COE (H.C.)

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# IN MEMORIAM.

## JAMES BRADBRIDGE HUNTER, M.D.

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*New York.*

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THERE is always an element of sadness in reunions, above all in those of our band of busy workers. Linked together as we are by the ties of friendship, by similarity of tastes, and by equal earnestness of purpose, our assembling together after the lapse of a year is like that of a regiment after a great battle, when more than one familiar face is missing. At our annual roll-call we must always write after more than one name the proud epitaph of Tour de l'Auvergne: *Mort sur le champs d'honneur.*

A year ago to-day there met with us one than whom no man had had a more honorable career, none had brighter prospects for years of useful service. In the prime of life, in the fruition of his hopes, holding high positions of trust, with a large and devoted *clientèle*, with his active, restless mind filled with plans for the future, he was felled like a tall tree before the woodman's axe. For a few days he lay upon a bed of pain, and then those busy hands which had ministered to thousands of suffering women, and which we had so often grasped in friendship, were folded for the long rest.

Though solicited to become a founder of this Society, Dr. Hunter preferred to wait until he had reached the height of his fame before he applied for entrance—three years ago. I might dwell upon the social side of his nature, but to us his professional career is of special interest, since from it he derived a name which

presented by the author —

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will not soon be forgotten. Few of us knew him well. He was not one to "wear his heart upon his sleeve." To many he gave the impression that he was cold, reserved, emotionless—an intellectual machine. But, to the keen, active mind was allied a tender human heart which throbbed responsive to other's woes.

Dr. Hunter was in every sense a self-made man. What he gained was by hard work; his position he attained not by chance, but as the result of his earnest devotion to duty. His development as a specialist was gradual and symmetrical. The best gynecologist is unquestionably the one whose special education was preceded and supplemented by a thorough training in general medicine. Dr. Hunter devoted over twenty years to general practice before he became a pure specialist. After serving throughout the late war as a medical officer, he was graduated at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New York, and then pursued a course of study abroad, his intention being to become an ophthalmologist. On returning to New York he became an interne in the Woman's Hospital, a step which changed the entire current of his life. How long and faithfully he served that institution I need not tell you. His training as a gynecologist was probably superior to that of any of his contemporaries. Associated in his earlier years with Sims and Peaslee, and later with Thomas and Emmet, he profited so well by his exceptional opportunities, that he represented all that was best in those honored teachers, the living and the dead. Combining a wise conservatism and respect for tradition with a constant desire to learn and to apply newer and better methods, he formed a connecting link between the past and the present of gynecology—the finest product of that institution with which so many of us are proud to have been connected. To us younger men he was as a tower of strength; he was what a veteran general in the army is to the cadet—a type of what he dimly hopes to become after long years of faithful service.

I have dwelt at length upon his relations to the Woman's Hospital because to disassociate his name from it would be to miss the secret of his success. The hospital made him, but he helped to make the hospital. There he acquired his acuteness as a diagnostician and his marvellous dexterity as an operator. Its wel-

fare was as dear to his heart as his own. A hospital patient was as important to him as the wealthiest lady, and could claim his services at any hour of the day or night. He could not sleep unless he was sure that his patients were doing well; frequently have I known him to visit the hospital after midnight in order to satisfy himself of their condition. This was the keynote of his life—duty first, ease afterward.

As an operator Dr. Hunter was neat, rapid, and absolutely cool. Being a strict disciplinarian, his operations were not marred by delay or confusion. He was calm and composed under the most trying circumstances, and displayed an invariable courtesy toward his assistants; an unkind or angry word I never heard him utter in the operating-room. His tendencies were conservative. He frequently declined to operate when he knew that others would be less scrupulous. If he was not sure of his diagnosis he did not assume a knowledge which he did not possess. This quality was appreciated by general practitioners, by whom he was held in high esteem as a consultant.

Though well informed in the literature of gynecology, Dr. Hunter never paraded his knowledge. His turn of mind was essentially practical, and his writings and public addresses were marked by an entire absence of theorizing. As in action, in speaking and writing he went straight to the point. When he alluded to what he had done it was briefly and unobtrusively. Without possessing the gifts which render more superficial men popular lecturers, he was a successful and highly-respected teacher. Although his tastes were literary, his professional engagements were such as to leave little time for writing; consequently his published articles were comparatively few. During the three years of his connection with this Society, however, he contributed no less than four papers, with the following titles: "Mural Abscesses following Laparotomy;" "Persistent Pain after Laparotomy;" "A Case of Acute Dilatation of the Stomach following Ovariotomy," and "Pregnancy as a Complication of Pelvic Disease." In debate he was clear and forcible, wasting no time in vain repetitions and oratorical flourishes.

Dr. Hunter's tastes were all pure and high. A fine draughtsman himself, he had a keen appreciation of art. Possessing

considerable mechanical skill, he devised a number of useful instruments and appliances, of which he carefully refrained from boasting.

Of his personal character I need not speak to you who knew him so many years. Yet even those who knew him best scarce penetrated the depths of his kindly nature. The suffering poor, who recognized in him their friend and benefactor, utter a nobler tribute to his memory than we can bring. O! friends, there is that which outlasts our ephemeral reputation, our poor writings, which a coming generation will reject as crude and outworn; there is that which is sweeter than success and more enduring than fame, and the tender-hearted satirist never wrote truer words than when he said of the love and gratitude of those to whom we have ministered: "I think we carry them with us past the grave."