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13—EDWARD NETTLESHIP, F.R.S., F.R.C.S., 1845-1913*

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EDWARD NETTLESHIP, born at Kettering, Northamptonshire, was the fourth son of John Henry Nettleship, solicitor, of that town. His mother was Isabella, daughter of the Rev. James Hogg, rector of Geddington, and sometime head master of Kettering Grammar School. His paternal ancestry has been traced through six generations to one John Nettleship, of Bole, Notts., whose will was proved in 1730-1. John had two sons by his first wife, from one of whom, Richard, is descended the line, which, so far as sons are concerned, has been terminated recently by the death of the only survivor of Edward Nettleship's sibship. John and his son Richard lived at Bole, but the succeeding four generations were resident in Gainsborough, where Henry John Nettleship, Edward's father (the eldest of a large family) was born in 1807. The home of Edward's grandfather in Gainsborough, where his widow and her five daughters were living, is referred to in Vol. I of Mozley's "Reminiscences of Towns, Villages and Schools" as "A Sunlit Spot," and the mother and daughters are described in eulogistic terms, Edward Nettleship was one of seven children, six of whom

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were boys. The only girl died in early infancy and the youngest boy died at the age of 15. Of the five brothers who grew to manhood, four, including the subject of this memoir, became distinguished in their several professions. The eldest, Henry Nettleship, held the Corpus Professorship of Latin, at Oxford, for 15 years, and was a man of high attainments and wide interests. The second son, John Trivett, achieved reputation as an animal painter, and as the author of the first serious study of Browning's poetry. The fifth son, Richard Lewis Nettleship, Fellow and Tutor of Balliol College, Oxford, was a man of remarkable personality and unusual gifts; his untimely death in 1892, from exposure in the Alps, cut short a career of great promise. All three died before their brother Edward.

Henry John Nettleship (Edward's father), described as rather shy and reserved in character, was a man of considerable intellectual power, with a developed taste for poetry and music; both these traits were manifest in varying degrees in his sons, especially in the eldest, who was an accomplished pianist. His wife, who, at her death at Oxford, at the age of 81, was alluded to as the "Mother of the Nettleships," was a woman of strong character, and although physically an invalid her will dominated the household. She was a firm believer in strenuous intellectual exercise, which she preached and practised in the training of her sons: her strongly marked asceticism led to her sons being debarred from all forms of social frivolity and even from many outdoor games during their boyhood, though they were permitted, and had facilities for, such amusements as riding. Edward Nettleship received his early education as a day boy at Kettering Grammar School. His three elder brothers had obtained scholarships at their respective public schools, but his parents considered that Edward was better suited for studies other than classics and mathematics. The head master of the grammar school at that time, Mr. Turle, was an enthusiast in natural history, and imparted his enthusiasm to his pupil who had already manifested a liking for such pursuits. One result of this was that the lad led rather a solitary life out of school, spending his Saturdays and half-holidays in exploring the woods near his home, and becoming familiar with the habits of birds and other woodland creatures. Geddington Chase, near Kettering, was a paradise for the young naturalist, and the head keeper, whose cottage was in the midst of the wood, was a firm friend and ally and gave him welcome assistance in his search for birds' nests and other objects of interest. Cranford Rectory, near Kettering, which had a large half-wild garden, was also a favourite haunt. The boy's love of outdoor pursuits led to the decision that he should become a farmer, and after leaving the Grammar School in 1861 he spent some months on a farm at Kimbolton. Thence he went to the Royal

Agricultural College at Cirencester. His record for the next few years is one of extraordinary activity and the accomplishment of a prodigious amount of study. In 1863 he became a member of the Royal Agricultural College. He then entered as a student at the Royal Veterinary College, Camden Town, and at King's College, London; and in 1867 obtained the diploma of Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries. In the same year he became a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and shortly afterwards was appointed Professor of Veterinary Surgery at the Cirencester College, in succession to Mr. William Hunting, but did not retain this post for more than a year. In 1868 he obtained the Membership and in 1870 the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons. Shortly before this he had joined the London Hospital where he became a dresser and, at a later date, assistant to Sir (then Mr.) Jonathan Hutchinson. This was the beginning of a long and intimate friendship, which was terminated only by Hutchinson's death not many months before that of his former pupil.

In 1867 or 1868 Nettleship began to give special attention to ophthalmology. He entered as a student at Moorfields Eye Hospital, becoming one of Hutchinson's clinical assistants and an associate and close friend of Waren Tay, acting in the same capacity. In later years Nettleship and he were colleagues on the staff of the hospital. In May, 1871, Nettleship was appointed Curator of the Museum and Librarian to the hospital and held this post for 2½ years. Ocular pathology was then in a comparatively early stage and the large amount of material at Moorfields afforded abundant scope for investigation. Nettleship made good use of his opportunities and published several papers of importance, The "Curator's Report" in Vol. III of the *Ophthalmic Hospital Reports* appears to be the earliest of his writings upon ophthalmic subjects. In 1873 he was appointed Medical Superintendent of Ophthalmia Schools at Bow, opened by the Local Government Board in an unused workhouse, for the reception and treatment of cases of ophthalmia and other chronic diseases, drafted from the West Surrey District Schools at Anerley; this was a very difficult post and only his tact and organizing power enabled him to fill it successfully. A year later he was asked by the Local Government Board to inspect and report upon the Metropolitan Poor Law Schools in reference especially to the prevalence of ophthalmia and the measures for dealing with it. This report was published in 1874 and led to some much-needed reforms in the care of pauper children. About the same time he wrote a long and valuable paper embodying the results of his investigations concerning granular conjunctivitis, which was published in the *British and Foreign Med.-Chir. Review* for 1874-75.

Nettleship's first appointment on the staff of a Hospital was at

the South London Ophthalmic Hospital (now the Royal Eye Hospital). He resigned this post in 1878, when he was elected Ophthalmic Surgeon to St. Thomas's Hospital and Lecturer on Ophthalmology in its Medical School, in succession to R. Liebreich. The latter, appointed Ophthalmic Surgeon to St. Thomas's when the new buildings on the Thames Embankment were opened in 1871, was the first specialist in charge of the Eye Department. During his tenure of office the Clinic increased rapidly and was attended by a large number of patients. Under Nettleship's *régime* it became more widely known and by his efforts was brought to a degree of perfection previously unequalled in this country. Nettleship remained on the staff of the Hospital until 1895. His work there was carried out with conspicuous ability and his reputation as an Ophthalmic Surgeon and as a teacher became firmly established. His merits and business capacity were so highly esteemed by his colleagues that in 1888 he was asked to accept the position of Dean of the Medical School at a somewhat critical period of its history. Although an exceptionally busy man, he undertook the heavy additional duties which this office entailed and carried them out with his usual thoroughness for three years. His name and reputation are still cherished and honoured by those who were associated with him in the Hospital and School either as colleagues or pupils.

The next important incident in Nettleship's professional career, and one peculiarly gratifying to him was his election as Assistant Surgeon to Moorfields Eye Hospital in 1882. His was the last election to the staff of that Hospital conducted on the old plan, whereby every Governor of the Hospital (there were several hundreds) had to be provided with a copy of the candidate's application and testimonials. The writer of these lines remembers very well assisting Nettleship in this onerous task. Five years later Nettleship became Surgeon to the Hospital and remained on the active staff until 1898. On his retirement he presented a considerable sum of money to the Committee of the Hospital to be expended in the purchase of instruments or apparatus for pathological or physiological investigation. Other Hospital appointments held by Nettleship though for comparatively brief periods, were those of Ophthalmic Surgeon to the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, and Assistant Surgeon to the Hospital for Skin Diseases, Blackfriars.

Early in 1880 a number of Surgeons and Physicians interested in Ophthalmology decided to found a Society for the advancement of this branch of medical science, and the Ophthalmological Society of the United Kingdom came into being, with Mr. (subsequently Sir) William Bowman as its first President. Nettleship took a prominent part in the preliminary arrangements and became the first Surgical Secretary of the Society, his medical colleague being Dr. (afterwards Sir) Stephen Mackenzie. From the outset Nettleship took a keen

and active interest in the Society and never relaxed his efforts to further its success; many of his most important papers were read before the Society and are published in its *Transactions*. In 1895, after serving as a member of Council and as Vice-President, he was elected President of the Society and filled this post with distinction for two years. He was also interested in the formation of the Section of Ophthalmology of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1912, and was one of the Vice-Presidents chosen at its foundation. He read several papers before the Section and took an active part in its proceedings.

In 1881 the International Medical Congress was held in London; the Ophthalmologists had a large and successful section presided over by Mr. Bowman. Nettleship was one of the Secretaries of this section (his colleague being the late W. A. Brailey) and contributed largely to the success of the meeting. The Congress met again in London in August, 1913; on this occasion Nettleship was a Vice-President of the Ophthalmological section and took a keen interest therein. He also entertained some of the visiting members of the Congress at Hindhead. Little more than two months later he had passed away. In 1897 Nettleship was chosen as President of the Ophthalmic Section of the British Medical Association for the annual meeting held in Montreal.

In 1909 he delivered the Bowman Lecture before the Ophthalmological Society "Upon some Hereditary Diseases of the Eye." In 1910 he was appointed a member of the Board of Trade Departmental Committee on Sight Tests for the Mercantile Marine. After two years of arduous investigation and experiment the Committee's report was issued in 1912. From that date until his death Nettleship was a member of a Special Board which sat at South Kensington for the examination of candidates for the Mercantile Marine, who appealed from the decision of the Board of Trade examiners in colour vision.

For some years after he obtained his medical qualifications Nettleship assisted his former teacher, Jonathan Hutchinson, in his hospital and private practice. In 1875 he began practice independently in Wimpole Street, where he continued to live, although not in the same house, until 1902. His professional knowledge and skill soon became recognized by the public as well as by the medical profession and patients in large numbers sought his advice. In spite of the demands of hospital attendance and a large private practice he found time (one is tempted to say he *made* time) to write a students' text-book on Diseases of the Eye, of which five editions were published. Throughout his professional career Nettleship was a voluminous writer, his papers covering almost the whole range of ophthalmic science, more especially from the clinical side. They were invariably characterised by accuracy

of statement and evidence of extreme care in observation. It is a tribute to his ability and to the punctilious care with which he prepared material for publication that there is scarcely a paper among them which even now will not repay perusal and has not some permanent value. His knowledge of ophthalmic medicine and surgery was extraordinarily wide and very accurate; although not very conversant with languages other than the mother tongue, he kept well abreast of French and German ophthalmic literature, and his large clinical experience and retentive memory gave him a familiarity with rare or unusual types of disease which few, if any, of his colleagues could equal. In private practice Nettleship was

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very successful, and his fame as an ophthalmic surgeon was world-wide, his opinion and advice being largely sought by his professional confrères, as well as by the public.

In 1902, when at the height of his professional success, he decided to retire from practice and left London to reside permanently at Hindhead, where he had spent week-ends and holidays for many years. This retirement from practice was but the starting point of renewed activity in scientific pursuits. He intended and indeed began to carry out some pathological research, but he soon relinquished this and devoted all his time and energy to the study of heredity in disease, a subject to which he had given much attention for some years. During the next ten or eleven years he accomplished a prodigious amount of work of a very high standard, "working in such a way that his pedigrees are models of orderly

observation and recording." The value of these researches was recognized by his election to the Fellowship of the Royal Society in 1912. Further reference to his labours on heredity, by the writer of these lines, would be superfluous in a journal dealing specially with this subject.

"The esteem and regard in which Nettleship was universally held by his pupils and colleagues found definite expression at the date of his retirement from practice. The fund then collected was, in accordance with his own desire, devoted to the establishment of a medal 'for the encouragement of scientific ophthalmic work.' This prize is in the custody of the Ophthalmological Society, and is awarded triennially. In 1909, to the great satisfaction of all, it was awarded to Nettleship himself, in recognition of his researches upon heredity in diseases of the eye." (*Lancet*, Nov. 8, 1913).

The foregoing paragraphs chronicle the main events in Nettleship's professional career and convey some idea of the strenuous life he led from the time he left school until he relinquished his work as a hospital surgeon and teacher and retired from practice. It is comparatively easy to compile such a record, especially of one who went steadily forward from one success to another; it is largely a statement of facts. A task far less easy is to write of his character and personal attributes.

As no member of Nettleship's family is now living, but little information concerning his boyhood is forthcoming. By reason of his devotion to natural history, especially bird life, his brothers nicknamed him "bird-bearing Ned," and there is a story told by an elder brother that once, when as a small boy, he had been studying botany, he came in fatigued with his ramble, and flinging himself down, exclaimed "I will now become sessile upon an ordinary chair." From other sources comes the information that even in his early days, as so notably in later life, he was a keen enquirer and investigator, laying, the foundations of that extreme accuracy of observation and statement which characterized his work in after years.

A relative who knew his home in Kettering in the late fifties, writes:—"It was a small but roomy house, where his father had his office; it was truly the abode of plain living and high thinking, with all the essentials of a cultured country life."

At an early stage in his medical career, as already mentioned, Nettleship had the good fortune, to which he often referred, to be intimately associated with Jonathan Hutchinson, one of the most astute and industrious clinical observers of the 19th century. This association encouraged and abetted his zeal in the investigation of disease, and probably confirmed his habit of note-taking of which Hutchinson was a past master. To the end of his professional career Nettleship took abundant notes of every case of interest or

importance which came under his observation, notes which, as the writer knows well, are models for any medical man.

Although Nettleship's reputation as a surgeon and a scientist is permanently established, his place in the memory of many men was gained by his ability and attractiveness as a teacher. As a lecturer in a class-room or theatre he was not at his best, he was not eloquent and his voice was not sufficiently powerful; as a clinical teacher of the individual, or of a group of students, he had few equals; he excelled especially in post-graduate teaching. During the active period of his service at Moorfields Hospital, his qualities as a teacher became widely recognized; these, added to his magnetic personality, attracted many of the best students to his side, most or all of whom soon became imbued with his spirit, and with his assiduity in the investigation of disease, and infected by his enthusiasm. He did not suffer fools gladly and had no use for the man whose clinical work was slovenly or inaccurate. Ignorance, provided the desire for knowledge was evident, was no bar, and no genuine seeker ever failed to obtain his help. Few, if any, of those who worked with him at St. Thomas's or Moorfields will ever forget the splendid example in the methods of clinical enquiry set by their teacher.

In practice, Nettleship gained and retained the confidence and loyalty of his patients in a remarkable degree. He was far from being all things to all men, but his obvious sincerity and straightforwardness, and his genuine kindness and sympathy were quickly recognized by the large majority. The writer has had many opportunities of learning from former patients how greatly they valued his advice and friendship. In Nettleship's personal character there was much that was noteworthy and much that called forth admiration. Broad-minded and well-informed, he possessed to an unusual degree the judicial mind, and his judgment in complex questions was seldom at fault; high ideals, scrupulous integrity and hatred of everything false or untrue were prominent traits. His natural reserve masked, in some degree, his decision of character, his determination and his unbounded energy. Throughout his life Nettleship was an indefatigable and tireless worker, and accomplished a great deal while others slept, his habit being to rise very early and work when all was quiet. To those who gained his confidence he was a staunch and loyal friend, and many of his acts of kindness were known only to the recipient. He exerted a remarkable and far reaching influence for good on many who were brought into contact with him, both young and old, and had no more devoted admirers than children and young persons. Some of these, now well advanced in years, have expressed in grateful terms their indebtedness to Nettleship's example and precept. The writer, who had the privilege of a long and close association with Nettleship,

has had for many years an unbounded admiration for the true nobility of his character and a deep appreciation of his warm-hearted and sympathetic nature. These qualities were, naturally, even more fully realized by those in his immediate circle ; of this there has been abundant testimony in letters from relatives and intimate friends. In 1869, before his medical studies were completed, Nettleship married Elizabeth Endacott, daughter of Mr. Richard Whiteway, of Compton, Devon ; they lived at first in Grafton Street, in furnished rooms : subsequently for a period of 18 months, they shared a house in Finsbury Pavement with his friend and colleague, Mr. Waren Tay, and then, in order to be near the London and Moorfields Hospitals, they took " a little old-fashioned creeper-clad house with a garden " at Stepney, where they had two students living with them. Their stay in this pleasant abode was followed by a dreary year of residence in the Bow Ophthalmic School referred to above, after which they moved to Wimpole Street. When visiting the Hutchinsons at Haslemere, the beauty of that part of Surrey captivated Nettleship and his wife, and in 1885 he bought land at Hindhead, on which he built a charming house, completed in 1887. Here, whenever his work permitted, Nettleship spent many happy days, working in the garden and the woods, which were, to him, a constant source of delight. His love of country life, birds, trees and flowers grew with advancing years ; probably he was never happier than at Hindhead. Many of his friends retain most pleasant memories of the kindness and hospitality of himself and Mrs. Nettleship in their Surrey home. In 1910 they moved to a smaller house pleasantly situated on the side of a hill with a beautiful outlook across a valley. In this house, surrounded by the trees and flowers he loved, Nettleship died ; and here his widow still resides.

This sketch would be very incomplete without a brief reference to Nettleship's partner in life, one who cheerfully shared the struggles of his early days, and rejoiced in his well-deserved success. Few men have had so loyal and devoted a helpmeet, and it is easy to imagine how greatly the companionship of one so gifted with womanly charm and true sympathy helped to smooth the rough places on life's pathway.