

ROE, (J. O.)

Compliments of Dr. Roe.

SIR MORELL

MACKENZIE'S BOOK

— ON —

"The Fatal Illness of Frederick the Noble."

AN INTERVIEW WITH

JOHN O. ROE, M. D.

Reported in the Rochester POST-EXPRESS of
October 20, 1888.

presented by the author



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OF

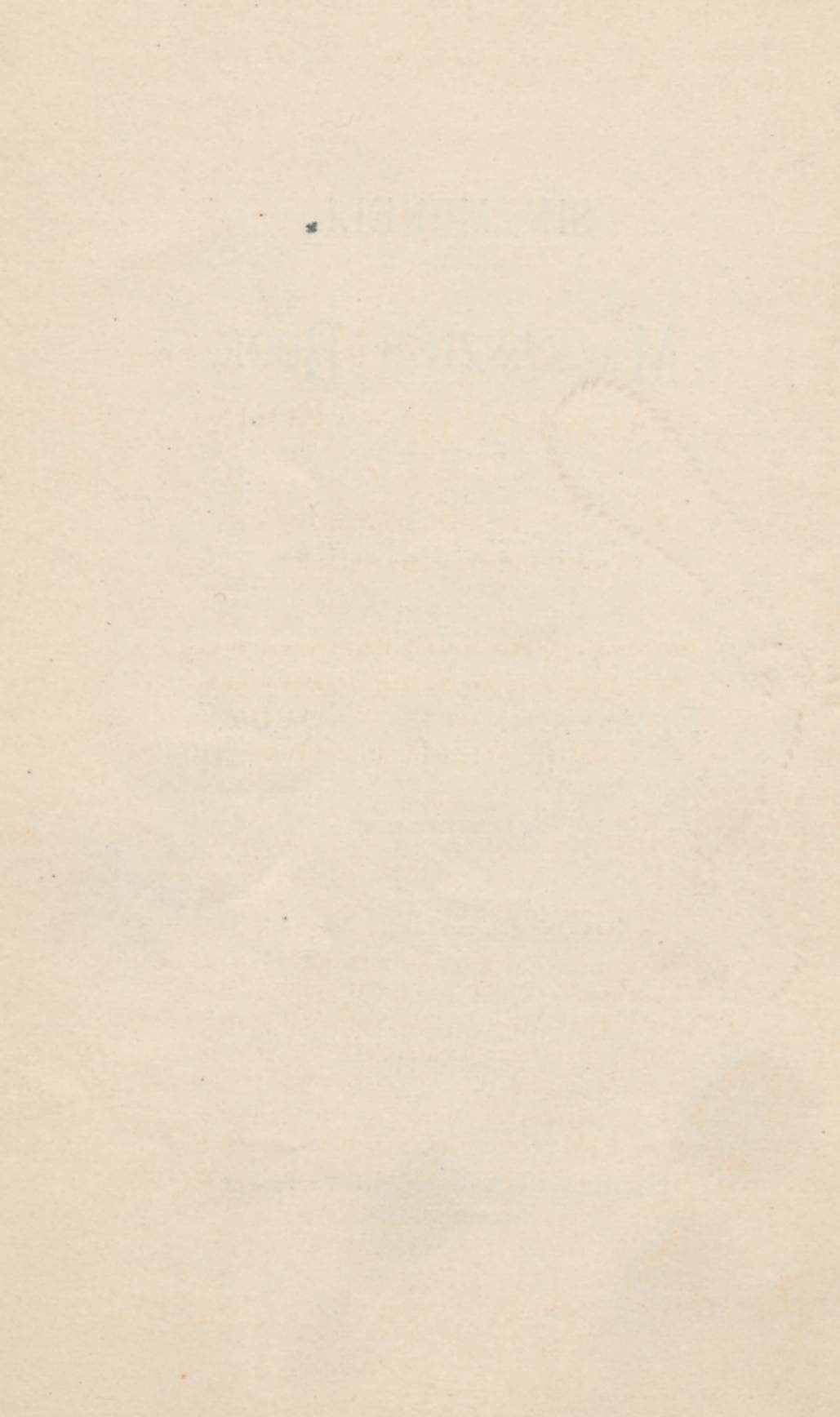
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DR. JOHN O. ROE ON EMPEROR
FREDERICK'S TREATMENT.

**Opinion of a Rochester Physician Who
Has Enjoyed the Intimate Personal
Acquaintance of Sir Morell—The
English Surgeon Defended.**

When in Europe last summer, Dr. J. O. Roe of this city talked over the case of the late German Emperor Frederick with Sir Morell Mackenzie. Moreover, the Rochester specialist has enjoyed the intimate personal acquaintance of the celebrated English surgeon. For these reasons a POST-EXPRESS reporter was sent to interview Dr. Roe on the merits of the quarrel between Sir Morell and the German physicians. The reporter propounded a series of questions which it will be seen Dr. Roe answered frankly and fully.

Following are the queries and replies :

What do you think of Sir Morell Mackenzie's book, written in reply to the charges made by the German physicians ?

The book is a clear, straightforward and concise account of the case, written in a very able and attractive manner. When I was in London the past summer I had the opportunity of discussing the late Emperor's case with Sir Morell, and from the extended description he gave me of the case, I knew quite well beforehand what his book would contain. A professional quarrel is always an unfortunate occurrence and for that reason Dr. Mackenzie has been criticised for having been too aggressive in the matter. But to those acquainted with the history of this case, and having a knowledge of the previous persistent attacks of the German physicians upon Dr. Mackenzie it must be evident that the pure motive of self defence which prompts this work is in every respect justifiable. When we consider that there is no instance in history in which a physician has had so much calumny and abuse heaped upon him, as he truly says, "One must be more or less than man, to bear deliberate and persistent distortion of his works, acts and motives with equanimity."

Was it not a capital mistake in Dr. Mackenzie to side against the German physicians who wished to perform an operation early in the history of the case ?

It was not a mistake for him to discourage so grave an operation as laryngectomy without positive evidence that the disease was of a cancerous nature. I am confident that not one of the physicians who proposed the operation would have had it performed upon himself before a positive diagnosis had been made by a histological or microscopical examination of the growth, as Dr. Mackenzie then and there proposed.

It was at this point that the quarrel began. The German physicians recognized that this examination was the proper thing to be done, but considered the removal of a portion of the growth for this purpose through the mouth an impossibility. But when Dr. Maekenzie succeeded in doing what they had failed to do, they at once recognized that they had met their master, and it was, perhaps, but natural that they should feel chagrined at their own failure, and jealous of his success. This jealousy was, however, without justification, and I must say that the German physicians acted, in this matter, in a very puerile manner. Not one of them was a skilled laryngologist, and but one of them was known in laryngological literature. Dr. Tobold was known in the early days of laryngoscopy. The laryngoscope that he invented during his early days still goes under his name, but he had long ceased to operate, as he himself confessed, and his name is no longer seen in medical literature. Under these circumstances it is simply absurd that any jealousy should arise between these Ger-

man physicians and the man recognized by every physician as the most eminent laryngologist in the world, and especially the most skillful operator in the removal of laryngeal growths.

Should not Dr. Mackenzie have suspected cancer from the start ?

The German surgeons in their own report stated that their diagnosis was made by the process of "exclusion" rather than by any distinct appearances of the growth itself; therefore Dr. Mackenzie was entirely justified in desiring that a more positive diagnosis should be made. The German surgeons were desirous of establishing their diagnosis by opening the larynx from the outside and resorting to the removal of a portion of the larynx where this growth was situated ; but it is clearly shown by their subsequent statements that they intended stopping nothing short of the complete extirpation of the larynx.

Upon what did Dr. Mackenzie base his early opinion that the growth was not of a cancerous nature ?

Upon several careful examinations and three specific reports of Professor Virchow, the most eminent pathologist in Germany, who failed to find any evidence of malignity, and who pronounced the portions of the growth submitted to him to be of benign nature.

Was it not possible that the portions of tissue submitted to Professor Virchow might have been removed from healthy rather than diseased portions of the larynx ?

This is readily answered by referring to Professor Virchow's reports, in which he states that the portions submitted to him were very much diseased, but not of such a character as to excite apprehension. To the skilled laryngologist such an accident is practically impossible. The growth was located on the left vocal cord and the forceps, which was the instrument employed by Dr. Mackenzie, would, after they had passed within the larynx, seize the growth or nothing. The larynx is a hollow organ and as there was no marked swelling of the parts no other portion would come within the forceps' grasp.

During the illness of the late emperor, did Dr. Mackenzie say that the growth in the larynx was of a cancerous nature ?

It will be remembered by those who followed the emperor's case, that after Dr. Mackenzie had removed the growth from the emperor's throat up to the time that he went to England, the growth was entirely under control ; but during his stay in London and at the Isle of Wight, his larynx became very much congested and more or less oedematous.

Following this, there was more or less active reappearance of the growth, but not

in its former location. His royal highness was then sent to San Remo, Italy, where he was visited by a number of German physicians, in consultation with Dr. Mackenzie. And in the early part of November Dr. Mackenzie said, that "although the nature of the growth which has lately appeared has not been determined by microscopic examination, it presents every appearance of cancer."

This final decision was submitted to his imperial highness, the crown prince, a copy of this report was sent to the *Berliner Klinische Wochenschrift*; and it was also published by Dr. Mackenzie in the *Journal of Laryngology and Rhinology*, of which he is the editor-in-chief. Therefore, it is clearly seen that the statements, that Dr. Mackenzie denied the existence of cancer up to the time of the emperor's death, are entirely untrue.

Did the late emperor at any time refuse to submit to the operation proposed by the German surgeons?

At no time did the crown prince consent to the excision of his larynx, the operation proposed by the German surgeons. When this operation was about to be performed in the early history of the case it was prevented by Dr. Mackenzie, and the royal patient stated afterwards that he never would have consented to its performance had he known its true character, the German surgeons having described it to him as mainly of an ex-

plorative character. When afterwards the existence of cancer was positively determined and the excision of the larynx suggested he absolutely refused to have the operation performed.

Do you think that Dr. Mackenzie should have performed the operation of excision of the larynx ?

The operation of excision of the larynx is one of so grave a character that the operation should not be attempted by any surgeon without full consent of the patient and without laying before both him and his family the possibility of its fatal consequences. As I have already stated, this question was plainly laid before the patient as soon as the positive character of the disease was determined, but he peremptorily declined to submit to any such operation. This question was settled by him regardless of the advice of the physicians.

Do you believe that Dr. Mackenzie's treatment was the correct thing ?

Under the circumstances, I certainly do ; and his plan was entirely concurred in by the German physicians after Professor Virchow had pronounced that the microscopic examination of the growth revealed no malignant elements.

Is it not a fact that most patients die soon after the operation of the excision of the larynx, and is there not a probability of the cancer returning after such an operation ?

As I have already stated, the operation is a very hazardous one. Of 103 cases of excision of the larynx for carcinoma or cancer, forty of these have died from the immediate effects of the operation. Of those who survived the immediate effects of the operation, the average period for the recurrence of the cancer was six months. Of the total number of the recorded cases, only nine are reported to have been living twelve months after the operation.

Thus we see that the operation is not a trivial affair, and had the emperor survived the immediate effects of the operation, there would have been the strong probability of its returning in a short time.

The operation tracheotomy in cases of cancer of the larynx, on an average, prolongs the patient's life about twelve months, and, therefore, we see that unless the graver operation of extirpation of the larynx prolongs the patient's life beyond the period of twelve months, it not only fails in its object, but the patient is left with a large and ugly gap in his neck, from which he suffers so much that life, in nearly every instance, becomes a burden to him.

A fellow laryngologist was describing to me, but a short time ago, a patient of his on whom this operation of excision of the larynx had been performed. In describing the sufferings of his patient to me he said: "He suffered the torments of the damned," and that he should not in any future case of cancer of the larynx advise total extirpation.

Then the best authorities declare that the operation of excision is not worth the sacrifice ?

It is so declared by many of our best authorities. In the German hospitals, however, it is frequently performed, in fact, on nearly every case which presents itself. The patients in German hospitals have very little to say about an operation ; for what the surgeon decides to do is not dependent upon the wishes of the patient, and the surgeon is more apt to consider the brilliancy of the operation than the life or comfort of his patient.

Has medical knowledge or skill made any advancement, practically, in the treatment of cancer ?

It practically has not. Many new remedies have been from time to time brought forward as specifics for the cure of cancer. We all remember the "cundurango" craze of a few years ago, and we often hear of wonderful cures by the application of plasters to "draw the cancer out," which are composed of arsenical paste and similar substances ; but as yet no surer method has been found than the knife, and this should be used only with hesitation, and in cases where the results of the operation will cause less suffering than the disease itself. The main advance which has been made on this subject has been respecting its diagnosis by the aid of the microscope.

From your long and intimate personal acquaintance with Dr. Mackenzie do you consider him over confident of his own knowledge and skill?

Not by any means. No one who knows Dr. Mackenzie would form any such opinion. On the contrary, he is a genial, frank and honorable gentleman. He is a man of strong convictions and with a determined purpose, and he has given us the best and most comprehensive work on diseases of the nose and throat, in addition to numerous and valuable contributions to the literature of his specialty. He has the greatest capacity for work of any man I ever knew.

What about Dr. Mackenzie's charges of brutality against the German physicians?

The best answer to this question is found in the confidential statements of the late emperor himself regarding the suffering which he experienced, especially at the hands of Dr. Von Bergmann, whose bungling effort to introduce a canula into the emperor's trachea, resulting in the creation of a false passage, is really susceptible of no charitable explanation.

What about the assertion recently made by the German doctors that Dr. Mackenzie has shown himself deficient in knowledge of anatomy?

This accusation is simply absurd. It would be quite as consistent to charge Professor Virchow with not understanding

how to use a microscope as to accuse a man of Sir Morell Mackenzie's attainments of not knowing his anatomy.

Has Sir Morell the confidence of the surgeons of this country?

He has. There may be, however, a few who will at first take sides in this controversy with the German physicians, believing their statements to be true rather than his. But if any one will take the trouble to read Sir Morell's book, describing the late emperor's case, he will at once come to a different conclusion.

The German physicians have the advantage in this controversy in two or three particulars. In the first place, there are a number of them to swear to each other's statements, whereas Sir Morell has largely to stand alone upon his own statements.

The German nation, also, actuated by a patriotic spirit, stands solidly at their back, whereas no such patriotic support is ever given unanimously by an English or an American constituency.

Sir Morell also, in substantiating his claims has been denied access to the various public documents relating to the late emperor's illness, which have been deposited in the state Archives in Berlin, and which have been freely accessible to the German physicians. And nothing could be more convincing of the spirit of unfairness and we might say of the consciousness of a weak

cause, than the refusal of the German government to allow the book to be distributed in the German empire, by which Sir Morell could vindicate himself before the people.

We sincerely hope that every one, before he passes judgment upon Sir Morell Mackenzie's professional ability, or his personal honor in this controversy, will take the trouble thoroughly to read his book ; and we are confident that such a person will become convinced that the attitude which Sir Morell has assumed in this case, however unpleasant it may seem to be, has been forced upon him by the unwarrantable charges to which he has been made subject.

