

LETTERS TO MY HOUSE PHYSICIANS.

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BALTIMORE.

LETTER I.

FREMONT, May 17, 1890.

DEAR L. : This is a charming town, beautifully situated at the southwestern end of the Black Forest, and with a medical faculty which attracts students from all parts of Germany and not a few from abroad. During the past few years the number of men in attendance has risen rapidly and the semester has reached six hundred. I met here my friend Ramsay Wright, of Toronto University, and together we saw much of interest.

Bäumler, who has charge of the medical clinic, is a man of about forty-five, and we are very much indebted to him for making our short stay here agreeable and profitable. He was in London at the German Hospital, and subsequently practiced there as a consultant for nine years, when he was called to the chair of medicine. The medical wards, containing about one hundred and twenty beds, are very conveniently arranged, and the plan of having a separate lecture-room for each department, which is almost universal at German universities, is very advantageous. There are three assistants, the first of whom, Dr. Reinhold, has been here three years, and, as is customary, is appointed for an indefinite term. The second and third assistants remain for one or two years. In addition, four men are named for periods of three months to act as clinical clerks in the wards. Digitized by Google

To-day's routine was as follows: At 7 A. M. the professor gave a didactic lecture (of which five are delivered weekly) to about a dozen students, the small number being due to a holiday yesterday and in part, no doubt, to the fact that attendance upon these systematic lectures is not compulsory. The subject was Diseases of the Esophagus, and spontaneous rupture, perforation, and hemorrhage were discussed in a most exhaustive manner. Afterward, in his private room, Dr. Bäumlér raised the question of the value of such teaching to the medical student and suggested that the same might be got in a shorter time from books. Possibly; and, though I am strongly opposed to our present system of over-lecturing, I could not but feel that the men who had listened and taken notes had got their information in a much more interesting and instructive manner than if they had read the subjects in any text-book. Indeed, I do not know of any one *Practica* which contained all the information given in the three quarters of an hour. The question must be discussed temperately, as it has two sides, one of which is ably presented in the May number of the *New Review* in a Lecture against Lecturing, by Professor Sedgwick.

One thing in the lecture-room pleased me greatly: around the walls were inscribed on each side—above the names of Hippocrates, Galen, Vesalius, and Harvey, and beneath these in groups—those of the great clinicians of all countries; and it warmed my heart to see, as the representatives of America, the names of Flint and of dear old Dr. Bowditch. At 8 o'clock the visit to the wards was made and new or specially interesting cases examined. In commenting upon a case of typhilitis, Bäumlér spoke of the great frequency of recovery in this disease, which he thought, as is now almost universally accepted, was always at first an affection of the appendix. The tendency toward early operation was, in his opinion, at present too strong. I mentioned the case which we had in the wards a few months ago, and which was certainly a most encouraging one in support of early interference; but who can say whether the small localized abscess found by Dr. Halsted at the point of the appendix might not have healed, or at any rate subsided, as the inflammation had done in a previous attack? Still, no one will deny that the lad is not better without his rudimentary appendage.

At nine o'clock the students assembled in the large ward, in the center of which chairs were arranged on either side of a bed, a method which is followed in the case of fever patients, and other cases too ill to take to the auditorium. A *Practicant*, as a final student is called, was then asked to examine the patient before the class, and an hour was occupied in the thorough investigation of the case—one of typhoid fever. Comments were made on each interesting feature, and the symptoms summed up in a clear and orderly fashion, most instructive to the class, the members of which had an opportunity of afterward looking at the case. Typhoid patients are uniformly bathed whenever the temperature rises to 103° F., and no internal antipyretics are used. The good effects are not, it is thought, confined to the lowering of the fever. The mortality is here only about eight per cent. lower than in the ordinary symptomatic method; but you shall hear much more on this subject. A convenience which we do not always see in American hospitals is the stand in each ward for the examination of the urine, and a microscope with the necessary reagents. A clinic is held daily, and on Wednesday it lasts two hours; so we concluded that the Freiburg professor did a very full day's work before ten o'clock in the morning. In another ward we found waiting four candidates for the *Staats-Examen*—the test demanded by the State and which is a very formidable affair, lasting for several days in each subject. We then went to the post-mortem room to see a case of bullet-wound of the brain. Ziegler, the professor of pathology, came here last year from Tübingen, and lends additional strength to the faculty, as he is one of the most progressive of the younger generation of workers in his department. To English and American students he has become well known through McAlister's translation of his work on pathological anatomy, which has had an extraordinary success here, a sixth edition being in course of publication. He is a young-looking man, with a pleasing, frank manner, and he gave us a hearty welcome and asked us to come to the post-mortem room to see an examination of three students for the license (*Staats-Examen*), and a most practical test it was. The men drew lots for trunk, head, and position of scribe. The poor fellow who began the work had evidently not been a diligent attendant

in the post-mortem room, for he bungled the inspection of the abdomen and thorax in a shocking manner. The examination of the heart—the *pons asinorum* of dissection—loosened his sweat centers, but Ziegler dealt with him most gently, considering the repeated aggravations. We could not wait to see the end, as it was a matter of several hours. In addition to this searching examination, there are others in pathological histology and general pathology. Von Kahlden, the Docent in pathology, showed us the laboratory, which is not large but very well equipped, particularly for histological work. We afterward spent a very pleasant evening with Ziegler and von Kahlden, both of whom are genial, sociable men. Ziegler must be most industrious, as, in addition to the teaching, which occupies, he said, at least three hours a day, the revision of his text-book has been continuously in hand, the editions having followed each other so rapidly; then he edits his *Beiträge*, which has become a most important pathological journal, and recently, in conjunction with von Kahlden, he has established the *Centralblatt für Pathologie*. By the way, I have sent out von Kahlden's new book on histological methods. Call the attention of S. to the section on Ehrlich's blood methods, which seems fuller than is usually given. To-day we saw Ziegler perform a most interesting autopsy before the class in a case of bullet-wound of the brain. Early in April the young lad had attempted suicide, and had discharged a revolver twice at his head. One bullet flattened against the frontal sinus, where it was found post mortem; the second passed through the left hemisphere to the occipital lobe, where it lay on the median surface close to the cuneus. There was a firm-walled tract in the course of the bullet. An operation for abscess had been performed yesterday, apparently only by enlargement of the original orifice and the insertion of a drainage-tube. There was extensive basilar meningitis. The boy was hemiplegic and aphasic, but we did not learn whether an examination of his visual fields had been made, which would have been of great interest considering the position of the bullet in the occipital lobe.

One of the assistants showed us through the new surgical clinic, which is not yet completed. The operating theatre is very well arranged, with a composition stone floor and iron frames for the seats, so that the whole room can be flushed with the hose and thoroughly cleansed. Carbolic acid is the chief disinfectant, bichloride being rarely used, and the gauze for dressings is simply sterilized.

The Anatomical Institute is a fine new building, of about the size of one of the pay-wards, with a large lecture-room in the rear. Professor Wiedersheim is in charge, and, as is customary in German universities, is an anatomist in the wide and proper sense of the term, having to teach human and comparative anatomy and histology. One of his assistants takes the surgical anatomy, and this really meets the objection one often hears urged in America against a pure anatomist teaching medical students. In a well-equipped anatomical department how easy it would be to have one of the surgical assistants teach the senior students the surgical relations of the subject in special courses! The anatomical lecture-room is one of the best I have seen—high and spacious, with splendid light from the roof and sides. In the center of the arena is a trap-door with hydraulic arrangement, by which, on turning a key in the floor, a table ascends from the preparation-room below. Wiedersheim is a beautiful draughtsman, and the blackboards were covered with elaborate diagrams, in colored chalks, of the origin of the cranial nerves. In the schemata which he thus makes of the nervous system from day to day he always uses the same colored chalk to indicate the same structure at different levels.

A man who has brought much renown to the university is Weismann, the professor of zoology, whose writings on heredity and Darwinism have attracted so much attention. In a recent pamphlet, *Ueber die Hypothese einer Vererbung von Verletzungen*, he makes a strong criticism of the recorded instances of the inheritance of peculiarities of structure acquired by accident or disease. His collected essays have been issued in English by the Clarendon Press, at Oxford, and form, perhaps, the most notable contributions to the theory of evolution which have been made during the past decade.

We came to the conclusion that Freiburg had a most progressive university, and certainly, so far as medicine, pathology, and anatomy are concerned, the post-graduate student will find everything that he could desire.