

**On the medical profession and medical education in Canada : address delivered at his installation as professor of the institutes of medicine, Queen's University, January 10, 1865 / by Donald Maclean.**

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MACLEAN (D.)

ON  
THE MEDICAL PROFESSION  
AND  
MEDICAL EDUCATION  
IN CANADA.

BY  
DONALD MACLEAN, M.D., L.R.C.S.E.

Address delivered at his Installation as Professor of the  
Institutes of Medicine.

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, JANUARY 10, 1865.



KINGSTON :  
1865.

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

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IN EXAMINATION

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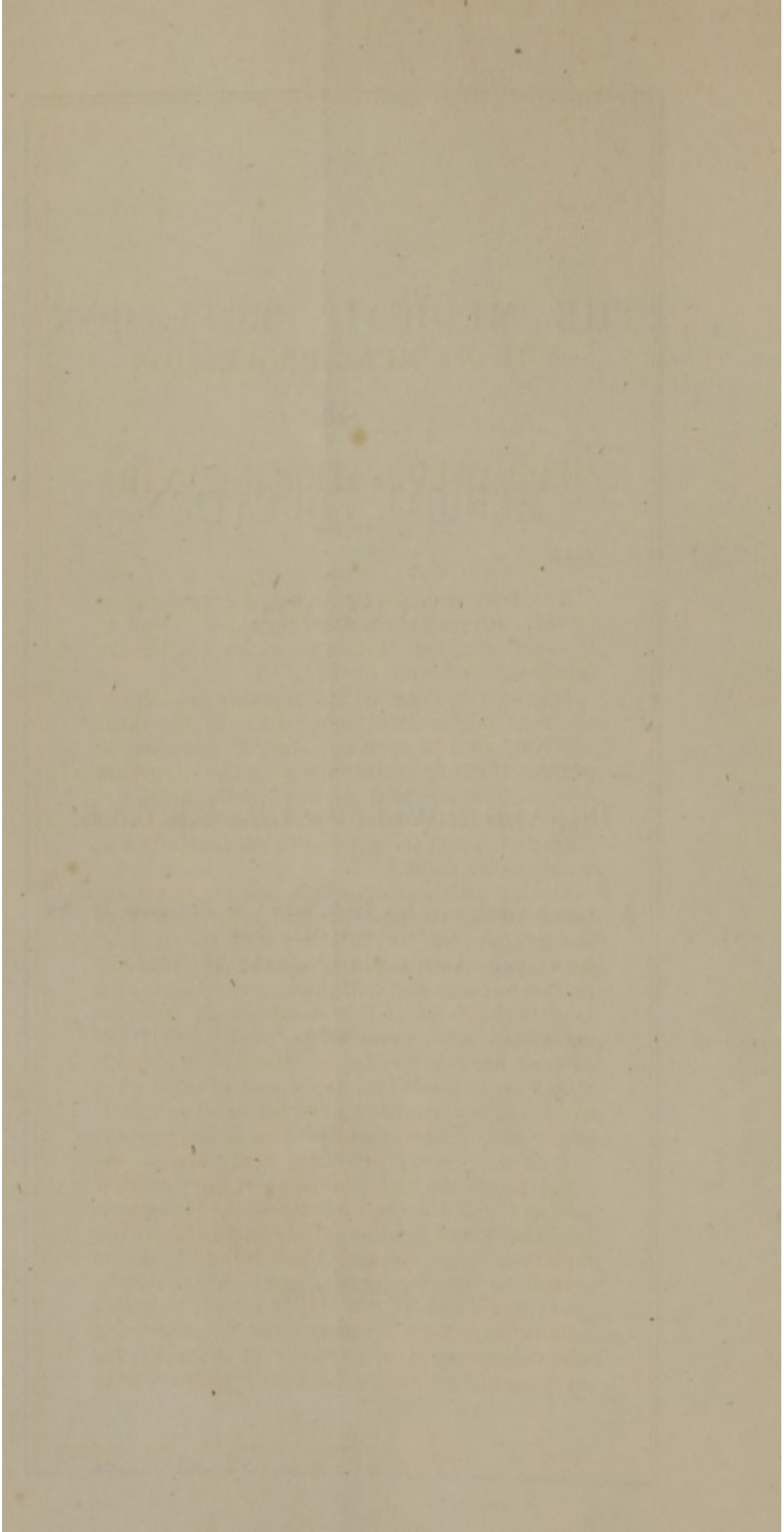
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GENTLEMEN,

The science of medicine has, for upwards of twenty-five centuries, been regarded as one of the most exalted studies to which the human intellect can devote itself.

During this time an innumerable multitude of great minds have laboured with the most untiring zeal to increase, and, if possible, to perfect their acquaintance with the structure and functions of that piece of mechanism, the mere contemplation of which caused the sweet singer of Israel to exclaim "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

During all these ages this science has numbered among its students and lovers many of the profoundest of thinkers and the best of men; and their labours, combined with the no less earnest and enlightened exertions of a mighty host of fellow-workers in all the collateral and correlative departments of science, have, in our day, culminated in a result which far exceeds in beauty and grandeur the utmost expectations of even the most sanguine of the early fathers and founders of the science.

It is now many centuries since Galen, the great physician and philosopher, gave expression to the dignity and beauty of the fundamental branches of medical study in the following terms:—"In explaining these things I esteem myself as composing a solemn hymn to the great Architect of our bodily frame, in which I think there is more piety than in sacrificing whole hecatombs of oxen, or in burning the most costly perfumes, for first I endeavour to

know Him myself, and afterwards by the same means to show Him to others, to inform them of His wisdom, goodness and power," But the science of our day is no more like the science of his day than hyperion is to a satyr. If Galen could rise from his grave, with what rapture and amazement would he behold all the beautiful revelations which modern investigators, with the aid of modern implements, have succeeded in eliminating.

It is now three hundred years since the great dramatist penned the following beautiful lines :

" What a piece of work is man ?  
 How noble in reason ! How infinite  
 In faculties ! In form and moving  
 How express and admirable !  
 In action how like an angel !  
 In apprehension how like a God !  
 The beauty of the world !  
 The paragon of animals !"

At this late period of the 19th century to enter upon any argument in favour of the dignity and importance of a science, which is founded upon the anatomy and physiology of this wonderful organism, would assuredly be a work of supererogation and an insult to the judgment of my audience. I may, however, allude very briefly to one of the most interesting relations in which the fundamental subjects of medical science can be considered, one from which, more than from any other, the science derives dignity, beauty, and importance. I refer to the relationship which exists between theology and metaphysics on the one hand, and anatomy and physiology on the other. Perhaps this peculiar and important relationship of medical science, or rather of physiology, on which, of course, all medical science is founded, could not be better illustrated than by quoting the words first, of a profound religious philosopher, then those of the greatest metaphysician of this century, and lastly, the opinions of one of the greatest of living physiologists on the same subject. First, the theologian uses the following strong terms : " Even the gorgeous majesty of the heavens, the object of a kneeling adoration to an infant world, subdues no more the



mind of him who comprehends the one mechanical law by which the planetary systems move, maintain their motion, and even originally form themselves. He no longer wonders at the object, infinite as it always is, but at the human intellect alone which in a Copernicus, Kepler, Gassendi, Newton, and La Place, was able to transcend the object, by science to terminate the miracle, to reave the Heaven of its divinities, and exorcise the universe. But even this, the only admiration of which our intelligent faculties are now capable, would vanish were a future Hartley, Darwin, Condillac, or Bonnett, to succeed in displaying to us a mechanical system of the human mind as comprehensive, intelligible, and satisfactory as the Newtonian mechanism of the heavens." To this the great metaphysician to whom I have referred adds the following: "Should Physiology ever succeed in reducing the facts of intelligence to phenomena of matter, philosophy would be subverted in the subversion of its three great objects—God, Free-will, and Immortality.

"True wisdom would then consist, not in speculation, but in repressing thought during our brief transit from nothingness to nothingness. For why? Philosophy would have become a meditation, not merely of death, but of annihilation; the precept 'know thyself,' would have been replaced by the terrific oracle to *Œdipus*—'Mayst thou never know the truth of what thou art,' and the final recompense of our scientific curiosity would be wailing, deeper than *Cassandra's*, for the ignorance that saved us from despair."

The theologian and metaphysician meant to say, we believe in God, Free will and Immortality; we do not believe that the physiologist, no matter how far or how successfully he may pursue his researches, can ever succeed in subverting the three great objects of philosophy, in which are centred all our hopes of another and better form of existence: still, say they, inasmuch as philosophy can receive no assistance and religion no additional evidence from the study of that wonderful structure which undoubtedly, and, to say the least of it, furnishes the conditions necessary for the



manifestation of intellect; therefore it is certainly useless, and it may be even dangerous, to devote much attention to it. Let us confine ourselves to speculative philosophy, and ignore the material substratum altogether.

But the physiologist to whom we have referred, and who may be taken as the representative of his class, views the matter in a different, and, we think, more correct light. He uses the following argument:—"It is to be greatly regretted that evidence drawn from structural arrangement has hitherto, by very high authority, either been totally cast aside, or held in very light esteem. It is still more deeply to be regretted that those who should have known better have conceded the argument, that from no consideration based upon anatomical or structural arrangement could proof be obtained of the existence of an immaterial principle. Even by such, physiology has been designated as leading to materialism, and with an injustice which cannot be too emphatically reprobated, the scandal has often been quoted that where there are three physicians there are two atheists."

In one part of his works we find this physiologist inculcating upon his brethren the propriety of leaving no ambiguity in the expression of the conclusion to which their own science brings them. "Especially is it for the physiologist," he says, "to assert and to uphold the doctrine of the oneness, the immortality and the accountability of the soul, and to enforce those paramount truths with whatever evidence the structure of the body can furnish."

In another he says, "certainly it is desirable that some new method should be introduced which may give point and precision to whatever metaphysical truths exist, and enable us to distinguish, separate and dismiss what are only vain and empty speculations."

So far from philosophy being a forbidden domain to the physiologist, it may be asserted that the time has now come when no one is entitled to express an opinion in philosophy, except he has first studied physiology.

It has hitherto been to the detriment of truth that these processes of positive investigation have been repudiated. If from the construction

of the human brain we may demonstrate the existence of a soul, is not that a gain? for there are many who are open to arguments of this class on whom speculative reasoning or a mere dictum fall without any weight. "Why," he asks, "should we cast aside the solid facts presented to us by material objects."

In his communications throughout the universe with us, God ever materializes. He equally speaks to us through the thousands of graceful organic forms which are scattered in profusion over the surface of the earth, and through the motions and appearances presented by the celestial orbs."

I have quoted thus extensively from the writings of this physiological philosopher on account of the paramount importance of the subject and the eminence of the author. His arguments appear to me to refute the terrible charge which has so frequently and by such high authority been preferred against the study of physiology, and at the same time to assert the high relationship occupied by this science in reference to theology and philosophy.

In conclusion (on this subject) permit me to observe, that the very fact that there exists a certain large and influential class of physiologists, whose studies have led them to adopt and promulgate the doctrines of materialism—physiologists who are foolish and presumptuous enough to believe that the time is not far distant when by the aid of the scalpel, microscope, and other means of research, they will have succeeded in proving that there is nothing in the whole universe except what is palpable to and in some way or other appreciable by our senses; that in short there is no soul in man and no God in heaven—I say the very fact that such a class of physiologists exists should furnish us with an additional stimulus to exertion in the cause of truth.

One great object of our ambition should be not only to counteract their malignant and wide-spread influence in the world, but also to convince them of their errors, which most assuredly we can only hope to accomplish by meeting them on their own ground and demonstrating, as Dr. Draper believes we will yet be able to do, the existence of the soul from



the structure of the human brain. These considerations should have a tendency to impress the student of medicine with a deep sense of the dignity and sacredness of his calling.

For the reasons before stated I do not at present stop to consider any of the very numerous additional arguments in favour of the dignity, the importance, and the grand comprehensiveness of the science of medicine; but in the next place I wish to make a few remarks respecting the present condition and social standing of the medical profession in Canada; after which, I shall consider briefly the present system of medical education, and in conclusion I shall venture to suggest certain steps which might be taken with a view to the improvement and elevation at once of our standard of education, and the social position of our noble profession in these Provinces. To all who are interested in the welfare and efficiency of the medical profession, (and who is not?) these are questions of the utmost importance, nevertheless I shall not at present attempt a full or detailed discussion of them. This is neither the time nor the place to do more than take a very cursory view of them.

And first, with regard to the present condition and social standing of the medical profession in Canada.

I am sure it will be readily conceded on all sides that the title, Doctor of Medicine, does not insure to its possessor that degree of respect or that honourable distinction in society, which the highest honour in medicine that any University has in its power to bestow ought to insure.

The degree of Doctor of Medicine, be it remembered, is not merely a license to practice the profession, it is at the same time a very high University honour, which ought to stamp its possessor as a man of unquestionable moral character, of high literary attainments, as well as one who is capable of discharging the duties and assuming the responsibilities of a practitioner of medicine.

In short, the term, Doctor of Medicine, ought to imply that its possessor is at once a skilful and experienced physician, and a thoroughly



educated gentleman, worthy of all confidence and respect. But at present I am sure no one can claim this position for the profession in Canada.

Instead of commanding confidence and respect, the title of "Dr," excites suspicion and, very generally, contempt; instead of implying literary eminence and moral rectitude, it implies rather ignorance and depravity, combined with impudent assurance and unprincipled recklessness. I doubt very much if the medical profession ever in any country occupied a more humble position in public opinion than it at present occupies in Canada.

If a coroner's inquest were held on every case of death in this Province, say for the next six months, and if the verdict in every case expressed candidly the public opinion as to the cause of death, in comparatively few cases would the verdict read, "died by the visitation of God;" in the great majority it would be, died by the visitation of the Doctor. The causes of this deplorable state of affairs are mainly two—first, the state of the law, which so far from preventing quackery or providing a rod of punishment for it, is calculated rather to nurse that evil; and secondly, the low standard of medical education in the Canadian Medical Schools.

With regard to the first of these causes, it is evident that so long as the law is such as to permit of every unprincipled impostor asserting the title and usurping the position of the regular legally qualified practitioner, it is vain to expect for our profession anything but contempt and degradation.

We cannot expect the people to distinguish between regular and irregular practitioners, between those who have and those who have not a right to the title, Doctor of Medicine. All receive an equal share of public confidence and public contumely—the learned, accomplished and skilful graduate of a University, and the ignorant vulgar quack who has barely sufficient education to write his own name, and who does not know one medicine from another. If indeed there is any difference between these two classes in the matter of public opinion, that difference will very often be in favour of the latter, whose

stock in trade consists of unblushing assurance combined with a proportionate amount of low cunning and deceit.

But I feel that it would be a waste of time for me to enter upon a lengthy dissertation on the evils of quackery, and the necessity of legislative interference for its punishment and suppression. No one whose opinion is entitled to respect doubts the necessity for remedial measure of some kind. The only doubt is respecting the nature and mode of applying the remedy. The question is similar to that which Macbeth in his extremity asked a member of our profession in regard to his English foes, "what rhubarb, senna, or what purgative drug will scour them hence?"

The first difficulty which meets us here is that of defining exactly the limits of the evil, in other words, the number of the enemy and the character of the weapons against which we have to contend.

For it must be remembered that ignorance and empiricism exist within as well as without the limits of the medical profession, as these are at present defined by the law. I mean to say that many of the most notorious members of the empirical fraternity are armed with a legal qualification to practise medicine.

Any law therefore which would merely render the possession of a medical diploma or degree necessary would fall very far short of accomplishing the object aimed at, for any person with \$100 at his disposal who wished to make money out of suffering humanity would find no difficulty in complying with this legal requirement so long as institutions calling themselves Universities or medical schools exist within a day's journey of any part of the province, though not actually in it, where a medical license may at any time be obtained without examination, without attendance on lectures, and without any pecuniary outlay beyond the small sum which I have mentioned. Besides requiring the possession of a degree or diploma by the practitioner the law, to be effective, must determine also the schools and colleges whose standard of literary and professional qualification is sufficiently high to entitle the holders of their degrees to rank as Doctors of Medicine in Canada.



I cannot see that there could be any objection to allowing the graduates of respectable foreign Universities to come to Canada and enter into competition with the graduates of our own Universities, if they have the desire and the courage to do so.

But they should certainly be required to furnish satisfactory evidence that they are *bona fide* graduates or licentiates of *bona fide* Universities or medical schools, and that they are in every respect qualified to maintain an honourable competition with the alumni of our own Universities, a competition by which all parties concerned would derive benefit and the cause of science be promoted.

I have been presupposing the existence in Canada of a high and efficient standard of medical education; and now let us consider for a moment whether or not we at present possess a sufficiently elevated and respectable standard of qualification for the degree of Dr. of Medicine; in other words, let us consider whether the present system of medical education in Canada is or is not all that it might and ought to be. I think the most superficial consideration of this question will suffice to convince any person who is open to conviction that there is the most imperative demand for reform in medical education in the Canadian schools; and to prove this it is not necessary, as it certainly is not desirable, to enter upon a critical examination of the qualifications, the merits and demerits of the many members of the profession who hold degrees from Canadian schools; nor is it in the slightest degree necessary to draw odious comparisons between them and the graduates of British or European schools.

It is but fair to mention in reference to these practitioners that however inferior their qualifications may have been at the time of graduation, many of them have subsequently taken every means of extending their acquaintance with the science of medicine and of increasing their usefulness as practitioners of the healing art. Many of them have devoted a great deal of time and money in the acquisition from other sources of the knowledge and experience which they ought to have acquired from their *alma*



*mater.* But the insufficiency and imperfection of the present system of medical education in Canada and the necessity which exists for its improvement and reform do not require to be proved or illustrated by any such invidious inquiries or comparisons; for any person, with even a very moderate acquaintance with human nature, who will take the trouble to make himself acquainted with the present mode of administration of our medical schools, will have no difficulty in forming an estimate of its inherent imperfections and the necessity for its reform. If any additional proof were wanting, it can be obtained to an overwhelming extent from history, from the history of the English and Scotch Universities. In this fact consists our chief comfort and ground for hope. Only a few years have elapsed since the medical schools of Scotland were oppressed and their progress impeded by exactly the same causes which now oppress those of Canada and impede their progress. This fact, together with the fact that the Scottish schools have succeeded in obtaining the removal of all those causes of oppression and impediment, should not only afford us comfort in our present unsatisfactory condition, but should also stimulate us to make every exertion, and to rest not till we have the satisfaction of seeing our Canadian schools freed from all the existing obstacles to their progress in the path of usefulness and greatness.

In Canada there are several medical schools between which of course there is maintained a good deal of competition, and herein consists the greatest obstacle to the efficiency and success of medical education in these Provinces. For each school being naturally desirous of enrolling the largest number of students, and turning out the largest number of graduates, and there being no uniform standard of examination, either preliminary or final, and the professors, who in this respect have everything in their power, having considerable pecuniary interests at stake, the result is, that no matter how ignorant an applicant for admission to the medical classes may be, he is permitted to enter; and in like manner the aspirant to the honour of a medical degree is almost sure to

be successful, no matter how far he may fall short of even the professed standard of the school.

Any attempt to attach blame in the matter to any particular University would be equally invidious and futile. Far better would it be for all to acknowledge the existence of the evil, and, appreciating its magnitude, to consider how it is to be remedied.

For our guidance in this matter we have an excellent precedent furnished by British schools in general, and the University of Edinburgh in particular. In a lecture delivered on the 13th April, 1861, before the medical students of the latter University, by Prof. Christison, on graduation under the Medical and Scottish University Acts, and since published, when describing the condition of the medical schools before these Acts, he says, "well founded rumors were often heard against certain Universities in Scotland from which a medical degree could be had by any body for a private certificate of character and a fee." "Moreover," he adds, "the several medical bodies of the Empire from time to time charged one another with undue laxity of examination, and not always without good cause."

In 1835 a Royal Commission was appointed "to inquire into the state of Municipal Corporations in Scotland," of which the University of Edinburgh was one. Sir Wm. Hamilton in reviewing the report returned by this Commission in reference to the latter Corporation, says, "The University of Edinburgh in its medical department had been latterly in a gradual process of decline, and the question which the visitors had first and principally to determine was, whether the Medical Doctorate was to be still further eviscerated of all literary qualification; and yet the degree issued under the same name to be still entitled to its former privileges."

Again, after pointing out somewhat more in detail the evils of the then system of medical education in Edinburgh, evils which certainly present a very close resemblance to the present imperfections and irregularities of our Canadian system, he adds: "Thus from want of a certain controlling power acting for the public and the



University, the public is deprived of that class of approved medical practitioners, to secure which, exclusively, this and other Universities were relatively privileged; while our *alma mater*, degraded by her members, selling for their private interest her highest medical honours at a lower literary price than is exacted not only by other academical bodies, but even by the inferior licensing incorporations, is, in fact, constrained by her own officers to convert her 'Seminary of Science' into an asylum of ignorance, covering the country with her annual issues of 'graduated dunces,' of '*Doctores indocti*.' In thus reducing the standard of medical literary competency far below the academical level of England, Ireland, or any other country of Christendom, the supine or interested regulators of this school have, unfortunately, been allowed to accomplish the one natural result. Medicine has now ceased in Scotland to be a learned profession; and though even in Scotland learned medical men may still be found, there is here no longer any assurance, not to say of superior erudition, but any guarantee against the lowest ignorance afforded to the public in a medical degree." Now I do not presume to say that the analogy between the condition of matters at that time in the University of Edinburgh and the condition of matters in the Canadian Medical Schools at present is complete. I sincerely hope and believe that we have not yet fallen quite so low. Still the fact cannot be denied that the manner in which our medical schools are at present administered, and the relation in which the medical profession stands to the public, are such as afford in the first place every opportunity, and in the second place every temptation, to fall into exactly the same errors and commit exactly the same species of fraud.

So long as the competition between the medical schools of Canada has reference merely to the number of students and graduates, without any regard to the standard of education and fitness for practising the profession, the tendency must unavoidably be downwards, and ere long we will find ourselves in the disreputable position in which the Royal Commission found the University of Edinburgh.



The following testimony of one of the witnesses examined before the Commission, applies, I think, with peculiar force to the Canadian schools. *Inter alia* this witness says: "To what extent the demand of higher qualifications for medical honours at Edinburgh College might affect the pecuniary interests of its professors, I am not prepared to say; but I am sure it would raise the value of their diplomas, and settle beyond a doubt the real merit of their school of medicine. I am far from wishing to underrate the Edinburgh Professors, but I must be permitted to remark that under their present system of conferring degrees, the number of students that flock to them for instruction is no more a test of the value of their lectures than the resort of young couples to Gretna Green, is a proof of the piety of the blacksmith who gives them his nuptial benediction. \* \* \* But though some men go to Edinburgh in order to obtain a rank in their profession which they could not otherwise acquire, and to which from the deficiencies of their education and the mediocrity of their attainments they have no right to pretend, the great majority of students go to learn their profession, and where they are well taught there they will go, whether they expect to be decorated with degrees or not. If the Edinburgh Professors do their duty, and in comparison with other teachers are well qualified to afford instruction, they may lose graduates, but they will not lose students by the change."

The visitors "having had much deliberation and received a good deal of evidence on the subject of the preliminary education which should be required of candidates for degrees in medicine," announce the conclusions at which they arrived in the following terms:—

"It has appeared to us to be a matter of great importance that the persons who are to practice medicine should be men of enlightened minds, accustomed to exercise their intellectual powers, and familiar with habits of accurate observation and cautious reflection; and that they should be possessed of such a degree of literary acquirement as may secure the respect of those with whom they are to associate in the practice of their profession. We therefore

thought it an indispensable qualification for a medical degree that the individual should have some reasonable acquaintance with the Greek and Latin languages, and with mathematics and philosophy; and though strong doubts have been expressed by many of the Medical Professors as to the expediency of rendering this an essential condition, from an apprehension that it might prevent many persons from taking the benefit of the instruction in medical science to be obtained in the Universities, we have found our opinion on this point confirmed by every one of the eminent physicians and surgeons not belonging to the Universities, whom we examined, as well as by some of the Medical Professors themselves; while we have also been fully satisfied by a due consideration of the matter itself, and of the evidence before us, that there is no ground for the apprehension entertained."

Another subject of university administration which the commissioners investigated was the examination for degrees, with regard to which they returned the following report:—

"The examinations for degrees in medicine have hitherto been conducted by the members of the Medical Faculty, and each candidate has been required to pay a sum of ten guineas, which is divided equally among the examining Professors. We are of opinion that this system is liable to very serious objections. The emoluments of the Professors who examine ought not to depend on the number of candidates for degrees; at present the fees drawn by the several Professors from this source are very considerable, in consequence of the great number of candidates; and it appears from the evidence that the number of degrees conferred has been continually increasing during many years, in a proportion much greater than corresponds to the rate of increase in the number of students attending the medical school of Edinburgh. No explanation has been given of this extraordinary increase in the number of degrees, and we are satisfied it cannot be accounted for from any external causes. We are of opinion that the present system has a necessary tendency to render the examinations less strict than they might otherwise be, and



practically to lower the standard of qualifications in the estimation of the Faculty."

It is, besides, scarcely to be doubted that there must be a natural reluctance in Professors to reject candidates, to many of whom the fees paid to the examiners may be a very serious sacrifice. Although most of the Professors in the Medical Faculty are adverse to any extension of the subjects of examination, and are strongly impressed with the idea that the importance and value of the University as a school of medicine ought to be estimated by the number of degrees annually conferred, an entirely different opinion has been strongly expressed by all the other physicians and surgeons whom we have examined, being persons very extensively engaged in the practice of their profession. It should seem to us that the value of the degree must bear a proportion to the nature of the qualifications required for it; and we have already observed, that it does not appear to us that either the reputation of the University as a school of medicine, or the number of students resorting to it for instruction, will be regulated merely by the number of those who may obtain degrees."

For all who are interested in the administration of the Canadian medical schools there is here much valuable instruction. If it was inconsistent with the interests of the University, the progress of medical science and the welfare of humanity, for the Edinburgh medical Professors to be possessed of absolute power in the matter of the examinations for degrees, the same must be said of that system as it exists at present in the Canadian schools. Of course it is to be hoped that human nature is, to some extent at least, improved and elevated since the foregoing observations were written; still it would, I fear, be assuming too much to expect that even at this enlightened and highly civilized period Professors will not be found who are weak, selfish, and short-sighted enough to allow their personal interests as well as their personal feelings, their likes and dislikes, to influence them in the discharge of their duties as examiners.

The Canadian medical schools are very frequently accused of making "annual issues of

graduated dunces," or *doctores indocti*, too frequently and decidedly, I fear, for the charge to be altogether without foundation; still there is comfort and encouragement in the fact that, even by those who urge this grave charge, it is at the same time admitted that there always are some worthy and well qualified graduates to be found in these annual issues.

I think no one will deny that in these schools a good and efficient medical education may be acquired; but, on the other hand, it must be admitted that the present system of examination is not such as to insure that all the candidates avail themselves of the opportunities afforded of acquiring the necessary proficiency in the great science of medicine; it is not even sufficient to insure that the candidate for admission to the medical classes possesses the intellectual ability and preliminary literary and scientific attainments indispensable to the efficient and successful prosecution of his medical studies. It must be admitted that, as Sir Wm. Hamilton remarked respecting the Edinburgh College, students are often attracted to the Canadian Universities chiefly by the bribe of the degree, and that many of them are too illiterate and professionally too incompetent to stand the test of impartial examination. When the literary qualifications for our Canadian medical degrees are raised to a respectable and efficient standard, and when our academical examinations are rendered unbiassed criteria of professional competency, then will the number of our medical graduates afford an index of the relative eminence of our medical schools; then, but not till then, will competition for the greatest number of students and graduates be productive of good, for intrinsic excellence and large numbers will under these circumstances bear a direct relation to each other. From all that has been said, and from all the evidence that has been adduced on this subject, there can hardly be a doubt that there is the most urgent demand for reform in the mode of administration of the Canadian medical schools. Until this is accomplished, it is vain to look for real prosperity or greatness in these institutions, and it is equally vain to expect any improvement in the social position and moral status of the medical



profession. And here the question naturally arises, whose aid are we to invoke in this work of reform and elevation? No doubt much might be done by those most interested, viz., by those members of the profession who at present have the administration of the medical schools entirely in their own hands. But to achieve anything like a satisfactory result, the most harmonious and uniform action would be necessary; and I fear the old well-known proverb which characterizes our profession as fond of a difference of opinion, is too true to admit of any hope from that quarter.

It is not necessary, however, to indulge in any surmises on this question. It has been most satisfactorily answered for us by history. History has taught us that there is but one source from which we can hope for deliverance, viz., "from the supreme civil power." To this power alone we look for the elevation of our profession in Canada to its proper social level as a truly honourable and learned profession. That this power will ere long interfere on our behalf can hardly be doubted.

The consummation of that grand scheme of confederation which at present engrosses the attention of the greatest statesmen here and at home, that scheme which promises to give birth to a mighty giant among the nations, and which holds out to us and to all the sister provinces the confident assurance of a great and glorious future—the consummation of this scheme, I say, will surely bring with it from the supreme civil power the much needed measure of medical reform.

What we want is an Act which will effect for British North America what Mr. Walpole's medical Act effected for Great Britain. Dr. Christison, in the lecture already quoted, enumerates the benefits derived from Mr. Walpole's Act, as follows:—

First, he says, we have got for the government of medical affairs a National Medical Council of 24 members, nominated partly by Universities, partly by corporations, and partly by the Crown.

2. We have got a register of lawfully qualified practitioners; and if any such person do not find himself there, it is his own fault.

3. We have in the General Medical Council a body appointed to keep the register pure ; to say who has a right to admission, and under what title. In this line of duty the council has already shown itself powerful to keep out quacks, to punish impostors, and to curb unfounded claims by the constituted medical bodies.

4. We have got the local privileges of practice of all our medical institutions widened, from a right over one division of the kingdom or a district of a division merely, to a similar right over all Her Majesty's dominions.

5. We have got a legislative discouragement of quackery. We cannot indeed with the Medical Act put down quacks summarily as many hoped to do. But it is a discouragement that no such person dare call himself by any of the numerous professional titles which denote a regular practitioner qualified to be registered.

6. We have got in the Medical Council a council of education entitled to see that practitioners are educated and examined competently for the efficient exercise of their profession.

We cannot at present stop to consider in detail all the blessings which have been conferred upon the British nation in relation to its medical institutions and practitioners by this Act, nor can we at present stop to inquire whether an exactly similar act would be in every respect adapted to the circumstances and requirements of the medical institutions of the British North American Confederation ; but I may here be permitted to remark that if our hopes of confederation are realized, and if at the same time a measure of medical reform is obtained, the whole confederation ought to have an equal share in its salutary influences.

Principal Dawson, in an eloquent and highly interesting lecture recently delivered, has pointed out that the greatest evils would undoubtedly follow from the local governments of the confederation having it in their power to settle each one for itself the legal value of its University degrees. Such a course, he says, " would tend to the erection of different standards in the different Provinces, and to give to the degrees of our Universities a merely local value. The degrees of all existing Universities should be degrees for all British America. The stand-



ard of professional education in the different provinces should as far as possible be assimilated and raised sufficiently high to prevent the interference of uneducated practitioners, and, if possible, to secure for our degrees that recognition in Great Britain which the separate provinces have as yet been unable to obtain. In order to these ends the general government should assume the supervision of this matter, or should at least retain the power to revise all local legislation in regard to it. Perhaps the best method to secure the desired result would be the appointment of an Educational Council similar to the Medical Council in Great Britain, and to charge this body with the oversight of all matters relating to professional education and the value of degrees therein."

These opinions, coming, as they do from very high authority, are entitled to the utmost respect; and it is to be hoped that they will be permitted to have due weight with the legislators of the land, or rather with the framers of the new constitution.

In pointing out, as I have now attempted to do, the humiliating position at present occupied by the medical profession in Canada, and the inherent imperfections of our present system of medical education, I have been influenced by a deep sense of the importance of the subject and by a sincere desire to discharge a duty not only to the medical school with which I have now the honour to be connected, but also to the profession of which I have ~~now~~ the honour to be a humble member. Assuredly the time has come when the old hackneyed question "to be, or not to be" may with propriety be asked respecting the medical profession and medical schools in Canada. Our noble profession! is it hereafter to be or not to be entitled to that designation? Is it to be or not to be, an honourable, enlightened profession worthy of the age in which we live? Is it or is it not to exercise that mighty influence in the cause of truth and civilization which it is in every respect well calculated to exercise? Are our medical schools to be "seminaries of science," institutions for preserving, teaching and extending that learning which constitutes "a foot in the tripod of a country's erudition, or

are they to be asylums of ignorance," mints for the manufacture and utterance of counterfeit coinage? Let us hope, my friends, that these questions will ere long be answered for us to our entire satisfaction: let us hope that upon the medical profession and medical schools, as well as upon all the institutions of these provinces, a new and glorious era is about to dawn. Let us moreover, as teachers, practitioners and students of the great science of medicine, endeavour to appreciate and perform the part which it behoves each one of us to perform in relation to that science.

Let us spare no exertion and grudge no sacrifice in our endeavours to secure the elevation of the medical profession and medical schools of Canada to their legitimate social position and their proper degree of efficiency and prosperity.

Let us remember that each one of us, the humblest as well as the most eminent, has his own proper part to play, his own peculiar share of influence to exert, not only in the relations of life generally, but also in the special relation of teacher, practitioner, or student of medicine.

"Let us then be up and doing,  
With a heart for every fate,  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labour and to wait."



