of his untimely, sudden death, will thank Mr. G. Elliot Smith, Professor of Anatomy of the University of London, University College, for the following letter which gives the details of Professor Hunter's last illness:

Dear Doctor Franklin Martin,—

16th December, 1924.

In reply to your cablegram which has just reached me, I can tell you in a few words the little there is to say about the terrible tragedy of poor Hunter's death. He arrived in London on 22nd November, apparently in exceptionally good health and full of energy. He threw himself at once into the business of demonstrating his work to the physiologists and clinicians in London, and gave a number of lectures, and was going to start a more formal course on 8th December. On 3rd December he went up to Cambridge, and was very busy there with informal discussions as well as public lectures. He returned to London on 6th December because he was not well. On the following day it was found that he had a temperature of 104.6 and I got our best physician, Dr. Charles Bolton, to see him, and he sent him into the hospital suffering from the most virulent form of enteric that Dr. Bolton had ever seen. His temperature remained at about 105 until the 10th December, when signs of cardiac failure showed themselves, and he died on that day. He was delirious a good part of the time, and almost unceasingly talked about his experimental work. It appears that he had been ill from 1st December, but took no notice of it; as he was so absorbed in the task of convincing people here of the truth of his results that he went about for six days after the onset of the illness without realizing that he was seriously ill. . . . The whole business is unspeakably tragic because he was certainly the most promising anatomist that we had, and I feel convinced that if he had been spared, he would have been perhaps the biggest figure in scientific medicine of the present generation. . . . Could you send to me fifty copies of the Murphy Oration (both Hunter's and Royle's contributions) for use in this country? I should like to have them as soon as possible, as I am embarking upon a course of public lectures here on Hunter and his work. With kind regards, yours very truly,

G. ELLIOT SMITH.