

Bigelow (Henry Jacob)

Obituary notice.

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FRIDAY MORNING, OCT. 31, 1890.

## DR. H. J. BIGELOW DEAD.

### *THE GREAT SURGEON PASSES AWAY AT NEWTON.*

The Son of a Boston Physician and Himself  
a Leader in His Profession—He Figured  
in the First Experiment With Ether to  
Relieve Pain.

Henry Jacob Bigelow, M.D., LL.D., who held a leading rank among the most prominent surgeons in the United States, died at his summer home in Newton yesterday afternoon. Dr. Bigelow was the son of Jacob Bigelow, M.D., LL.D., and was born in Boston, March 11, 1818. He received his early training at the Boston Latin School. Having completed his preparatory course here he entered Harvard College, from which he graduated with the class of '37. Under his father's direction he now began the study of medicine, attending also the regular medical course at Harvard. At the end of three years, his health being impaired, he went to Europe, but returned in 1841 to receive the degree of M.D.

The newly-fledged physician went back to Europe immediately after receiving his diploma, and remained there three years, a greater part of the time being spent in Paris. He visited other important centres of medical instruction on the continent and in Great Britain. Having returned to Boston, he was, in 1845, appointed a teacher of surgery in the Tremont st. medical school, succeeding to the vacancy caused by the resignation of Dr. Reynolds. This position he held until the school was merged with the medical school of Harvard University. In the spring of 1846 he was appointed surgeon to the Massachusetts General Hospital, and he maintained a connection with that institution for a long number of years.

In 1849 the nearly simultaneous resignation of Dr. J. C. Warren and Dr. George Hayward of the surgical professorships then held by them in Harvard University, created a vacancy to which after a union of the teaching in the various departments of surgery and clinical surgery under a single professorship, Dr. Bigelow was appointed. For a period of nearly 20 years he filled this chair without an assistant.

A few months after his becoming connected with the Massachusetts General Hospital the first public experiments in the administration of ether to produce anaesthesia during surgical operations took place in that institution. The important part played by Dr. Bigelow in these early experiments, and the fact that he made the original announcement of the discovery of modern anaesthesia in a paper published

in November, 1846, linked his name permanently with the history of this great benefaction to humanity.

As a writer Prof. Bigelow's influence has been far reaching and effective. Apart from addresses, etc., his contributions to medical science have all contained distinctly new and important matter. One of his works, an octavo volume (illustrated) on the mechanism of dislocation by the flexion method, published in 1869, is the best treatise extant on these injuries. It has changed the modes of practice in respect to them and is well known to the medical profession. He has been a copious contributor to the literature of his profession, and in addition to his eminent scientific attainments, possessed a grace of language, an elegance of illustration which render interesting the dryest details of the healing art.

Among the other more important of his papers and addresses, the following may be mentioned: "Fragments of Medical Science and Art," an address delivered before the Boylston Medical Society of Harvard University in 1846; "Insensibility during surgical operations, produced by inhalation," read before the Boston Society of Medical Improvement Nov. 9, 1846, an abstract having been previously read before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Nov. 3; "Discovery of anesthesia ether and chloroform; a compendium of their history, surgical use, dangers and discovery;" "Anaesthetic agents; their mode of exhibition and physiological effects," written at the request of a committee of the American Medical Association and reprinted from the transactions of that body in 1848.

Other articles written by him are: "Alleged Death from Ether," "Centennial Article on the History of Anesthesia," "On the Employment of a New Agent in the Treatment of Strictures of the Urethra," "On a New Physical Sign," "Rhigolene; a Petroleum Naptha for Producing Anesthesia by Freezing," "New and Successful Operation for Ununited Fracture," "Fractures and Dislocations of the Elbow Joint," "Practical Views on the General Propriety of Passive Motion," "An Introductory Lecture" which was delivered at the Massachusetts Medical College in 1849: "Notes from Clinical Lectures on Surgery," delivered at the same place in 1851; "Science and Success," a valedictory address delivered to the medical graduates of Harvard University in 1859; "Medical Education in America," the annual address delivered before the Massachusetts Medical Society in 1870; "Dislocation of the Hip," "Litholapaxy, or Lithotrixy, with Evacuation," "The True Neck, its Structure and Pathology," "Turbinated Corpora Cavernosa," "New methods and treatment of exstrophy of the bladder and of erectile tumors."

Dr. Bigelow's attainments in medical science have won for him membership in leading American and European societies, among which are the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Societe Anatomique, the Societe de Biologie, and the Societe de Chirurgie of France. Dr. Bigelow leaves a sister, and one son, who is himself a prominent physician in this city.

