

**THE FATAL ILLNESS
OF FREDERICK THE
NOBLE**

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The Fatal illness of Frederick the Noble by Sir Morell Mackenzie

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SIR MORELL MACKENZIE

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"Mark now how a plain tale shall put you down."

Henry IV., Part I., Act ii., Scene iv.

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P R E F A C E.



IT has been a painful task to me to write the following pages, not because there is anything in the charges recently brought against me by some of my German colleagues, which I have the slightest difficulty in meeting, but because I feel most keenly the unseemliness of a controversy which must necessarily cause additional suffering to hearts which have already been tried beyond the common lot. Although the pamphlet issued from the Imperial Press at Berlin embodies accusations which amount to a charge of malpraxis, I should have been content, so far as I am personally concerned, to leave my professional reputation to the judgment of impartial men. Under the special circumstances of the case, however, I feel it to be a duty which I owe to those exalted persons who honoured me with their fullest confidence through thirteen months of terrible anxiety, to justify the trust which they placed in me. My position, as will easily be understood, was one of the greatest difficulty, owing not only to the overwhelming responsibility of the case itself, but to what I may call its external complications. I know of no instance in history in

which a physician, who simply tried to do his duty to his patient to the best of his ability, has had to endure so much calumny and misrepresentation. I say nothing of the abuse and even threats which were liberally showered on me, for to these things I was utterly indifferent, and I can, therefore, claim no credit for despising them. But one must be more—or less—than man to bear deliberate and persistent distortion of his words and acts and motives with equanimity. It is true that the accusations were in many instances absurd, and even self-contradictory, but my assailants evidently acted on the cynical maxim attributed to Voltaire, "Throw mud enough and some of it is sure to stick;" and from the nature of the case there were few, even among professional men, who could form a correct judgment on the facts as presented to them. Two things supported me in what would otherwise have been an intolerable position. First, my own consciousness of perfect integrity of purpose; secondly, the absolute trust and delicate consideration with which from first to last I was trusted by my noble-hearted patient. No physician could wish for a patient more obedient to his injunctions, more full of "sweet reasonableness," than the ruler of the mighty Empire of Germany.

As there is a good deal of plain speaking in the following pages, and as the conduct of some of my German colleagues is discussed with a freedom which may seem unprofessional to those who have not read

the attack which these gentlemen have made on me, I take this opportunity of saying that I have advanced nothing here with respect to my hostile colleagues which has not been publicly stated already, nor have I made any allegations except in self-defence in reply to charges against myself. I regret extremely that the controversy should have assumed such a tone, but I may remind my readers that I am in no way responsible for it.

In conclusion I may be allowed to refer to some of the difficulties under which I have laboured in drawing up this vindication of my professional character. I have been unable for obvious reasons to allude to several points, which, though not bearing on the purely medical aspect of the case, were yet most important factors in determining the course which was pursued. I think I have also some grounds of complaint against the Prussian Government, which, whilst allowing my adversaries free access to the State Archives, refused me the same privilege. As I have shown in the body of this little work (p. 207), these "official sources" are of a very miscellaneous character; but among them there are important documents relating to the case of the late Emperor which, in justice to me, should not have been kept from the public. Amongst others may be mentioned the protocols of Professor von Schrötter, Dr. Krause, and myself, drawn up in November 1887, and more especially the written refusal of the Emperor (then Crown Prince) to submit to any other external operation

than tracheotomy. The protocols which it is proved that Professors Gerhardt and von Bergmann sent in to the Haus-Ministerium would also furnish interesting reading, and would show what really were the views of these gentlemen before I was summoned to Berlin. The first Report of Professor Virchow would also be highly instructive. I can only hope that these documents and other matters bearing on this historical case will some day be made public. I at least have no reason to fear the full light of day.

M. M.

19, *Harley Street, W.*,
October, 1888.

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