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(SECOND SERIES.)

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Henry J. Bowditch

THE LATE PROFESSOR

## Henry Ingersoll Bowditch.

BY FREDERICK I. KNIGHT, M.D.

DR. HENRY INGERSOLL BOWDITCH was born in Salem, Massachusetts, August 9, 1808. His father was Nathaniel Bowditch, the eminent mathematician, and his mother Mary Ingersoll; parents who have transmitted in a remarkable degree to their descendants the honesty and strength of character peculiar to them. The father, as is well known, educated himself in hours which by others were taken for rest or recreation; and this hard experience led to restrictions in the education of the children, which, though some of them were afterwards regretted by the latter, may have been on the whole beneficent. As one instance, they were never allowed to devote any time to music, the study of which, considering the hard struggle in life before them, the father considered a waste of time, and likely to lead to greater waste in the enjoyment of it. That this and other restrictions were imposed with considerate tenderness is abundantly shown by the thorough respect and obedience of the children.

The only school in Salem attended by Henry, of which I have any positive knowledge, was the Salem Private Grammar School, situated on Green Street, which was kept at the time by John Walsh, son of Michael, of arithmetic fame. I know that Dr. Bowditch attended here in 1822, for I have seen a programme of an exhibition at the school in this year, on which he appears for a Latin dialogue with J. B. Bigelow. It is interesting to notice on the same programme the names of Henry W. Pickering, of this city, and Benjamin Peirce, late Professor in Harvard College. The fact that Dr. Bowditch was selected for a Latin dialogue argues, I think, that he was at this time a good deal more of a student than he used to represent himself. He was, however, not a "house-rat" (as we were accustomed to call boys who stayed in with their books all the time), but was a thorough boy, fond of out-door

exercise, full of life and innocent fun. On a photograph of the typical Salem house in which he was born and lived, he has marked an upper middle window as one from which he and his brothers used to pelt with beans the promenading boys and girls on Sunday, they themselves being allowed out on that day only to go to and from church. There is a tradition also of the subject of our sketch having had a hand in introducing some fire-crackers into a certain old lady's teapot.

The family moved to Boston in 1823, Dr. Nathaniel Bowditch having been invited to the Presidency of the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company, which afterwards under his management attained such wonderful growth and prosperity. In Boston Henry attended the Public Latin School, entered Harvard College as a sophomore, and graduated in the class of 1828.

Dr. Bowditch always represented himself as an indifferent student, as "students" were estimated in those days,—that is, he was not a dig for recitation-marks. None of his teachers appear to have excited any enthusiasm or admiration except Professor Charles Follen, to whom he was always grateful for having suggested and urged upon him the study of the German language. This was very likely the only personal interest ever shown in him by any member of the Faculty. However this may be, and student or no student by the gauge of the day, I am sure Dr. Bowditch was busy at something, for a more industrious man I have never seen. He was always occupied. I have wondered whether the non-use of tobacco might not have had something to do with this, knowing how often it serves its devotee as both companion and occupation. He apparently had one of those brains rested by change of work. He never sat still musing, or walked up and down thinking out the solution of any subject, but he thought with pen in hand.

After taking his academic degree, Dr. Bowditch entered the Harvard Medical School. What determined his choice of a profession I have not learned, except that his mother was desirous that her sons should take different professions, and he felt himself more inclined to medicine than to theology or law. There are now few living associates who can tell us of his immediate, enthusiastic devotion to his profession when once chosen, but of the fact there is no doubt. The medical Faculty at this time consisted of Drs. Walter Channing (Dean), John C. Warren, James Jackson, Jacob Bigelow, and John W. Webster. In September, 1830, he entered the Massachusetts General Hospital as medical house-pupil, and served one year, his colleague on the surgical side being Thomas R. Thomas, Jr. He received his medical degree in 1832, and

went to Paris, as was the custom in those days, to complete his medical education. It was natural that a man of his mind and home-training in regard to exact truth should have been soon attracted to Louis and his teachings, and eventually to have been thoroughly devoted to them. The numerical method, as it was called, the recording and analyzing of symptoms in a large number of cases without any preconceived theory of the disease, simply the recording of facts and drawing logical deductions from them, was then being expounded by Louis, whom Dr. Bowditch delighted to call master. So thoroughly did Dr. Bowditch always practise this method, so thoroughly did he identify himself with it, and so consistent was it with his own character, that one can hardly help feeling that, even if he had not had the advantage of Louis's teaching, he would have adopted such a method himself. His friendship with Louis was kept up till the death of the latter. If asked what he had learned abroad that was especially valuable, he, while admitting the many things in clinical and pathological work which were new to him, would undoubtedly have said, "What I value most is the proper method of observation and recording of cases."

Another great good fortune came to Dr. Bowditch in Paris, in that it was here he first met Miss Olivia Yardley, who was destined a few years later to become his bride; for Mrs. Bowditch had all the qualifications for his complement, whether it was in managing the exchequer, in making drawings of his microscopical preparations, or in the exercise of accomplishments which go to make up the amenities of life.

After a residence of two years in Paris he returned to Boston (in 1834), and established himself in practice. His office was at first on Bedford Street, soon afterwards on Otis Place.<sup>1</sup>

With enthusiasm he devoted himself to the propagation of the teachings of Louis, and founded in 1835 a society for medical observation, on the plan of the one in Paris, for practice in the correct observing and recording of cases. Its membership was small, chiefly medical students, the only physicians at its organization being Dr. John Ware and Dr. Bowditch. This was discontinued in 1838.

Soon after this, Dr. Bowditch was associated with Drs. Marshall S. Perry, Charles H. Stedman, and Henry G. Wiley, in a private medical school. They had about fifteen students. There were recitations and clinical instruction. The recitations were held at an infirmary for chest-

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above, I have been informed by one of our profession, who settled in Boston about the same time, that he remembers visiting Dr. Bowditch, soon after his return from Paris, at an office on Washington Street, near the Marlboro' Hotel.