

THOMAS LAWRENCE

M.D., P.R.C.P. (1711-83)*

BY

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FEW Presidents of this College can expect to attain to a more detailed immortality than that conferred by the roll with which the College list begins and a paragraph in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. In every century, however, there are a few who are more generally remembered, either for their contributions to medicine or for the part they played in wider spheres. If Thomas Lawrence belongs to this select company it is because he was the friend of Dr. Samuel Johnson. That in itself tells us much about his qualities of learning and character: it is also responsible for the fact that we can construct an unusually detailed picture of him. For we are able to see him not only as a physician, and President in somewhat troublous times, but against the background of everyday life in cultured eighteenth century circles. We find him helping Johnson through his troubles, and receiving letters from Johnson about his own. We see him to some extent through Johnson's eyes. And because he was Johnson's friend we have accounts of him from several sources, which would not have been available to us but for that association.

Thomas Lawrence was born in 1711 into the kind of family which, from generation to generation, sends its sons into the learned professions, in which from time to time one of them occupies some outstanding position. The Lawrence family can be traced playing such a part from the middle of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth. The first member of whom there seems to be any record is Thomas Lawrence's great-great-grandfather, Sir John Lawrence, who died in 1604. In the collateral line to Thomas Lawrence's is Sir John's son, Henry (1600-64), who was a Member of Parliament and author of various religious books, and his son, Edward or Henry, was the Lawrence to whom Milton addressed his sonnet beginning 'Lawrence of vertuous Father vertuous Son'. Milton's lines throw some light on the character of this cousin, for the sonnet ends:

*What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice
Of Attick tast, with Wine, whence we may rise
To hear the Lute well toucht, or artfull voice
Warble immortal Notes and Tuskan Ayre?
He who those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.*

Thomas Lawrence's grandfather was another Dr. Thomas Lawrence who was physician to Queen Anne and physician general to the Army. He had

* Address to the Osler Club on the occasion of its 146th meeting, held at the Royal College of Physicians on 24 January 1957.

Sir Russell Brain

nine children, one of whom, yet another Thomas, was a Captain in the Royal Navy and married Elizabeth Soulden of Kinsale in Ireland. Our Thomas Lawrence was their second son and was born on 25 May 1711, in the parish of St. Margaret, Westminster. He began his education in Dublin, where his father was then stationed, and continued it in Southampton. In October, 1727, he entered Trinity College, Oxford, as a commoner. He stayed at Oxford until 1733, taking his B.A. in 1730 and his M.A. in 1733, and then decided to take up medicine. He came to London and became a student at St. Thomas's Hospital and a pupil of Dr. Nicholls who was a popular lecturer in anatomy. Nicholls, who was also a Fellow of this College, was twelve years older than Lawrence. A strong friendship grew up between the two men. Lawrence is said to have 'loved Nicholls as a brother and revered him as a parent', and he wrote a Latin life of him; while Nicholls added to the second edition of his *De Anima Medica* a dissertation 'De motu cordis et sanguinis in homine nato et non nato' which he dedicated to Lawrence.

Lawrence took the degree of bachelor of medicine in 1736 and doctor of medicine at Oxford in 1740, and when Nicholls resigned from his post as anatomical reader at Oxford Lawrence was appointed to succeed him and lectured in anatomy at Oxford from 1745 to 1750, and also in London where he took over the house in Lincoln's Inn Fields which Nicholls occupied until his marriage with Mead's daughter. Lawrence's lectures were popular until, says Hawkins,

Hunter, a surgeon, arrived from Scotland, who, settling in London, became his rival in the same practice, and having the advantage of Dr. Lawrence, in his manner of enunciating, together with the assistance and support of all his countrymen in this kingdom, and moreover, being a man whose skill in his art was equal to his pretensions, he became a favourite with the leading men in the practice of physic, and in a few winters drew to him such a resort of pupils, as induced Dr. Lawrence to give up lecturing, and betake himself to the general exercise of his profession.

Lawrence was admitted a Candidate of this College in 1743 and a Fellow in 1744, in which year he was Goulstonian Lecturer. He was Censor five times between 1746 and 1759 and Registrar from 1747 to 1766 inclusive. He delivered the Harveian Oration in 1748, the Croonian Lectures in 1751, and was appointed Lumleian Lecturer in 1755. He was named an Elect in 1759, was Consiliarius 1760, 1761, and 1763 and was elected President of the College in 1767, holding office for seven years.

LAWRENCE AS A PHYSICIAN

Lawrence's surviving medical works comprise the *Hydrops*, described as 'disputatio medica', published in London in 1756, the *Praelectiones Medicae*, published in London in 1757, and another edition of the same published in

1759. In the same year he published the *De Natura Musculorum*, also in London. There are seventeen volumes of Lawrence's manuscripts in the College, of which seven comprise a course of lectures dictated by him and taken down by a Mr. Clark. These are in English, together with 'three lectures on digestion read at the College' and 'a comment upon three lectures in Dr. Nicholls's compendium'. The remainder are in Latin, and in some ways the most interesting of these is the *De Natura Animalium*, because we have the manuscript of Johnson's corrections of Lawrence's Latin in this volume. (Figs. 2, 3.)

The *Hydriops* is cast in the form of an imaginary conversation between Hamey, Ent and Harvey and contains no original contribution to the subject. The 1757 edition of the lectures illustrates Lawrence's knowledge of anatomy and shows that he regarded it as fundamental to the understanding of medicine, though the essential link between the two, morbid anatomy, was at that time missing. This volume is concerned with disorders of the nervous system, and contains a very detailed account of the naked-eye anatomy of the meninges and the brain. The diseases discussed include apoplexy and epilepsy, and Lawrence stresses the importance of heredity as a cause of the latter. I shall now quote this at some length, partly because it well illustrates Lawrence as a physician, but even more because in it he paints a charming eighteenth century conversation piece, for it includes a report of a conversation which Lawrence had with Mead, Crow and Nicholls.

It is a time-honoured opinion, derived from the beginnings of theoretical medicine, that each man has a bodily constitution peculiar to himself, a nature of his own: for it may be seen that by a certain natural law, providing for the preservation and communal health of animals, whatever is now useless or about to fall into corruption is removed and, on the other hand, any deficiency is supplied and this passes into nourishment for the body. Furthermore, it is so arranged that the kind of food which is most salutary to some is swiftly vomited back by others or passes out in excrement; that some take dense and solid base metal with the greatest of ease while others suffer difficulty in respiration unless they breathe finest ethereal gold; that each has his own most suitable way of life, since some, because of a feeble physique can bear only an easy and sheltered life while to others a rugged life of toil is vital. In the muscles of athletes the close-knit and taut threads are signs of bodily firmness and strength while the thin threads of their muscles who are afflicted with tumours are unequal in strength to any great and hard work. Again, in the perception of external objects, the senses in some men are more alert and acute, in others so dull as to disregard that administration of vital functions which we find more diligently cared for in the former, more negligently in the latter.

Turning these matters over in my mind, I recalled a certain discussion which took place many years ago in Mead's house. For, since some physicians of a lower order were pretending to membership of the College, claiming everything for themselves, he felt it would be a good thing to consider its Statutes concerning the method of

investigation into the extent to which anyone who sought the right to practise medicine were proficient in that art; that is to say, to establish in what place he should be ranked among the physicians. For, since the experiments of chemists and the discoveries of anatomists had greatly extended the foundations of medicine since the time at which the old College Statutes were established, it seemed that a permanent method of examination should be proposed.

When, therefore, on the day after that on which this matter was discussed in the College, I came by chance to greet Mead, I found him sitting in the library, discussing the state of the College with Crow and Nicholls, furious, indeed, and finding it hard to tolerate those arguments which had been advanced, by a man undoubtedly learned and well instructed, in a meeting of medical colleagues, against Galen's books on the Elements and Temperaments.

'I fear,' said Mead, than whom there is none more sincere, 'that I may seem to have replied more peevishly and brusquely than justly to an opinion which was, surely, rashly blurted out by a well-informed man, on matters which Galen, no less eruditely than stylishly, had written on the nature of the human body; that is, the books on the Elements and Temperaments in which, if there are many things which may appear a little strange to the improved science of this age, yet there have been more things handed down, which were obtained from a knowledge of the nature of animals and from which we may gather much to be distinguished and expounded in the question of diseases.

First, Galen, investigated the nature of the smallest of that which scientists term an element—to see, that is, whether all things exist, act, or experience merely as a simple entity or, rather, consist of many elements, each of which has its own force and power. Which question, indeed, inasmuch as it concerns the nature of animals, he answers both elegantly and very briefly, following the most wise Hippocrates, with an argument drawn from the nature of disease.'

This is an apposite introduction to the lecture, since the bulk of it consists of a commentary on Galen's teaching on constitutional types. All this may seem rather platitudinous today, but it is interesting to see the influence of Harvey at work. Lawrence is clearly groping after an interpretation of physical constitution in terms of the circulation of the blood. He is seeking to give an account of 'that bodily constitution which the Greeks call well-tempered'.

The well-tempered man, [he says] is midway between fatness and thinness; he is also brawny and having his muscles tensed to a moderate degree, striking a mean between the rugged constitution of athletes and the delicacy of women, with a bodily temperature of moderate heat. For, indeed, in a constitution such as that attributed to a well-formed man, the whole apparatus of the heart's muscles restores vigour, sensation and tension, since, also, by the power of the heart and arteries, the elements of the blood, condensed and mixed, form a liquid proper and suitable to permeate the smallest vessels. There will also be room everywhere in them for the liquid to be received easily. Hence, there is due distribution of blood and a swift passage of nourishing moisture into their places. It follows that, by unobstructed ways, the viscera

Thomas Lawrence

situated in the abdomen, the stomach, the intestines, the liver, the spleen, the kidneys, to which is entrusted the digestion of food, the conduction of this into the vessels of the animal and, not least, the removal of waste matters—these organs are all supplied in this way with the active liquids whereby the strength may be sustained and sufficient to fulfil its functions. Therefore, the well-tempered man has an appetite, digests and distributes the results of digestion. He enjoys acute and watchful senses and an alert and active mind.

He also discusses the significance of the distribution of hair on the body.

Lawrence had a philosophical interest in the nature of the mind and its link with the body. He was interested in the physiology of vision and hearing, and was something of a psychologist. He recognizes the part played by attention and gives the following instance. 'Someone busy in a public place has a thousand men's voices ringing in his ears, but he hears the voice of him alone with whom he speaks, for to this alone his mind attends.' The following passage shows how much the body-mind relationship interested him:

However, in the states of mind under consideration, one must put aside that yearning after good and shunning of evil which, since they are related to no single thing, either pleasant or unpleasant, bring about no sensation in the nerves, no tension or relaxation in the rest of the body but rather, derive discernment in general matters of good and evil from that perception of a stimulated mind which is immediately and promptly excited to evil or good and is accustomed to effect the greatest changes in the performance of animal functions. For it is because of this dominating sense that, through diverse emotions, man blanches, blushes, experiences violent motions of the heart and is accustomed sometimes to swoon. However, it seems that, in postulating anything about these three things—the soul, first and foremost, the body and the vital spirit, I must be more explicit.

Concerning the nature of the soul and its connection with the body, by reason of which the mind perceives the things presented to it, while the soul itself and by its own power alone, divorced from the material life and in no way subjected to our senses, does whatever it has to do, I do not venture to speak; its own force and power, however, are shown very plainly in the results; the manner and nature in which they are effected are certainly not mechanical and, thus, are not to be explained by physical causes.

However, this union is allowed by which the soul is so joined to the body that it is affected by external things brought before the senses, for the use and purpose of every sense, and the body is impelled, in its turn, to various motions at the command of the soul; this we see in the voluntary contraction of the muscles, the physical process of which is completely unknown to us. There have been some, however, who have tried to shed light on this matter, wrapt in the deepest obscurity of nature, by discussing subtly and elegantly the natures of things impressed upon the sense and thence at the direction of the nerves, brought to the perception of the soul.

Lawrence's *Harveian Oration*, delivered in 1748, was merely a commemoration in good Latin of his illustrious predecessors, as was the fashion

in those days. He was also the author of the life of Harvey in Latin prefixed to the College edition in quarto of Harvey's works, and on 3 March 1766, was voted £100 for writing this.

THE SIEGE OF WARWICK LANE

During the first year of his Presidency Thomas Lawrence was rapidly plunged into the turmoil of events which reached a climax in the famous siege of the College. It was a long tradition of the College that only graduates of Oxford and Cambridge could become Fellows. But this practice was not incorporated in the bylaws until 1765. There was already a good deal of dissatisfaction with the College on account of this restriction, particularly among the graduates of Scottish universities, headed by William Hunter. In January, 1767, the malcontents founded the Society of Collegiate Physicians. Sir William Duncan was elected President and Fothergill and Hunter stewards. On June 26th, the President, Sir William Browne, and Fellows being assembled in Comitia at the College house in Warwick Lane, nine of the Licentiates, led by Duncan and Hunter, sat down among the Fellows. When the Licentiates refused to withdraw, the President, by the advice of the College solicitor, told them that unless they withdrew quietly he would be under the necessity of sending for constables, whereupon Dr. Hunter declared that if any man or constable offered to lay hands upon him to turn him out of their house (adding, for this is our house), he would run him through the body. The tumult increasing the President found it necessary to dissolve the Comitia.

The next meeting of Comitia was due to be held on 24 September. A number of Licentiates dined at the Queen's Arms Tavern and some of them began to assemble in the courtyard of the College house some time before the Comitia was due to begin. The President and Fellows ordered the outer gate to be locked and the key to be delivered to their solicitor, whose name was Lawrence also. When the rebels were refused admission they burst open the gate and got into the courtyard and Sir William Duncan and a blacksmith advanced to the hall door, which was locked. The blacksmith and another then, with sledge-hammers and crowbars, broke open the hall door and two other doors leading to the room where the President and Fellows assembled, and Sir William Duncan and the other Licentiates then took their places with the Fellows. Their names were taken by the Registrar and the President dissolved the Comitia, after which they withdrew without doing any further violence. Another Comitia for the election of officers was due to be held on 30 September and this time the College prepared to defend itself. They made sure that the gate of the courtyard was well secured and procured a body of constables to keep the peace. The President and Fellows, taking the precaution

Thomas Lawrence

of arriving early, got into the College without any difficulty. These measures were successful. Sir William Duncan and his fellow Licentiates met again at the Queen's Arms Tavern and collected a pack of ragamuffins to the number of forty. But this time the blacksmith refused to break open the gate of the courtyard and the rebels had to content themselves with sending a letter to the President demanding admittance to vote in the election of officers of the College. When the letter arrived the Elects were withdrawn to choose a new President and they elected Thomas Lawrence.

The sequel is probably well known to you. Fothergill and Archer obtained a mandamus requiring the College to admit them to the Fellowship, but their claim was disallowed by the Court of King's Bench. The uproar slowly subsided, as uproars do; the Society of Collegiate Physicians went on, and its relations with the College gradually improved until two members of that Society were elected Fellows, and this led the Society to permit the election of Fellows as its members, and on 1 November 1786 the President of the College, Sir George Baker, dined with the Society of Collegiate Physicians. In 1794 the Society of Collegiate Physicians handed over its functions to the body of Licentiates at large and never met again. It was not until 1834 that the Fellowship was thrown open to graduates of other universities than Oxford and Cambridge.

LAWRENCE AND JOHNSON

When Lawrence was a pupil of Nicholls he met Bathurst by whom he was introduced to Johnson. We can learn much about their relationship from Johnson's letters, in which the first reference to Lawrence occurs in a letter to Miss Boothby written on 30 December 1755. 'The Doctor (i.e. Lawrence) is anxious about you. He thinks you too negligent of yourself; if you will promise to be cautious, I will exchange promises, we have already exchanged injunctions'. This referred to a letter which Miss Boothby had written to Johnson in which she said: 'I beg you would be governed by the good Doctor while you are sick; however, when you are well, do as you please.' On the next day Johnson wrote to Miss Boothby again.

Give me leave, who have thought much on medicine, to propose to you an easy, and I think a very probable remedy for indigestion and lubricity of the bowels. Dr Lawrence has told me your case. Take an ounce of dried orangepeel finely powdered, divide it into scruples, and take one scruple at a time in any manner; the best way is perhaps to drink it in a glass of hot red port, or to eat it first and to drink the wine after it. If you mix cinnamon or nutmeg with the powder it were not worse; but it will be more bulky, and so more troublesome. This is a medicine not disgusting, not costly, easily tried, and if not found useful, easily left off. I would not have you offer it to the Doctor as mine. Physicians do not love intruders; yet do not take it without his leave. But do not be easily put off, for it is in my opinion very likely to help you, not

likely to do you harm; do not take too much in haste; a scruple once in three hours, or about five scruples a day will be sufficient to begin, or less, if you find any aversion. I think sugar with it might be bad; if syrup, use old syrup of quinces; but even that I do not like. I should think better of conserve of sloes. Has the Doctor mentioned the bark? In powder you could hardly take it, perhaps you might bear the infusion?

Johnson wrote to Miss Boothby yet again on the next day, 1 January 1756. 'Dearest Madam, Nobody but you can recompense me for the distress which I suffered on Monday night. Having engaged Doctor Lawrence to let me know, at whatever hour, the state in which he left you; I concluded when he staid so long, that he staid to see my dearest expire.' Two days later he was writing again about his own health: 'Dearest Dear, I am extremely obliged to you for the kindness of your enquiry. After I had written to you Doctor Lawrence came and would have given some oil and sugar, but I took Rhenish and water, and recovered my voice. I yet cough much, and sleep ill. I have been visited by another Doctor; but I laughed at his Balsam of Peru.'

The prescription of the powdered orange peel solves a problem which was later to puzzle Boswell who saw Johnson put into his pocket the oranges from which he had squeezed the juice and asked him what he did with them, and Johnson refused to tell him.

The first recorded letter from Johnson to Lawrence was written from Lichfield on 17 June 1767, and asked Lawrence's advice about Mrs. Chambers, who suffered from dropsy, and about whom Johnson sent numerous medical details. There was a further letter three days later with the same object. On 27 February 1773, Johnson wrote to Dr. Taylor: 'I perceive myself now not the match that I once was for wind and weather. Dr. Lawrence laughs at me when he sees me in a greatcoat.' On 22 May of the same year he wrote to Mrs. Thrale describing Lawrence's treatment of him, and in an undated letter to Mrs. Thrale in 1774 he says: 'I have done exactly as Dr. Lawrence ordered, and am much better at the expense of about 36 ounces of blood.' In the same year, on 20 December, he wrote to Warren Hastings recommending to his attention Chauncey Lawrence, who was then in India. Johnson said: 'His Father is now President of the College of Physicians, a man venerable for his knowledge and more venerable for his virtue.' Another of Lawrence's sons, Soulden, became a judge. His scrupulousness is illustrated by the fact that his will contained a direction for the indemnification out of his estate of the losing party in a suit in which he considered that he had misdirected the jury.

On 19 January 1775 Boswell wrote from Edinburgh to Johnson to ask his advice with regard to a case in which he was appearing. A Dr. Memis, a physician at Aberdeen, complained that in a translation of the charter of the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary a phrase, which in the original was in one place



Fig. 1.
Portrait of Thomas Lawrence from the monument in Canterbury Cathedral.

disputationis cuiusdam, quo ~~plurimum ad hanc~~
~~annos in~~ Medici adibus est habita, cum enim ~~plurimum~~
 nonnulli ordinis inferioris nihil non sibi ar-
 rogantes Collegii societatem affectarent, visum
 est eisdem statuta sua, de ratione exigendi, quan-
 tum quisque, qui ius medicinam facendi pote-
 ret, in arte illa valeret, expendere, nempe ut con-
 staret quo loco inter medicos numerari deberet
 Cum enim Chymicorum experimentis et Anatomicorum
 inventis Medicina fundamenta multum operat dilata-
 ta eo tempore, quo Collegii statuta ~~non~~ ^{valere} sibi
 sancta, rationem examinandi immutandam vel
 postulare videbatur.
 Cum igitur pestis die eius diei, quo de hac re in
 Collegio agebatur, forte Medicum salutandi causa
 adirem, offendi eum in Bibliotheca recentem cum
 Gouio et Nicholio de statu Collegii disputantem,
 Stomachantem quidem et coepereferentem ea, qua
 die superiore, a viro docto sane, et liberaliter
 institute contra Galeni Libros de Elementis et
 Temperamentis in medicorum consociationum con-
 ventu essent disputata.
 Vereor, inquit ~~meatus~~, quo nullus candidior, ne-
 morosius breviusque iusto respondisse vixi videret
 sententia, temere certe a viro erudito effuditur, in
 ea qua Galenus, non minus docte quam eleganter
 de natura corporis humani conscripsit libros
 scilicet de Elementis atque Temperamentis, in quibus

Fig. 2.
Page 2 of Lawrence's *De Natura Animalium*.

This is the most perfect copy of the Treatise, and as such
 which Dr. Johnson permitted to whom the paging and
 marginal has been used for the purpose of assisting
 Referrers to the parts the corrections, which he suggested
 on the approved Paper.

<p>31 Casus qu. p. 28</p> <p>26 11 In vobis, que se pro ob- jectantur, perspicuenda</p> <p>13 cum opo. Siquidem enim animus percellitur</p> <p>21 pro habeat mollem ob- vata. S. 29</p> <p>28 pro vobis sine meatus quibus cum moy. f. q. h. e.</p> <p>p. 30</p> <p>17 suggerendi - S. 30</p> <p>23 pro fit - f. h. e.</p> <p>p. 31</p> <p>14 quid sit dignitatem 21 Vobis confidendi ab offitio 22 pro obiectum arguit, hanc enim vobis q. d. h. e.</p>	<p>p. 32</p> <p>3. S. 32 vobis - cum pro his.</p> <p>22 - et que mollem ob- vata in regit</p> <p>24 pro cum fitum - f. h. e. fitum enim</p> <p>5. 140 (male numerat que paginas)</p> <p>23 pro autem fere vobis.</p> <p>30 Principium gubernat non vobis cum se ventum et quidam fit, cum gubernat et aut opo. h. e. vobis mollem Recti quidem</p> <p>p. 41</p> <p>11. M. h. e. carceribus, non vobis vobis h. e. h. e. h. e. h. e.</p>
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Fig. 3.
Part of Dr. Johnson's manuscript
corrections of *De Natura Animalium*.

rendered physician, was applied to him rendered Doctor of Medicine. Dr. Memis brought an action for damages on the ground that the designation given to him was an inferior one, tended to make it suppose that he was not a physician, and, consequently, to hurt his practice. The case was heard by Boswell's father who dismissed the action, and Dr. Memis was appealing. Johnson consulted Lawrence to whom he wrote on 7 February 1775: 'Sir. One of the Scotch physicians is now prosecuting a corporation that in some public instrument have stiled him Doctor of Medicine instead of Physician. Boswell desires, being advocate for the corporation, to know whether a Doctor of Medicine be not a legitimate title, and whether it can be considered as a disadvantageous distinction. I am to write tonight, be pleased to tell me.' He evidently received a reply rapidly because he wrote to Boswell the same day as follows:

I consulted this morning the President of the London College of Physicians, who says, that with us, Doctor of Physick (we do not say Doctor of Medicine) is the highest title that a practitioner of physick can have; that Doctor implies not only Physician, but teacher of physick; that every Doctor is legally a Physician, but no man, not a Doctor, can practice physick, but by licence particularly granted. The Doctorate is a licence of itself. It seems to us a very slender cause of prosecution.

On 29 August 1775 Johnson was writing to Mrs. Thrale about his foot. 'This sorry foot! and this sorry Dr. Lawrence, who says it is the gout! But then he thinks everything the gout; so I will try not to believe him. Into the sea, I suppose, you will send it, and into the sea I design it shall go.' This was a reference to the fact that Johnson intended to go to Brighthelmstone.

By 1777 his health was deteriorating. He wrote to Mrs. Thrale on 15 January:

On Saturday I dined with Sir Joshua. The night was such as I was forced to rise and pass some hours in a chair, with great labour of respiration. I found it now time to do something, and went to Dr. Lawrence, and told him I would do what he should order, without reading the prescription. He sent for a Chirurgeon and took about twelve ounces of blood, and in the afternoon I got to sleep in a chair.

At night when I came to lie down after a trial of an hour or two, I found sleep impracticable, and therefore did what the Doctor permitted in a case of distress; I rose, and opening the orifice, let out about ten ounces more. Frank and I were a bit awkward; but with Mr. Levet's help, we stopped the stream, and I lay down again, though to little purpose, the difficulty of breathing allowed no rest. I slept again in the daytime in an erect posture. The Doctor has ordered me a second bleeding, which, I hope, will set my Breath at liberty. Last night I could lie but little at a time.

On 26 July 1777 Johnson wrote to Lawrence asking his opinion on two epitaphs. Chapman notes that one was no doubt Goldsmith's. Johnson habitually wrote in Latin to Lawrence and perhaps wanted his opinion on the Latinity of these epitaphs. In August Johnson was trying ipecacuanha on the

recommendation of Akenside, but, 'Lawrence indeed told me that he did not credit him, and no credit can I find him to deserve.' On 13 October he wrote to Dr. Lawrence asking his permission to take musk as a remedy for his distress in the night and three days later he wrote to Mrs. Thrale saying that he had given it a trial without much success. Next month he was trying valerian.

In January 1780 Lawrence lost his wife, and on 20 January Johnson wrote to him one of his finest letters. It begins with an account of Johnson's cough for which he said: 'I have bled once, fasted four or five times, taken physick five times and opiates I think six.' He then goes on to say that he knows from his own experience what the loss of a wife means.

He that outlives a wife whom he has long loved, sees himself disjoined from the only mind that had the same hopes, and fears, and interests; from the only companion with whom he has shared much good or evil, and with whom he could set his mind at liberty to retrace the past, or anticipate the future. The continuity of being is lacerated. The settled course of sentiment, and action is stopped, and life stands suspended and motionless till it is driven by external senses into a new channel. But the time of suspense is dreadful. . . . Of two mortal Beings one must lose the other. But surely there is a higher and a better comfort to be drawn from the consideration of that Providence which watches over all; and belief that the living and the dead are equally in the hands of God, who will reunite those whom he has separated, or will see that it is best not to reunite them.

I am Dear Sir,
Your most affectionate and Most Humble Servant

Sam: Johnson.

In April 1780 Johnson was dining with Lawrence and on 11 April he wrote to Mrs. Thrale. 'On Sunday I dined with poor Lawrence, who is deafer than ever.' He goes on to add that Lawrence had read Fanny Burney's *Evelina* three times over. There is a further reference by Johnson to Lawrence's deafness in a letter to Mrs. Thrale on 27 July 1780. 'On Sunday I went with Dr. Lawrence and his two Sisters in law to dine with Mr. Gawler at Putney. The Doctor cannot hear in a coach better than in a room, and it was but a dull day, only I saw two Crownbirds, paltry creatures, and a red curlew.' On 1 August 1780 Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale that Lawrence had drunk tea with him and that they had discussed Mr. Thrale's health, and on the 18th he wrote to Lawrence about Thrale's health and gave Lawrence some advice about purging and bleeding him. Between January and March 1782 there are a series of letters from Johnson to Lawrence describing his own symptoms, sometimes in Latin and sometimes in English, culminating in a letter written on 21 March in Latin verse. Johnson must have been a trying patient, for Mrs. Thrale said that Lawrence told him one day that if he would come and beat him once a week he would bear it: but to hear his complaints was more than man could support.

Thomas Lawrence

By this time Lawrence's health also had begun to fail. His deafness, which had begun in middle age, was by now an increasing disability. We are told that in 1773 he began to suffer from angina pectoris. Mrs. Thrale wrote to Fanny Burney giving her an account of a meeting she had with Lawrence when she found him with Johnson in February 1782. 'I put my nose into the old man's wig (Dr. Lawrence's) and shouted: but got none but melancholy answers—so melancholy that I was forced to crack jokes for fear of crying.'

In her *Anecdotes* Mrs. Thrale gives a more detailed account of what may have been the same occasion.

The conversation I saw them [that is Johnson and Lawrence] hold together in Essex Street one day in the year 1781 or 1782 was a melancholy one, and made a singular impression on my mind. He was himself exceedingly ill, and I accompanied him thither for advice. The physician was however, in some respects, more to be pitied than the patient: Johnson was panting under an asthma and dropsy; but Lawrence had been brought home that very morning struck with the palsy, from which he had, two hours before we came, strove to awaken himself by blisters: they were both deaf, and scarce able to speak besides; one from difficulty of breathing, the other from paralytic debility. To give and receive medical counsel therefore, they fairly sate down on each side a table in the Doctor's gloomy apartment, adorned with skeletons, preserved monsters, etc., and agreed to write Latin billets to each other: such a scene did I never see! 'You [said Johnson] are timidé and gelidé'; finding that his friend had prescribed palliative not drastic remedies. 'It is not *me*,' replies poor Lawrence in an interrupted voice; 'tis nature that is gelidé and timidé. In fact he lived but a few months after I believe, and retained his faculties still a shorter time.

The deterioration in Lawrence's health led his family to persuade him to retire both from practice and from London. He would have liked to go to Oxford, but, to quote the *Gentleman's Magazine*,

it being objected that that city was not so eligible as some others, for a family that would consist chiefly of women, he at length fixed upon Canterbury, where he hoped that the Cathedral would supply him with a society as suitable, if not so numerous, as that of Oxford.

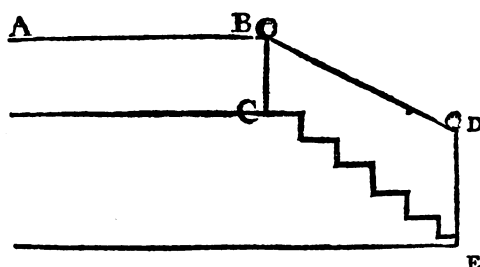
Lawrence therefore moved to Canterbury in June 1782. By that time we are told, slight but repeated strokes had nearly deprived him of the power of speech and entirely of the use of his right hand. On 4 August 1782, Johnson wrote to Dr. Taylor: 'Poor dear Dr. Lawrence is gone to die at Canterbury. He has lost his speech and the action of his right side, with very little hope of recovering them.' On 16 April 1783 he wrote to Lawrence: 'Since your departure I have often wanted your assistance as well as your conversation. I have been very ill, but am now better, and it would be a great comfort added to my recovery if I could hear that you are better too. We can now do nothing more than pray for one another. God bless for Christ's sake.'

Lawrence died on 6 June 1783. He was buried at the church of St. Margaret at Canterbury and a memorial tablet, with a portrait in relief, was placed in Canterbury Cathedral by his surviving children (Fig. 1).

LAWRENCE THE MAN

What kind of man was Lawrence? Material from various sources enables us to form a fairly clear picture of his personality. An Oxford man, he possessed that background of classical knowledge which has distinguished so many Presidents of this College. He was an excellent Latinist, and though he submitted his Latin for Johnson's correction, there is some evidence that Johnson, on one occasion at least, returned the compliment. He was interested in natural phenomena, apart from medicine, and capable of making and recording exact observations upon them. This is well illustrated by a communication which he made to the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society in the form of a letter to William Heberden 'On the effects of lightning in Essex Street on 18 June 1764'. The storm which struck London and the surrounding country on that day seems to have made a great impression, for there are four consecutive communications on lightning in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society including one by Heberden himself. Lawrence lived in Essex Street and he traced in great detail the course taken by the lightning along the houses as it could be inferred from the damage done. The reactions of various occupants of the houses are carefully noted.

The house last mentioned has a door on the east side, which opens into a garden looking into the Temple; from this door there are several stone steps down to the garden. On the left hand of the steps is an iron rail. I have represented the steps and rail as well as I can in the figure.



AB is an iron rail supported by an iron baluster BC; BD is the same rail continued down the side of the steps, and supported at D by the iron baluster DE. The lightning, conducted (as I suppose) by the

Fig. 4. From Lawrence's article in the *Philosophical Transactions*, 1764.

The discharge, having run along the roofs of several houses, finally came to earth along some iron railings at the side of some stone steps and two of the steps were broken. Lawrence's communication is illustrated by means of a diagram of the steps and the railings (Fig. 4). Heberden's paper, which is concerned with the effects of the same storm at South Weald in Essex, ends with a plea in support of the lightning rods which had been suggested by Benjamin Franklin in 1752.

Mrs. Thrale says of Lawrence that 'he was a mine of strict piety and profound learning, but little skilled in the knowledge of life or manners, and died without having ever enjoyed the reputation he so justly deserved.' His piety is illustrated by the following reference to him in *Thraliana*:

Doctor Stonehouse began the World an Infidel, but was inclined to examine into the Evidence of Christianity by attending Doctor Lawrence's Medical Lectures: Stonehouse was bred to Physick, and went thither like many more for Information: but speaking there one Day somewhat slightly of Religion—I would, says Lawrence gravely that Physicians went on as sure Grounds as Divines. The Expression struck Dr. Stonehouse so forcibly that he studied Divinity and fairly took Orders.

Hawkins throws light on Lawrence's handicaps.

In his endeavours to attain to eminence, [he writes] it was his misfortune to fail: he was above those arts by which popularity is acquired, and had besides some personal defects and habits which stood in his way; a vacuity of countenance very unfavourable to an opinion of his learning or sagacity, and certain convulsive motions of the head and features that gave pain to the beholders and drew off attention to all that he said. It will hardly be believed, how much such particulars as these obstruct the progress of one who is to make this way in a profession: a stammering, or a bad articulation, spoil an orator, and a disgusting appearance hurts a physician.

It is possible, however, that Lawrence's tics actually commended him to Johnson, who suffered from the same affliction in an even more severe form.

A man's hobbies often tell us most about him and happily we learn from Hawkins what Lawrence's spare-time pursuits were.

He delighted much in naval architecture [said Hawkins] and was able with his own hands, and a variety of tools of his own contrivance, to form a model of a ship of war of any rate; first framing it with ribs and such other timbers as are requisite in a ship for service, and afterwards covering it with planks of the thickness of a half crown piece, and the breadth of about an inch, which he fastened to the ribs with wooden pins of a proportionable size, and in this manner of working he completed many such models, elegantly wrought and most beautiful in their forms. He was also a lover of music and was able to play his part in concert on the violoncello until hindered by deafness. He had a younger brother named Charles, a solicitor of great practice, who also played on the violoncello, and having been a pupil on that instrument, of Caporale, was the best performer on it of any gentleman in England. About the year 1740, I was used to meet both the brothers at a tavern in Gracechurch Street, where

Sir Russell Brain

was a private concert, at which none but such as could join in it were admitted. Many of those who frequented it were great masters, namely, Mr. Stanley, who played the first violin, the above Signor Caporale, Vincent, the hautboy player, and Balicourt, who performed on the German flute, the rest were organists and gentleman performers.

So we take leave of a man who was not only a physician and President of this College, but also a gentle and conscientious scholar. We picture him 'rising at very early hours, that he might secure leisure for study in the quiet part of the day,' being called reluctantly from his workshop to see a patient, and perhaps at his happiest at the tavern in Gracechurch Street playing the cello by candlelight at 'a private concert, to which none but such as could join in it were admitted.'

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