

**THE HUNTERIAN ORATION.
DELIVERED AT THE ROYAL
COLLEGE
OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND, ON
THE 14TH OF FEBRUARY, 1879**

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The Hunterian oration. Delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, on the 14th of February, 1879 by George Murray Humphry

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GEORGE MURRAY HUMPHRY

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THE
HUNTERIAN ORATION,

FEBRUARY 14, 1879.

THE
HUNTERIAN ORATION.

DELIVERED AT

The Royal College of Surgeons of England,

ON THE

14TH OF FEBRUARY, 1879,

BY



GEORGE MURRAY HUMPHRY, M.D. F.R.S.

HON. FELLOW OF DOWNING COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL SOCIETY OF SURGEONS, PARIS.
PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,
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TO
JOHN SIMON, C.B., D.C.L. OXON., F.R.S.,
PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS
OF ENGLAND,

THIS ORATION

IS DEDICATED

IN SINCERE RESPECT

FOR HIS LEARNING, HIS TALENTS,

AND HIS CHARACTER.

CAMBRIDGE, Feb. 1879.

THE
HUNTERIAN ORATION.

MR PRESIDENT, MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

THE best memorials of the dead are undoubtedly those which do most good to the living; and the purpose of this oration, I conceive, is not simply to honour Hunter, but, still more, to inspire and rouse succeeding generations of surgeons by reminding them, from time to time, of the salient points of his character, and to endeavour so to fan the fire of his example that it may burn more and more steadily and brightly and may warm us and others to nobler and better work. What could Hunter have more desired than that his memory should be an abiding influence, inducing his followers to appreciate and utilize the stores which he has left? What more suitable supplement to them could be made than a provision for some, even the humblest, effort to awaken his spirit among the custodians of his treasure; and where can that spirit be

better invoked than in the resting place of the works among which it loved to dwell?

Few lives of those who have taken a prominent place in the world's history were so devoid of incident and so full of lesson, so wanting in romance and so abounding in fact; few in which that which may be called accident played so small a part, and in which the man's own character so largely determined the course and events; and, for this reason, few are so well suited for example and instruction as that of him in whose memory we are met to-day.

Sprung from those northern tenants of our island who are inferior to no branch of the human stock in calm firm thinking capacity, and corresponding steadiness of purpose and strength of body; a member of a family which gave evidence of being no mean example of its race—John Hunter spent his earlier years in a manner calculated to promote manual dexterity and bodily strength rather than mental culture; and not till the age of twenty did he apply himself to the calling of his life. By many this would be thought late, too late; but I am disposed to believe that it is about the very best age for entering upon a professional career—a career, that is, which demands the full exercise of the mental faculties. It is the time of life when the mind, though retaining suppleness and impressibility, has acquired sufficient firmness to resist falsities and sufficient strength and independence to guide itself aright, and when it is likely to enter upon a new work with rational confidence and determination, not as a plaything to be toyed with, but as a