

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by



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THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

## LECTURE: "THE EVOLUTION OF SURGERY."

Dr. Rice-Oxley, Mayor of Kensington, occupied the chair on Saturday last, when Sir D'Arcy Power lectured before the members of the Royal British Nurses' Association on "The Evolution of Surgery." Dr. Rice-Oxley, after some kind remarks on the pleasure which it gave him to take the chair for the Royal British Nurses' Association, spoke of Sir D'Arcy Power's distinguished career and warmly congratulated the nurses on having been able to arrange to have a lecture from him at their club at Queen's Gate.

Sir D'Arcy put upon the screen a very wonderful collection of slides from old drawings and engravings, some of them dating back to the thirteenth century. In those early days a surgeon was expected to diagnose a case without seeing a patient, and one of the first pictures was of a messenger bringing a sample of urine for examination; the receptacle in which he carried the specimen glass served, with other details of the picture, to show that urinology was a common means of arriving at a diagnosis even in those early days.

Another picture showed a surgeon trephining a patient with a mallet and chisel, and the lecturer remarked that quite recently a traveller witnessed the same operation being performed by the natives in the mountains beyond Morocco; strangely enough the patient on whom the operation was performed seemed to suffer no pain. Other pictures represented patients being cupped, bled, leeches and bathed; the baths were simply high tubs with curtains round them. Next came the picture of a dentist with all the teeth he had drawn hung in a chain about his neck; in the following picture he was seen extracting a tooth with such vigour that his chain of teeth was threatening to fly away.

The representation of a hospital in the time of the Reformation came next, and, remarked the lecturer, it was very like one in Madrid at the present time. It had a large hall and an altar visible to all; sometimes there were two patients in one bed and the Sisters were seen sewing up grim-looking objects which looked like dead bodies being prepared for burial, but which were in reality, Sir D'Arcy believed, merely sandbags to be placed alongside broken limbs.

Another slide showed a reproduction of the earliest Diploma in medicine which exists, and then came many pictures connected with the examinations of those who wished to practise as surgeons. The examinations took place before a large concourse of people, and in cases where the candidate made a particularly "poor show," it was the habit to announce that the coroner might be called in to prove that he was unsuited to become a doctor. Sir D'Arcy remarked that this was probably better than the modern method of calling in the coroner after he had been in practice. (Laughter.) A very fine slide was that of an examination going on in the Barbers' Hall in which were seen the great paintings, the King's cup, and other trophies greatly prized still.

First of a long series of famous surgeons came John Arden, "the first great predecessor of Lister," said Sir D'Arcy. He lived from 1307 to 1380, and he was the first to claim that wounds should heal by first intention, and that there should be no suppuration after operation. He had a famous operation for fistula which ceased to be performed after his death, but which was revived again in 1850; it has been used ever since and thus the modern treatment for fistula owes its origin to this surgeon of early times. He lived at a time when money was worth ten times its present value, and yet his charge for an operation was £1,000; in addition to this he received £40 for every year the patient lived after the operation, and also two changes of garments annually from the patient during his lifetime. The names of his patients fill several pages, but there is no record as to the disposal of the large fortune he must have accumulated.

Sir Thomas Gale, a great surgeon of Elizabeth's time, was so quarrelsome that he used to go out and fight his colleagues with his fists in the first field they came to, and he was constantly hauled up before the Barbers' Company and fined. All the greatest surgeons, down to Lord Lister, were passed in review, among them Sir Thomas Woodall who, in the seventeenth century, stamped out scurvy in the navy, Cheselton the most dexterous operator for stone, Percivall Pott who broke his leg by a fall from his horse in the Old Kent Road, and thereby gave his name to a certain fracture, and John Hunter, "the greatest of all surgeons up to the time of Lister," great because of his originality, one of his ideas being to go through

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