

EPILEPSIA

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SIR WILLIAM GOWERS †.

Our patron — Sir *William Gowers* — has passed away.

Not long ago he promised our periodical an article from his pen; this honour is, alas! lost to us forever.

The death of one so singularly gifted and so rich in experience is doubly sad; not only is his own wonderful experience lost, but also the inspiration and stimulus afforded by him to other workers. The keen interest which Sir *William Gowers* took in the work of others, combined with his wide knowledge and brilliant critical faculty, account for his widespread influence on the progress in neurological research made in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the passing of this man, eminent among many eminent English neurologists and epileptologists, we sustain a loss which it is difficult to believe the coming years can repair.

More competent authors have written of his marvellous professional ability and striking personality; to us is left the honour of recalling the valuable contributions made by him to the study of epilepsy.

In epilepsy as in paraplegia *Gowers'* keen and accurate observations have done much to extend our clinical knowledge of the disease. Although his book on epilepsy was not the first scientific treatise on the subject, yet the original method in which he describes the symptomatology of the fit itself and the important diagnostic data to be deduced therefrom makes it of unique value to the neurologist, whether he agrees or not with *Gowers'* deep analysis of the sequence of convulsions in different parts of the body. *Gowers*, probably on account of training and personal inclination, did not operate but he did much for

the introduction of surgery in the treatment of epilepsy. The occasion on which, confident in his exact scientific diagnosis, he persuaded *Horsley* to operate for tumor in the medulla is perhaps unique in medical history.

This great neurologist was probably seen at his best in the hospital when we, his students, went round with him to see the cases. There a few clear trenchant remarks in his somewhat harsh voice sufficed to describe the important clinical features of each case. As a clinician he was tireless; twenty visits paid to an uncomplicated case of petit mal in no way diminished his watchfulness for some new symptom which might be of diagnostic value in the case. But besides this he was a keen therapist particularly in dealing with epilepsy, taking a close personal interest in his patients. Most wonderful of all in a neurologist, his optimism never failed.

The same sad fate which befell *Hughlings Jackson* and *Frankl-Hochwart* also befell *Gowers*. As *Hughlings Jackson* watched his dearest relative die of Jacksonian epilepsy, and *Frankl-Hochwart* himself died of that form of brain disease, the study of which had been his magnum opus, so *Gowers* for two years prior to his death suffered from motor and sensory paraplegia associated with cortical disease: a field in which he has earned as great and enduring laurels as in his work on epilepsy.

THE REDACTION.