

Lancet Gallery

OF

Medical Portraits.

SIR WILLIAM BLIZARD,
SENIOR SURGEON TO THE LONDON HOSPITAL.

SCENE.—“*The London Hospital, White-chapel-road. Sir WILLIAM on the steps at the door of the Hospital. A Porter at the Gate. A STUDENT near the railing reading “THE LANCET.”*”

SIR WILLIAM—[*stamping, and twisting his hat violently in both hands*]. “Porter, I say, holloa! you rascal, you scoundrel; d’ ye hear me?”

PORTER.—“Yes, Sir; yes, Sir William.”

SIR WILLIAM.—“What’s look at me for? Look there [*pointing to the student*]; see; there’s a fellow reading THE LANCET. Send him here this instant, this moment, or I’ll—.”

Such was the ludicrous spectacle exhibited at the London Hospital on a certain occasion within the last month. The degree of respect entertained by the students towards a gentleman who can so conduct himself, may be imagined with far greater facility than it can be described with accuracy.—Having observed Sir WILLIAM for a moment on the outside of the Institution, let us follow him to the wards, where, having satisfied himself, after repeated interrogatories, that no gentleman is present who is connected with THE LANCET, he takes his rounds, and regales the minds of the students with the “occasional clinical remarks by Sir W. Blizard,” as advertised in the Hospital Prospectus. The following are specimens of these useful discourses. They were taken down on the spot, and we vouch for their accuracy:—

SCENE.—*The Wards of the Hospital.—TIME, Saturday, Feb. 16th, 1833. Sir WILLIAM BLIZARD and PUPILS “going round.” Some one directs the attention of Sir WILLIAM to a case of inflammation of the elbow-joint. The knight examines it, and the following clinical observations ensue:—*

SIR WILLIAM.—“Now, Gentlemen, No. 500.

mark this. In all cases of inflammation of the joints, it is desirable to keep the limb in such a position, that when morbid action ceases, the limb may be of use to the patient. Thus, in inflammation of the knee-joint, the limb should be kept in the straight position, and in inflammation of the elbow-joint, the arm should be bent at an acute angle, and not an obtuse angle. Now do, pray, Gentlemen, bear these remarks in your mind.”

A case of Hydrocele falls next under notice.

SIR WILLIAM.—“This case will soon be in a fit state for the operation of paracentesis and injection. Now, pray mark that, Gentlemen. Not *tapping*. How I hate that word. We sometimes ask at the College, What would you do in a case of hydrocele?”—“Why, tap him,” says the student.—“*Tap him?*” say I; “Pray what publican were you brought up under?”—Do, pray mark this, Gentlemen. Always say, *Paracentesis abdominis; Paracentesis scroti*. I will tell you a most remarkable case that occurred to me a number of years ago. I had a black man under my care, for hydrocele; a most enormous one it was; it held at least two quarts of fluid. Well, I *tapped* him. Some time afterwards he came here again with another man. ‘Well,’ said I to him, ‘I dare say,’ I said, ‘you have come here to be *tapped* again?’—‘Me? no Massa,’ says he, ‘me quite well.’—Well, Gentlemen, this man declared that he never had a drop of fluid secreted from the moment that I performed the operation; only think of that, Gentlemen.” [*A short pause.*] “I will tell you something else, and then I will not detain you any longer, Gentlemen. My friend, Dr. B., couldn’t go round the Hospital without indulging in a joke. Well, Gentlemen, he had a patient, a woman; he went to see her, and he asked her how she was. She said, she *had taken his medicine, and was not worse*. Then said the Doctor, ‘Thank God for it.’—Good morning, Gentlemen.”

TIME. Wednesday, Feb. 20. Sir WILLIAM and the PUPILS again. *A case of diseased joint before them.*

SIR WILLIAM.—“There is a time when morbid action ceases, and the part does not suffer any injury from it. The posi-

tion of the limb should be thought of before ankylosis takes place. But I will not tire you by recapitulating the remarks I made a few days ago. There was the son of a Page of the Duke of G., whom I was called to some years ago, with disease of the knee-joint. The part got quite well, and yet there was considerable enlargement of the joint remaining, and the limb became ankylosed at an obtuse angle. I dare say if any of you, Gentlemen, had seen the limb for the first time, you would have said there was considerable disease of the part. But the parts may be much altered by disease, and yet no disease remain."

Turning to a Case of diseased Testis:—

SIR WILLIAM.—"When I took this case in, I thought it was scirrhus epididymis. What are the diagnostic marks of scirrhus? Well, I will tell you. Its peculiar hardness and a sense of specific gravity. I have blistered this, and I dare say when the blister has healed the man will be quite well."

This is a sorry spectacle, and the unhappy representation is scarcely relieved, as far as the instruction of the students is concerned, by the fact, that Sir WILLIAM is now upwards of 90 years of age, having, according to the church register, been christened at St. Mary's, Barnes, Surrey, on the 19th of February, 1743. His age, at that period, is unknown, but we have heard it stated on what we deem good authority, that this ceremony was not performed until the child had passed its fifth year. Sir WILLIAM was born in a little, one-story, and now antique, tenement, next door to the *Sun* public-house, at Barnes, where his father carried on the business of a hair-dresser, bleeder, and tooth-drawer, and here it was that our hero executed his first "operations" in the science of surgery, little expecting, at that period, possibly, that he should figure nearly one hundred years afterwards as the father of English "barber-surgeons." Where Sir WILLIAM was subsequently educated, we know not. What have been his writings (except one Hunterian Oration, indeed) we know not, as he has outlived all his former preceptors,—outstood, apparently, the scholastic establishments of his early years. Having quitted Barnes, we hear of him first as the occupier of a little shop in the "medical way," at Lambeth Butts. But this not

succeeding according to his wants and views, he removed to Crutchedfriars, where he commenced operations as a general practitioner, and soon after endeavoured to bring his "talents" into notice by the publication of a pamphlet on aneurism of the brachial artery. Full four-fifths on in the eighteenth century, we find him become one of the surgeons of the London Hospital. In 1790 he exerted himself strenuously to procure the passing of that vile surgeons' Bill which was so severely castigated by Lord THURLOW,—in the year 1800 he was one of the successful petitioners to GEORGE the THIRD, for the Charter now held by the College of Surgeons, (from which period he has been one of the ruling powers of that institution)—and now that we have dipped one-third into the nineteenth century, we find this gentleman still acting as the most *busy* surgeon in the London Hospital, to which institution he was elected upwards of fifty years since. He was knighted by GEORGE III., about the time that he was made surgeon to the hospital. He has ever taken a particularly active part in the government of his favourite College, and, to use a vernacular phrase, it was said that for many years he had "everything his own way" in that institution. If Sir WILLIAM ever became an author, otherwise than by publishing his "Oration" and pamphlet, it is quite certain that the *man* has outlived the reputation of the *writer*. At one period he was considered to be expert and accurate in forming a diagnosis, and bold and skilful in the performance of surgical operations. As an examiner at the College of Surgeons, he has ever been dreaded by the students, from his austerity and testiness of manner, and from his pertinacious interrogatories connected with the minute anatomy of the neck. He has been a bold man in his day, having once leaped from his carriage and seized a highwayman by the throat, and he not long since invited to mortal combat his comparatively juvenile colleague in the College, Mr. J. G. GUTHRIE. The old gentleman is in every respect a man of mettle, has been an Adonis in his day, and, we believe, was sufficiently intrepid to pay a second visit to the hymeneal altar at the threatening age of fourscore years.