

was surmounted by a dome and lantern dome." Accommodation was provided for 228 patients, "each in a distinct bed," and "the apartments of the male and female patients were entirely distinct."

The names of James Bell, the father of the surgical school; of John Bell, who originated the school of surgical anatomy; and of James Rae, the first to deliver a complete course of lectures on surgery—must be placed on record.

The progress of the school was hampered by vested interests—the details of the controversy cannot be entered into here but are full of interest to students of human nature). We pass on to the time when, towards the close of the pre-Listerian era, the Surgical School of Edinburgh reached the zenith of its fame. In a band of able and accomplished surgeons, two names stood out pre-eminent—Robert Liston, the great operator; and James Syme, the surgeon *par excellence*.

Liston, in pursuit of his aim to become an operating surgeon, devoted himself whole-heartedly to the study of anatomy, eventually becoming a lecturer on anatomy and surgery on his own account. To obtain material for dissection was his chief difficulty. The meagre supply in Edinburgh was already controlled by the experienced "agents" of Monro and Barclay, with whom it was not easy to enter into competition.

"It was no uncommon occurrence for one party to have a look-out man sitting on the churchyard wall in the dangerous dusk, ready to drop down on the first appearance of the rival party and appropriate the grave by striding across it. Another grim method of staking out a claim was to drive a digger into the sod of the coveted grave."

The jealousy of Liston's medical colleagues of his growing reputation led to a drastic resolution being passed by the Managers of the Royal Infirmary, decreeing "that Mr. Liston be prohibited and discharged from entering the wards or operation room of the Royal Infirmary, at any time, and on any pretence whatever." The clerk was further directed "to transmit a copy of this resolution to Mr. Liston, and the Treasurer to notify the substance of it to the Physicians, Surgeons, Apothecary, Matron, Clerks and Porter." Thus have the prophets ever been stoned! "With grim determination, he overcame the handicap of being without a hospital appointment, and circumvented the open antagonism of his surgical contemporaries."

Liston and Syme were for many years devoted friends and inseparable colleagues. It is sad to relate that ultimately there was an open rupture between them. "Each was by nature contentious, and the struggle for existence, which both found hard, underlay the discord." Eventually, five years after Liston had accepted the chair of surgery at University College, London, he wrote to Syme "a few words with the view of bringing about a reconciliation . . . Write and tell me that you wish to have our grievances and sores, not plastered up, but firmly cicatrized."

Most interesting is the account of the first major operation performed under ether-anæsthesia in England, carried out by Liston at University College Hospital. Readers of this journal will remember that ether was first used at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, and turning to the crowd of onlookers, students, colleagues, &c., Liston said dryly, "We are going to try a Yankee dodge to-day, gentlemen, for making men insensible." The operation, an amputation through the thigh, successfully accomplished, "Liston turns again to his audience, so excited that he almost stammers and hesitates, and exclaims: 'This Yankee dodge, gentlemen, beats mesmerism hollow.'"

The story of the discovery of the anæsthetic properties of chloroform has often been told, but bears repetition. Ether did not prove an ideal anæsthetic to abolish the pains of parturition, and James Young Simpson set himself to discover a better. It was in Dr. Simpson's dining-room that he and his two friends, Drs. H. Keith and J. Matthews Duncan inhaled chloroform, which had for some time been set aside "as of no likelihood whatever," in the presence of the ladies of the family and a naval officer. All these friends ultimately found themselves under the table, recovering from the unconscious condition to which they had been reduced. "The *sederunt* was resumed. Each expressed himself delighted with this new agent, and its inhalation was repeated many times that night, one of the ladies gallantly taking her turn and place at the table, until the supply of chloroform was fairly exhausted."

M. B.

COMING EVENTS.

March 15th.—Club for Canadian Nurses. Her Royal Highness Princess Patricia of Connaught will open the I.D.O.E. Club for Canadian Nurses at 95, Lancaster Gate, London, W., on Friday, March 15th, at 3 o'clock.

March 16th.—Incorporated Society of Trained Masseuses. Annual Meeting. Armitage Hall, 228, Great Portland Street (by kind permission of the National Institute for the Blind). 3 p.m.

March 20th.—Association for Promoting the Training and Supply of Midwives: Annual Meeting at 9, Park Crescent, the Right Hon. T. MacKinnon Wood in the Chair. Address on "Proposals for a State-aided Midwifery Service," Miss Amy Hughes. 3.30 p.m.

March 21st.—Central Midwives Board. Monthly Meeting. Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, Dartmouth Street, Westminster, S.W. 3.30 p.m.

April 4th.—Royal British Nurses' Association Lecture. "Some Points in Personal Hygiene." By Leonard Williams, Esq., M.D. Chair: Percival White, Esq., M.D. Rooms of the Medical Society of London, 11, Chandos Street, W. 2.45 p.m.

April 10th.—Memorial Service in St. Paul's Cathedral, for Nurses who have fallen in the war. Queen Alexandra has expressed her intention of attending. 2.30 p.m.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)