

## Texts and Documents

Not only does this evidence destroy the myth of Salernitan medicine having been far and away ahead of Anglo-Saxon medical practice and theory, but it shows, contrary to all previously held views, that England was, in the ninth and tenth centuries, in no way inferior to its continental neighbours in the assimilation of classical medicine.<sup>4</sup>

### NOTES

1. *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, collected and edited by the Rev. Thomas Oswald Cockayne, with a new introduction by Charles Singer, The Holland Press, London, 1961. The Leech Book of Bald is contained in vol. II.
2. *Peri didaxeon, eine Sammlung von Rezepten in englischer Sprache*, herausgegeben von Max Löweneck, Erlangen, 1896.
3. *Passionarius Galeni*, Lugduni, 1526. I am aware that there are manuscripts of this text earlier than the eleventh century, but this does not affect the fundamental argument of this paper.
4. Owing to the non-arrival of micro-films ordered many months ago, some other points of vital importance have had to be omitted, but I hope to deal with them on another occasion.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF THOMAS LAYCOCK, Chiefly written when he was a medical student 1833–5

by

SIR ZACHARY COPE

THOMAS LAYCOCK was one of the pioneers of modern neurology. He was born at Wetherby in Yorkshire in 1812, was educated at Woodhouse Grove Academy (Wesleyan) and became an articled pupil of Mr. Spence, a medical practitioner at Bedale, a small town in Yorkshire, where he remained till 1833. He then went to study at University College which had recently been founded. At that time University College Hospital had not yet been built but there was a Dispensary at which out-patients were seen by members of the medical staff of the College. Laycock kept a diary, fairly regularly during the years 1833–5, but gradually the entries became less frequent and few entries occur up to 1857 when they cease. By the courtesy of Mr. T. J. L. Stirling Boyd, grandson of Dr. Laycock, I am able to give some extracts from this diary which throw considerable light upon the early years of University College Medical School and in general upon the life of a medical student at that time.

September 25. 1833. I entered the Highflyer coach this evening for London. I had £48 in my pocket, a light heart, firm step and cheering though uncertain prospects, and above all I trust I had a deep feeling of my dependence upon God, for life and health and all things. I had the good fortune to travel inside till five o'clock next morning when the entrance of another passenger obliged me to turn out; as I had my ride to London given me by my uncle Cattle I did so very willingly.

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Arrived in town at 7½ o'clock and took a hackney coach for 49 London Street, paid 4/- instead of 1/6, the fellow professing to charge for luggage. N.B. The fellow had no business to charge for luggage. [At that time there was a London Street near University College.]  
September 30. Obtained a recommendation from Mr Hardy and entered at the University of London to the lectures on *Materia Medica* and Therapeutics, Anatomy and Physiology, Anatomical demonstrations and dissections, Chemistry, and the Principles, Practice and Operations of Surgery, with a full resolution to use my advantages to their utmost extent.  
Visited Guys Hospital today, and the Museum and dissecting rooms attached. Milton's description is not applicable to Guys. There were few dire tossings, and a deep groan only when the pain was caused by the surgeon.

Laycock attended the introductory lectures of the various professors and made the following comments on them.

October 5. Heard the introductory lecture on *Materia Medica* and Therapeutics and was surprised to hear the Professor Thompson\* say at the close of his lecture: Gentlemen, I am sorry to say I can only recommend one work safely to you treating of the present subject, and that is my own. I have taken the utmost pains and expended a great deal of labour upon the work and confidently refer you to it as every way calculated to meet your views.  
October 7. Attended the whole day at the University. I have now had an opportunity to judge respecting the merits of my future instructors. Professor Lindley is everything a professor ought to be excepting in his enunciation of the technical terms of the science. He is plain, concise, deliberative and anxious to give the best information he can procure respecting his subject—Botany.

Mr Davies, Midwifery Professor, is familiar in his explanations and exceedingly minute in his remarks, so much so that the merest tyro may understand him; for instance he occupied five minutes in informing the class what was the diameter of a circle, and in other particulars he is the same, his voice and manner are good.

Dr Elliotson, though a celebrated lecturer, is very indistinct in his enunciation and is almost inaudible to the upper benches of the theatre. He has a great name, however, and I believe is a learned man and a Phrenologist.

Dr Turner is an admirable lecturer and an excellent chemist. I am already enchanted with the science and wait with anxiety for the hour of lecture. He is familiar and explicit in his explanations, apt in his allusions and happy in his selection of illustrative experiments; these qualifications, joined to his truly anxious desire to make everyone understand and become acquainted with what he teaches, render him the most finished lecturer in the University. His *Chemistry* has gone through several editions and is an excellent work.

Dr Quain, Prof. of Anatomy and Physiology is inferior only to Dr Turner. His appearance is gentlemanly, his manner dignified and prepossessing, familiar yet inspiring respect. He shows the same anxiety to communicate knowledge in the most impressive yet pleasing manner as the other professors mentioned.

Dr Thompson, author of *Thompson's Dispensatory*, is an old man and his quaintness and self-conceit are consequently very excusable. In giving his introductory lecture he showed no little vanity and his performance today has been exactly in the same style. His manner is pompous and inflated and had more the appearance of a 'set oration' than a familiar discourse. He has published a synopsis of his system of *materia medica* and therapeutics in Latin by Professore Antonio Todd Thomson, which one of the students ludicrously changes into Antonio Toddo Thompsonio. He is dean of the University.

Professor Samuel Cooper the talented author of *First Lines of Surgery*, *Surgical Dictionary*, and last in name as well as in fame as a lecturer, possesses few of the requisite talents for a lecturer on the principles and operations of surgery. He is exceedingly timid and nervous and in his first commencement his voice is faltering, his eyes glance timidly around, he 'hems', shuffles his feet, his legs are in incessant motion constantly twitching and shrinking,

\* Anthony Todd Thomson.

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he has his lecture written on both sides of the paper, and thus frequently confounds the pages, he repeats a sentence two or three times, talks as if his tongue were too large for his mouth and in short is totally wanting in that manly, fearless and unhesitating enunciation, that commanding dignified yet familiar deportment and that cool and deliberative elocution so captivating to a medical student; the fearless and bold he respects; the bashful and timorous he ridicules and despises. The well known talents of Professor Cooper however have such an intrinsic weight as to command him personal respect and regard from his class and his lectures are excellent.

[I] find myself quite contented and comfortable in my instruction. I have nothing before me but the delightful task of acquiring as much knowledge as I possibly can, in what, I have little doubt, will soon be considered the first Medical School in the United Kingdom, perhaps in the world, The Hospital near to the University will soon be finished.

This spirit of elation soon subsided for a few days later we get the following entry:

October 8. Was wearied in Dr Thomson's lecture on *Materia Medica*; his manner is so unengaging as completely to repel the attention and it is with great difficulty I have been able to keep my attention fixed on the subject.

October 10. Attended lectures and wrote and read closely yesterday and today. 'Truly much study is a weariness to the flesh.' I cannot keep awake after ten at night, or if I do cannot study at all.

A little later he paid a visit to the Middlesex Hospital and gives an account of what he saw there:

Nov. 2. Saw Sir C. Bell and Mr Mayo at Middlesex Hospital today where I witnessed an amputation for the first time in a hospital. There is something inexpressively touching in the groans of a man suffering mortal agony. The patient was a German and had caries of the bones of the ankle for eleven months. He endured the pain of amputation with fortitude only uttering three or four unearthly groans when the amputation was half completed. The theatre was crowded with students who expressed by their contorted countenances their sympathy with the poor sufferer. He was cheerful and thankful after the operation.

Mayo is butcherlike and unfeeling in his appearance and seems utterly destitute of sympathy. Sir Charles Bell on the contrary is mild and gentlemanly. When a child was brought in to be operated on, not approving of its performance he gave his opinion accordingly, but being overruled he left the theatre as soon as it was done saying 'Well, I leave today with clean hands and a clear conscience.' The little babe screamed its agony and writhed under the hands of the operator, vainly attempting to get away. The elderly patient merely requested to have the bandage removed from his eyes.

At the time that Laycock went to University College the apprenticeship system was becoming less popular, and the College of Surgeons was not so severe in insisting on it, though it was still required by the Apothecaries Society. The following entry is therefore of particular interest.

November 6. Wrote the following letter to Mrs Outhwaite, Richmond Yorks: 'Dear Madam, You mentioned some time ago your intention of educating your son William for the medical profession. I have always felt a little interest in his success in his studies, and, thinking you might be apprenticing him prematurely should a favourable opportunity occur, or rather one favourable according to your views, I have ventured to write for the purpose of advising you not to apprentice him upon any consideration. I will tell you the reason. Changes have been long agitated in the profession which will come under the notice of Parliament this winter, and it is not improbable that the apprenticeship will be

abolished altogether or very much shortened in its term which at present is five years. I shall be happy at any time to give you any information I may be able to communicate.'

We do not know what was the outcome of this letter but Parliament took no steps in the matter for many years. Laycock was ambitious to do some journalistic work. Though only twenty-one years of age he had confidence in his own abilities as may be judged by the entry for

December 1. (1833)

I have fancied if I could become the editor of a medical journal designed expressly for students I should have a way opened for me. I reasoned long and deeply and at last, last night I resolutely started, bent on the errand to see Churchill the medical publisher. I arrived at last at his shop and then my heart failed me. I paced up and down the streets around his house, uncertain what to do, afraid to venture, ignorant as I was of all business connected with the publication of a journal. At last I mustered courage and, half sick with agitation, knocked at the door. Mr C. received me very kindly, heard me explain my views with attention, and stated candidly as I suppose his opinions. He said he did not like to encourage authors, that most works were losing speculations, that no one encouraged periodicals less than the profession, and that he thought such an one that I intended would not obtain a sufficient circulation, and that he could not recommend the attempt. However, he stated that Dr Lane of Liverpool was about to establish a journal and that if I would furnish papers or translations for the work, if they were thought suitable, they should be inserted, and if the work succeeded I should be paid for them. I have thus one opening.

In the early part of 1834 Laycock made few entries of interest in his diary except that on 21 March he saw Baron Heurteloup perform lithotripsy before an immense crowd of students in the Anatomical theatre at University College.

But later in the year there are two most remarkable entries, the first short and the second long and thrilling. First the short entry which throws an attractive light on a man of genius.

14 June 1834. Dr Grant stated today that Mr Faraday the lecturer at the Royal Institute lectured from no other notes than 'Not so fast' and 'Hands off' written on a card—the former that he might not speak so fast, the latter to check a bad habit of swinging on the table with his hands. Dr Grant informed us that at his recommendation he wrote his sole notes upon a card 'Speak louder' that he might not mumble so.

The second and only other important entry in 1834 was that on:

October 17. 1834. Saw the two houses of Parliament burnt today. I had been to Apothecaries Hall with Ayres and to Coutts and Co for £40, and after having dined in Fleet Street at a Yorkshire House (where by the bye I got a bug upon me) was returning along the Strand about twenty minutes past six. As we turned past St Martin's Church we met a number of people running, and turning in the direction in which they were going saw a red glare just behind Northumberland House, in fact that mansion seemed to be on fire. We resolved, however, to follow the current and followed the crowd down Parliament Street; after we had come within sight of Canning's monument we heard some of the crowd shouting 'Hurrah, it is the House of Lords etc'. We made our way close to the Abbey and saw an immense crowd was assembled already and had blocked farther passage that way. I fearing to be hemmed in by the mob, proposed to go on to Westminster Bridge to which Ayres agreed and we passed through the open space in front of Westminster Hall; very few people were assembled there. As we passed, however, we saw through the large window of the farther extremity of the Hall huge waves of fire incessantly rolling past it and throwing a singular yellow glare upon the crowds which were collecting with amazing

rapidity; we retired to some palisades near the river just below the steps leading up from the river to the bridge. Here we had a tolerable view of the whole and certainly it was horribly magnificent. Huge flames were shooting up into the sky from the House of Lords, far overtopping the towers of the Hall and Abbey, and sometimes even the dense smoke they enlightened. The thick dust which arose when some of the walls fell and the smoke which came up with it was of a bright yellowish red and caused the moon which shone very brightly at intervals, a light red colour; the beautifully fretted towers of the Abbey were gilded by the same extraordinary colours—something like the orange of sunset, but singularly striking as it shone amidst the darkness of the night. Nothing could equal the awful magnificence of the Abbey during the whole; the buttresses of the Bridge and the faces of the hundreds of spectators which covered its walls were equally illuminated while those parts which were not so were quite black. The windows of the houses across the river were glittering as if a bright setting sun were shining on them. And then there were the countless heads of the crowd which had now filled the area in front of the Hall, and Palace Yard. The shouts of the mob and police, the rattle of the fire engines as they were galloping along or were worked by the firemen and soldiers, the crackle of the flames and the constant noise of falling walls and rafters forming a fusion of sound most striking.

We then went to the river side and waded through the mud (it being low water) here we had a view of the whole range. The Chapel of St Stephens or the House of Commons appeared one huge flaming furnace; the flames appeared to be circling round and round its whole extent like water in a vase while shone upon by the sun, while at the same time they rushed through the fine gothic windows and above the roof with prodigious fury. The Chapel of the House of Lords presented a similar appearance. A piece of a gunpowder canister fell into the water close to me. The police and soldiers in the large yard adjoining the river were actively engaged in packing up the books and papers which were thrown out of the windows with the greatest precipitation. Several however were blown into the flames by the high winds which blew from the south-west at the time. The exultation of the mob and their execrable language were very annoying, not to mention being up to the calf in mud.

Laycock still hankered after journalism, as we note by the entry for

- 15 February 1835. Mr Forster the barrister has promised to recommend me to a member of the Committee of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, for employment as writer for the penny Cyclopaedia on Heat, Anatomy and Physiology. If I am fortunate enough to succeed it is likely enough to decide what should be the course of my future life. Have devised lately a work on Method, its necessity and use with rules for its application to the medical cycle of Science and examples taken from the best writers. Such a work if well written would sell.

Also a popular journal of medicine in imitation of the penny publication called *the Doctor*, but in a more respectable style.

Two months after the last entry Laycock tried another literary adventure which was not altogether successful:

Easter Sunday, 9 April 1835. One day last week I saw an advertisement in the Times addressed 'Literary Men' and requiring a person capable of translating 'French into English with elegance and accuracy'. The address was A.B.C. Chapter Coffee House, St Pauls, personally from 10 to 12. I resolved to go and started on Tuesday morning. I was there fifteen minutes before time, but however I strolled about till St Paul's indicated it to want one minute of the time, and I thereupon popped into the Coffee House; I had no sooner seated myself than a tall meagre red-haired gent. came up and asked the waiter for A.B.C. The waiter was totally ignorant of such an address and knew nothing of the person, and the enquirer shrunk back. I however in an undertone (for there is nothing like appearing to give them one's confidence) told the waiter the circumstances and pleased the fellow by whispering to him, for he immediately went to ask the barmaid, and while doing so who



should come in but A.B.C. The very same! The waiter like a civil fellow introduced him to me and we went into a corner to talk on the said affair of the translation. After a little chat I agreed to do the thing for a franc a page and he agreed to come to my lodgings and see how I could translate; by the time we had finished and indeed before we had begun, half a dozen half-starved anxious looking fellows had collected round us in the same and neighbouring boxes, pricking their ears and listening with the deepest interest; I chuckled at the idea of being the first in and the successful candidate, but somehow prematurely, for the fellow has not called upon me to this day. However, I had no sooner said 'Bon jour, monsieur,' when the said half dozen hungry gents pounced upon the poor Frenchman or rather Swiss . . . a volley of exclamations 'Un — sujet' 'I was here the first'. 'A.B.C. I presume Sir', 'I shall be glad to serve you' etc etc. I was glad to go forthwith for it was with great difficulty I could help laughing outright—how they managed I don't know but they seemed very likely to come to blows. Be that as it may the Frenchman thought some of them would suit him better than I should so cut me. It was de Tocqueville.

Though the entries in the diary became scarce in 1835 Laycock thought the passing of the qualifying examination worthy of a note.

8 May 1835. The examinations at the University were finished on Thursday night and I passed the College of Surgeons on Friday (last night). After the doors were closed (precisely at six) the candidates were called up one after the other to do something. I went up in my turn and was stopped by the beadle at the door with the enquiry 'are you prepared with the fee of £22?' I replied 'Yes'. 'In what sort of money?' 'Bank notes and sovereigns' was the reply. 'Are the notes endorsed?' 'No'. 'Endorse them then'. 'Very well'. I entered. Brodie and another were at the table—they looked over my sheets—the form of articles was not filled up—Brodie asked me why. I answered with an excuse—next the hospital practice was not signed—Brodie asked me why again—I was about to make another excuse when Belfour interrupted me and said my paper was in the country.

However as I had all these certificates I passed. After lounging about from six to ten o'clock in the 'funking room' I was called up. Brodie examined me on the base of the brain, the orbit, the physiology of vision, ovarian dropsy and the operation of paracentesis. I paid my twenty two pounds and five shillings to Stone and his lieutenant, and this morning went for my Diploma.

After passing his qualifying examinations Laycock apparently went North to see his friends in Lancashire and Yorkshire. He made some comments on the different aspects of the countryside.

19 May 1835 On Tuesday morning I left Manchester and had a most delightful ride through the vale of Todmorden to Leeds by way of Rochdale, Halifax and Bradford. I could not help noticing the difference in the people on the road—near Manchester they were generally plain, rough-looking and dirty; at Rochdale they were so much so that they appeared like savages, the children having nothing on but a cotton chemise and that sometimes split from top to bottom. Entering the vale of Todmorden there was a manifest improvement in the population. Their houses looked clean and neat, the women cleaner, better dressed and rather pretty, the men tall and handsome in their faces and persons. These characteristics continued through Halifax to Bradford where the women and men were again stunted in their stature, plain in their faces and dirty. At and near Leeds they improved some little but as I pursued my journey from Leeds to Bedale there was a most marked improvement in the purely agricultural districts, the men being stout, robust and well-complexioned, and the women clean and neat.

It is a great pity that Laycock did not keep his diary regularly for we should have liked to hear his comments on his visit to Paris in 1834 and his later visit to Göttingen.

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There are but a few scattered entries during the next few years, but some of them are of interest, as for example the following:

10 July 1835. Have been at Hyde Park seeing the Household and other troops reviewed, the King and Queen etc. The Princess Victoria was opposite me. She is an interesting child and seemed wearied of the pageant. She at last sat down and looked languidly upon the dense mass of spectators. Prince George was in the same carriage—if it were he pointed out as such.

There are two meteorological notes of interest which show the variability of the English climate:

- 4 March 1834. It is now March and there has not been a flake of snow since this time last year. Nay we have scarcely had a frosty night, not a dozen in all since the winter commenced, or rather should have done.
- 23 April 1837. Since the twenty first day of last October there has been an almost uninterrupted succession of heavy storms and severe frost. Seven days ago the ground was covered with snow to the depth of three inches here at York while in some parts the mail coaches stuck fast in it. Today has been excessively cold—What is the reason? Is it the comet of last year? The year 1260 was the year following the appearance of the same comet, and in that year the Mediterranean Sea was frozen over.

It will be noted that the last entry was written in York, for on the 16 February 1837 Laycock had been elected house-surgeon to the York County Hospital. That will explain the reference to the Cathedral in the next entry:

4 June 1837. King William was buried last evening. The minute bell of the Cathedral tolled during the night and awoke me two or three times just as I was beginning to sleep.

In 1840 Laycock published his *Treatise on the Nervous Diseases of Women*, and in the next year he makes an entry concerning it.

4 September 1841. I have published my treatise on nervous diseases; it appeared in November last. It has gone through the hands of the critics and with some credit, but sells badly, I suspect. I have written some letters on political medicine in the Dublin Medical Press besides one or two cases and leading articles. I have come forward as a medical reformer. I have succeeded tolerably well in practice; I have joined the Tory party in politics. In religion I am still undecided except that I hope by the blessing of the God of my fathers to do good while I live.

In July 1842 Laycock was downhearted. He was in practice but had only received £118 for the last six months. He was in love with a young lady in a better social position and saw no prospect of being able to marry her. Finally he notes:

21 July 1842. No hope of gaining A. and after a severe mental struggle—after experiencing more anguish than I ever felt in my life before—I give up all hope.

There now occurs a gap of ten years in the diary but on 7 December 1852 it is recorded that Laycock was married on 27 April 1848 to Anne Lockwood, that it was a happy union, and that in 1851 a son, the firstborn, had perished in his birth. A new house had been built and was occupied for the first time on 29 January 1852.

As is well known, Laycock was in 1855 elected professor of the practice of physic in Edinburgh University—the only Englishman who has occupied that chair. There

is a solitary entry in 1857 which enables one to see that his position there was not altogether easy.

4 December 1857. Simpson came to me from the College dinner last night and followed me into my bedroom. I had retired early from the dinner. He renewed his propositions about my consenting to the appointment of a Professor of Clinical Medicine. Hinted at compensation, that the appointment of Gairdner would fill my class room etc. I expressed my determination not to concede. He said the patrons would do it in spite of me—I had no authority or right by virtue of my commission. I replied I would try it. He said I should have to carry the question to the House of Lords. What is Simpson aiming at in all this pertinacity of purpose to drive me from clinical teaching and have an independent Professor of Clinical Medicine? Is it not that he wishes to withdraw from obstetric practice and become a pure consulting physician? If so then the flotation of the Royal Commission, the mention of Gairdner is all a blind. When by means of Gairdner's friends he has carried his point with the Town Council he will resign his own chair and be a candidate for the Clinical Professorship.

I once again begin to diarize under strangely altered circumstances. I have been Professor of the Practice of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh since November 1855 and have just closed a six weeks struggle with Professors Syme, Christison, and Bennett who have made an \* \* attempt to isolate me in Clinical Teaching. Dr S. has been my only supporter in the Faculty but now I am victorious he apparently sets on foot another scheme more disastrous to me in its results if perfected than any other.

So that if my surmises be true as to his ultimate objects he has only worked with me of late to keep me in as his warming pan.

Here I am in the full front after \* \* academic and professional. On Monday last I gave my first lecture on practical psychology to a large audience. I have it \* \* to revolutionize metaphysics—to do that for it which Bacon did for physics. In every branch of medicine I develop new views and new ideas. On every hand with few exceptions I meet with opposition, distrust, lukewarmness. This is natural. And yet there is a feeling of justice in the public mind towards me which will in the end find utterance.

The last entry occurs four days later and bears on the same subject.

8 December 1857. A letter in the Scotsman this morning in advocacy of Dr S's views as to clinical professor being appointed by the patrons and hinting at the extra-academical school as the source of new light. Dr S. came in and I called his attention to it. He said Mr Carmichael had mentioned it to him (query, wrote it) and he believed it was old Dr Gairdner's, the father of Dr W.T.G.? I said it was a very impudent letter, whoever wrote it—whereupon Dr S. disappeared.

It is quite clear that Laycock was a determined man and that he had to fight against considerable opposition in Edinburgh. Yet he managed to do some remarkable work, and in 1859 published *Mind and Brain*, a book which ranks as a pioneer work in modern psychology.

\*\* Indecipherable words omitted.