

**A TREATISE ON FOREIGN
BODIES IN SURGICAL
PRACTICE, VOL. I**

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A Treatise on Foreign Bodies in Surgical Practice, Vol. I by Alfred Poulet

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ALFRED POULET

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IN
SURGICAL PRACTICE

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BY

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VOLUME I.

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PREFACE.

No surgeon has hitherto thought of collecting in one book all the material which is scattered throughout the annals of science concerning the question of foreign bodies. However, there are few subjects which are more worthy of attracting the serious attention of practitioners. All those who have been brought in contact, in the course of their practice, with the numberless difficulties produced by the presence of foreign bodies, know how uncertain the diagnosis often is, how sudden are the symptoms, and how often the treatment requires skill, address, and varied and extensive learning. The treatises and journals are also, in some sort, encumbered by the interesting cases which have accumulated for centuries, although no one has drawn practical deductions from them, or has rendered them useful in surgery.

The pathology of foreign bodies has, undoubtedly, not arrived at that stage of perfection toward which the efforts of lovers of our art tend. But is it not worth our while to endeavor to collect all these materials in one work, to make a synthesis of the notions which have been slowly acquired, and to place landmarks in the path of progress?

Fortified by the experience of past generations, I have, therefore, undertaken a work which has no analogue in our classical literature. Apart from a few more or less complete monographs, and from a few useful, general ideas, we possess no important guide, and experience teaches that the concise precepts of our classical works are frequently insufficient to endow the surgeon with the boldness and positiveness demanded in the treatment of foreign bodies.

Take a student who has passed through all the medical grades, and is on the eve of entering civil or military service: place him in the presence of even the simplest cases of foreign bodies—a small stone or a pea in the ear, a metallic splinter in the cornea, or a catheter broken in the urethra—and the anxiety and embarrassment which he manifests will show how insufficient is his surgical knowledge on this point. He has been taught to amputate, resect, or disarticulate the limb *secundum*

artem; he knows the principal arterial trunks, and all the exceptional occurrences, but there is every reason to believe that he will be a very novice in the solution of this problem which may be suddenly presented to him, both in the city and country.

Read the thousands of curious cases published by authors, and you will see how frequently the address and ingenuity necessary to overcome the difficulties presented in such cases have been wanting, and how useful a knowledge of similar cases may be.

Amussat has written that, in order to know how to arrest a hemorrhage, it is necessary to have tied the arteries in animal vivisections. This precept, with whose justice I was struck at an early period, is equally applicable to foreign bodies. Of what use can a lithotrite, a laryngeal forceps, or an œsophageal curette be in the hand of an inexperienced practitioner, if he has not learnt its management on the cadaver and upon animals?

It would be very easy to fill up this hiatus in the curriculum by associating the didactic teachings, which are given almost solely at the present time, with methodical exercises and practical demonstrations. This is, undoubtedly, very useful to those who adopt this plan; their confidence is then not based upon illusions, which very soon vanish, and give way to numerous deceptions. They can form an accurate idea of the value and efficacy of the measures at the disposal of our surgical arsenal, which is so perfect at the present time.

This book, despite its imperfections, will be a guide in this direction, and may also be valuable to practitioners who, when thrown on their own resources, can consult it with some profit. It is for this reason that I have thought it well to publish a certain number of original cases, which will impress the reader more forcibly than the most judicious precepts.

But the work must not be looked upon as an undigested compilation of cases taken at random, or a long series of statistics with indefinite percentages. This is readily understood if we remember that authors usually publish only the curious cases, and frequently only the fortunate ones. I have not been led into the error of basing my views on a number of exceptions.

The history of foreign bodies comprises three principal groups: The first, which forms the subject of this book, involves the foreign bodies of the natural passages. The foreign bodies which enter the economy by "effraction," or are fixed to the surface of the parts, form two other groups, but they will be considered somewhat later.

I have endeavored to give a clear exposition of the various accidents produced by the arrest of foreign bodies, and to collect the various

therapeutic measures into natural groups. When I have thought it useful, I have reproduced specimens, in order to throw into relief the pathological lesions, the varieties of the foreign bodies, and especially the instruments which are chiefly in vogue in France. I desire publicly to thank my collaborator and friend, M. Dauphin, whose woodcuts adorn this work.

In conclusion, I will have attained the object of all my endeavors if this work proves of service.

A. POULET.

PARIS, December, 1878.

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