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ABUSE IN NASAL SURGERY.

WE publish this month a paper from Dr. J. N. Mackenzie entitled "Remarks on some Abuses in the Intra-nasal Surgery of To-day." and also the discussion which followed its reading at the last meeting of the American Laryngological Association. Our readers may remember that this question was discussed in an editorial in the February number in 1903. The members of the profession had had the subject prior to that date somewhat prominently brought before them by the address of Dr. Goodhart on "Friends in Council" and he had founded his arguments not entirely upon such questions in relation to laryngology or rhinology (although he did say that "throats and noses suffered terribly from this lust of operation which has beset the public") but rather upon the indication of a general tendency in more than one branch of surgery.

In the paper published this month we have an interesting and vigorous denunciation of the same tendency from a writer on the other side of the Atlantic. Dr. Mackenzie writes in his usual welcome and striking style, and however one may differ in one's views upon the question of abuse in intra-nasal surgery, the paper will interest and amuse the reader. Further, the arguments here and there forcibly expressed will, no doubt, upon the whole, cause serious reflection in the minds of all earnest workers in our special department.

Dr. Mackenzie was careful to point out that Burke's dictum, that you cannot indict a whole nation, is applicable to laryngologists the world over, and any fair-minded person will agree with him. Further, most surgeons will be thoroughly in agreement with him when he states that in matters relating to intra-nasal surgery there will, in the nature of things, always be honest difference of opinion. In this last statement perhaps the greatest part of the difficulty lies, because as long as honest workers differ to some extent amongst themselves their practice will and must vary. The most conscientious worker when applying his knowledge to a particular case must always be confronted with this difficulty, because it is necessary to guard against doing too much, and yet, in justice to the patient, too little should not be done. A cautious worker desires rather to err on the latter side, but there can be no doubt that not a few of the best workers in our profession can recall cases in their own practice in which precious time might have been saved, not to speak of discomforts and sufferings, had more decided measures been taken from the first.

Dr. Mackenzie proceeds to quote examples from different parts of the nostrils, and his remarks upon the surgery of the nasal septum deserve careful consideration. Not a few readers will be amused by his reference to the partial list of the operations performed on the septum, which might rival in length the catalogue of ships in the "Iliad" or the genealogical records of Deuteronomy. Again, his remarks upon the turbinated bones and bodies and their wholesale removal are worthy of the most careful consideration. We should hope, however, that such a charge is not levelled against many workers in our special department, whatever notable exceptions may exist. Dr. Mackenzie also refers to the accessory cavities, particularly the ethmoid and antrum, in both of which he thinks unnecessary interference often takes place, and his statements are also worthy of the attention of practitioners.

The discussion which followed is exceedingly interesting because of the views expressed upon the question from a number of eminent authorities whose opinion is of value. One or two were inclined to think that Dr. Mackenzie had possibly gone a little too far in his warning; still, the remarks in general showed a tendency to agree with the views expressed by the author, and we have little doubt that the results, viewed from any standpoint, will be beneficial.

There is one part of the discussion to which special attention may be drawn in these pages, and that is a reference to a tendency in some directions to attribute such practice to workers in a par-

ticular school or a particular country. For example, Dr. J. H. Bryan said that the paper indicated a condition of affairs which prevails not only in America but abroad, and that while much harm had been done by reckless surgery in the nasal passages, there was no justification for the assault on American laryngology published in a recent number of the *JOURNAL OF LARYNGOLOGY*. In the first place we should, as editors, like to point out that it has always appeared to us an unfortunate thing to make charges against individuals, or schools, or nationalities. We are consequently at a loss to understand why the *British JOURNAL OF LARYNGOLOGY* should be so quoted. It is a pity that Dr. Bryan did not quote his authority, because we are quite unconscious of any such opinions ever having been expressed by us in reference to a school of laryngology which has done so much for our special department, and whose practitioners we have always looked upon as friends and co-workers, having for their aim the advancement of a special department of surgery. Of course, such views may have been expressed by some writers at meetings or in papers, and been published in these pages.

In this connection we feel very much inclined to quote Dr. Mackenzie's words in reference to John Hare's famous play, because the man we are referring to is most likely to be found in more than one city of different continents.

Our views expressed a year ago, when trying to give an unbiased and just opinion, contained pretty much all we have to say in the matter. As for those—and we sincerely hope they are few—who may be tempted into such paths for personal ends, perhaps the less said the better. They may be safely left to the ultimate judgment of their professional brethren, and they will doubtless find their proper level.

The question, however, of what is best to be done in cases in which different, though honest, views may be expressed is a serious one, and it is by no means easy to suggest a remedy in this, as in any other progressive branch of science. Societies, such as the Laryngological of London, where cases may be brought before a large number of men engaged in the special department for discussion, are invaluable to those who live in such a centre and have the privilege of attending their meetings. But, again, there are the healthy influences of keen introspection, a determination to do conscientiously what is just to the individual patients under observation, and scientific research. While admitting, therefore, the use of such papers as Dr. Mackenzie's, the question of abuses in

surgery need not too seriously absorb our attention. The tendency of our special department is onward. Much good work has been done, and is being done. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that such charges can be brought against us by those engaged in general practice, as well as by those who confine their studies mainly to laryngology and rhinology. We would fain hope, nevertheless, that the necessity of pointing out such methods is becoming daily less important. Considering the large numbers of men devoting their attention to these special branches all over the world, we believe, exceptions notwithstanding, that the general tendency is in this healthier direction.

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE
OTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

ON

THE INSTITUTION OF RESEARCH WORK AND A
PERMANENT MUSEUM IN CONNECTION WITH THE
SOCIETY.

BY THOMAS BARR, M.D.Glasg.,

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GENTLEMEN, I desire first to thank you for the great honour you have conferred upon me in electing me for a second year to the presidential position. I can only trust that my experience of the first year may lead to greater efficiency during the second.

At the annual dinner I took the liberty, in replying to the toast of the Society, of giving utterance to certain aspirations which, if not capable of immediate realisation, are, I think, worthy of further consideration. As only a comparatively small number of members were present at the dinner, I have thought it well to put on record and somewhat amplify these in a short address.

My first aspiration is, *the institution of organised and systematic research* in connection with the Society. I would ask, gentlemen, is there any part of the body which presents problems so eminently demanding research as that with which we have to do?—difficult problems, complicated problems, we are sometimes apt to think insoluble problems. By means of organised and systematic research, we could grapple more closely with these difficulties and hope to solve at least some of them. As one subject well worthy of re-