

# ASSOCIATION MEDICAL JOURNAL.

EDITED BY JOHN ROSE CORMACK, M.D.

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NEW SERIES.

## PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL ASSOCIATION.

THE NAMES OF MEMBERS WHOSE SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE RECEIVED, WILL IN FUTURE BE PRINTED ALPHABETICALLY ONCE A MONTH IN THE JOURNAL. The first monthly list—embracing all subscriptions for 1855 received up to the last day of January—will appear in the JOURNAL of February 9th. *Members are particularly requested to bear in mind that subscriptions for the current year became due on the 1st day of January.*

A safe and simple method of remitting subscriptions is by post-office order, payable to the undersigned at the General Post Office, London.

JOHN ROSE CORMACK, *General Secretary.*

21, Edwards Street, Portman Square, London.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BOOKS RECEIVED. [*An Asterisk is prefixed to the names of Members of the Association.*] 1. TRANSACTIONS of Belfast Clinical and Pathological Society. 12mo, pp. 132. Belfast, 1854. 2. FOSTER, JOHN F. On the Operation of the Cholera Poison on the System. pp. . London, 1854. 3. HASSALL, ARTHUR H., M.D. Food and its Adulterations. pp. 569. London, 1855. 4. \*GARRETT, C. B., M.D. On East and North-East Winds. pp. 136. London, 1855. 5. London and Provincial Medical Directory for 1855. pp. 696. London, 1855. 6. \*MURPHY, EDWARD WILLIAM, M.D. Chloroform: its Properties and Safety in Childbirth. pp. 72. London, 1855.

MR. CLENDON'S paper is in the hands of the compositor.

DR. T. ROBERTSON, of Nottingham, wishes us to state that the meteorological observations at Nottingham are kindly supplied to him by Mr. F. J. Lowe, of Highfield House, near that town, and that he is indebted to the kindness and cooperation of most of the medical men in the town for the list of diseases which appear in the report.

## MEDICAL HERO-WORSHIP: ITS EVILS, AND THEIR REMEDY.

THE practice of rendering special honours to special men has the sanction of great antiquity, and has been especially conspicuous in the history of medicine. We have become accustomed to select the names of a few men, as Hippocrates, Galen, Harvey, John Hunter, and Jenner, and to hold them up to the admiration of the whole world, omitting in our blind idolatry to give honour to many others, upon whose labours the works of our special heroes have been founded.

There can be no doubt, that every man who adds to the capital of medical knowledge is essentially a great man, and there is as little doubt that every man who thus purchases on our noble art, hopes in the end to have his labours recognised by the world. What man indeed is there that would work and write without this incentive to action? Surely none. The hope is legitimate, honourable, ennobling, and in every way most valuable. But how do we treat the impulse which gives rise to it, when we praise one man to the exclusion of another? With unkindness, with injustice, is the only possible reply!

We have shown with some care in the early numbers of last year, that no leading medical discovery was ever the absolute work of a single man; that in discovery there are always steps—always progress; and that the greatest honour

is often due to the man who commenced, rather than to him who completed the work, and to whom the chief merit is generally awarded. This statement needs no new proof nor illustration: the facts are indisputable. It is therefore not fair at once to raise a huge monument of adulation to the successful genius whose head has appeared over the summit of the mountain: we ought first to retrace the journey such an one has made, to see by whom the steps of the difficult ascent have been carved out, and to award to every one of the labourers in the task the honours which he has fairly earned. Anything less than this is "hero-worship"; a worship false in principle, and one which acts as a clog to genius, and an iron bond to industry.

But, before the ideas which we now throw out can be rightly appreciated and applied, a great innovation in our system of medical education must be introduced; the student of medicine must be taught that his science has a past and a future, as well as a present meaning. He must not be surfeited with repetitions of the lives and works of a few famous and favoured men, but must be made to grasp the progress of *all* medical science through the labours of *all* who have promoted that progress; and he must also be inspired and deeply imbued with the feeling, that every honest work which he may undertake will in the end receive a just and certain recognition, though that work be but the foundation or the middle part of the structure he assists in erecting, and though another and more fortunate hand shall—perhaps in after ages—place the cope-stone on the finished edifice.

The means for the introduction of this new element into medical education are few and simple. Let professorships of medical history be established in all our medical schools, and let the examining boards insist that the preliminary knowledge of the student shall not be based on a mere acquaintance with two or three particular classical authors, but on a general comprehension of the past history of that profession of which he is about to become a member. Let this be done, and the proposal here given on paper will become the principle in living action.

In proportion as men are barbarous, so have they their individual representatives of heroism. In proportion as men are civilised, so does mental capacity universally become enlarged, so does every man become a hero in himself, and all become coequal. There can, indeed, be little progress while power is concentrated in the unit, and while the masses merely look on in inactive admiration. If other men then, in the republic of the world, still cling to a false dogma, and chant divine praises to their Odins and Mahomets, let them continue doing so till they weary of it: but let us of the republic of medicine, in direct contrast, lay hero-worship decently in its grave, and proclaim the broad principle, that every one is a hero who works with all his energies, and performs with honour his allotted tasks.