Address to the students of St. Thomas's hospital / delivered at the opening of the session, October 1st, 1874 by William Mac Cormac.

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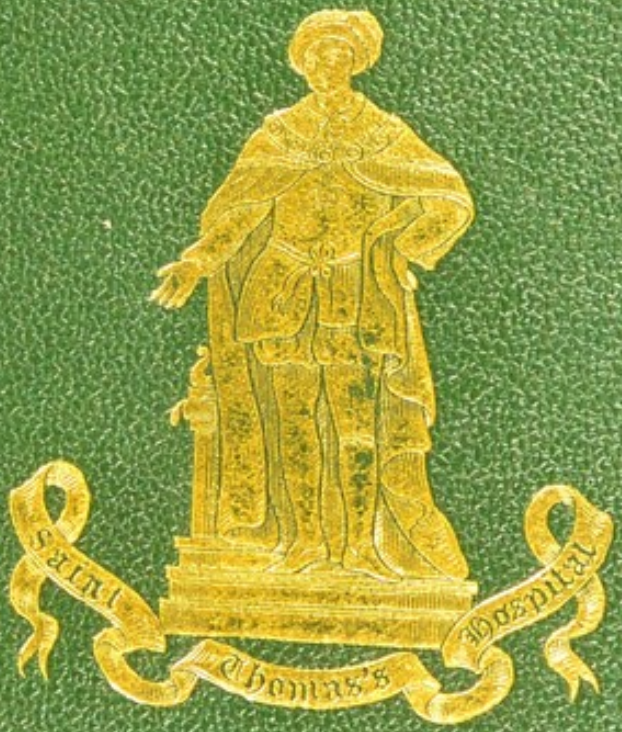

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AN ADDRESS

TO THE

Students of St. Thomas's Hospital,

DELIVERED AT THE

OPENING OF THE SESSION, OCTOBER 1ST, 1874.

BY

WILLIAM MAC CORMAC,

SURGEON TO THE HOSPITAL,

AND LECTURER ON SURGERY IN THE MEDICAL SCHOOL.

Second Edition.

LONDON:

J. W. KOLCKMANN,

PRINCES STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE, W.

1874.

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INTRODUCTION.

At the request of the Treasurer, Sir Francis Hicks, I print this Address. To him, and to the Meeting which so cordially endorsed the request, I tender my best thanks.

WILLIAM MAC CORMAC.

13, Harley Street, London, W.

October, 1874.

AN ADDRESS.

Sir Francis Hicks and Gentlemen,

An elevated position, as the powerful Pope Adrian IV. once confided to a friend, is not always a source of happiness. I can fully appreciate the truth of this observation. For the moment my position is, apparently, an elevated one, yet I know that I fill it imperfectly, and can feel but faint assurance of being able to justify the choice my colleagues have seen fit to make. Deeply sensible as I am of the honour conferred upon me, and the importance of the occasion, I must confess I did my best to evade it. I entreated that some one else should be selected. I even suggested it might be well to abandon altogether the practice of giving an Introductory Address. But finding entreaties were in vain I yielded, with such grace as I could muster, to the inevitable.

What, then, in my inexperience would seem more natural than to turn to those friends, at once able and willing to give me some advice?

The first I spoke to said, "It does not matter in the least what you say—be it good, bad,

or indifferent—for not a word of it will be heard."

"Give way to no anxiety," said a second. "Read up some old Addresses, 'Rejected Ones' to be preferred. With these and a few quotations, you will complete your Address in an evening."

"Go in bravely," was the advice of an accomplished physician, "and repeat once more the good old things that have been so often told before. They are true, and will certainly be new to those to whom they are meant to be addressed. Never mind the rest."

Again, I was advised to say much in praise of ourselves, and to criticise very freely everybody else. And so on with many more. From each person to whom I spoke, I received a contradictory opinion, and I began to feel myself drifting into the mental condition of that ancient donkey-driver, who, while striving to please everyone, succeeded in satisfying nobody.

But now it occurs to me that, perhaps, my first duty in giving this Address is to begin by introducing myself. May I, then, claim your indulgence for uttering a word or two of a personal nature? This Hospital is of very ancient foundation, but it is only of yesterday that I became attached to it. I have not had the advantage—which you will have, which my colleagues and predecessors have had—of being educated within its walls, and thus becoming identified with its traditions. Four short years ago, I could not in my most ambitious dreams have ventured to imagine that I was to occupy

the proud position I now hold of Surgeon to this splendid Hospital, and Teacher of Surgery in its Medical School. Four years ago I was personally unacquainted with any member of its Staff, or with any of its Authorities. I wish, therefore, to take this the first public opportunity I have had to testify to you Sir Francis Hicks, to you my Colleagues, and last, though not least, to you the Pupils of this School, in what a generous spirit my desire to come amongst you was entertained, and with what cordiality I have been adopted. I came amongst you a stranger; but I can say, I believe with truth, as I can with pride, I am a stranger no longer.

Gentlemen, I do not intend troubling you with much of what is commonly termed good advice to students. It is somewhat late for you now to begin to learn the responsibilities you assume in having made choice of the profession of Medicine. You have all, I doubt not, more or less seriously considered the duties upon which you are about to enter. It is to be earnestly hoped that you come thoroughly prepared and educated for a task which surely requires as much as any the exercise of the most disciplined intelligence. The medical student should have enjoyed the very best preliminary culture that schools and colleges are fitted to impart. Without such previous training you would find yourselves unfitted adequately to grasp the subjects now demanding your attention, or adequately to fill hereafter a responsible professional position. But let me here tell you that, however well prepared you

come, it will be hardly practicable to learn all you ought to know within the short period of a medical curriculum. It is at best but an interval of training, in which the most valuable knowledge you shall acquire will be the art of teaching yourselves. "Every person," says Gibbon, "receives two educations—one from others, and one, the more important, he gives himself." It is the latter which you must studiously pursue. Your most precious possession is your time; the moments lost are never to be retrieved. Like the Peau de Chagrin, in Balzac's story, time, whether used or abused, shrinks and dwindles till at last it is no more.

Life is limited, and yet none the less is it needful to live. I do not, therefore, wish to hold up any impracticable, or too high flown, ideal, lest by so doing I should deter you from making any attempt at all. Rather would I say that before you all lies a fair and adequate reward for honest work, a result which, nevertheless, some amongst you, by dint of unusual application or exceptional talent, may far surpass. The majority cannot perhaps attain to wide-spread fame, but they will, at least, realise the satisfaction accruing from a reasonable ambition, and an upright purpose. Your work will not, on this account, prove less useful or essential, nor will it be less respected. Happiness, Gentlemen, depends not so much on position, as on character.

Those who are ambitious of great success must be prepared for years of hard, and perhaps ill-requited, labour. All real excellence depends on never-ending striving after it; nor

is the price too great to pay; while you may be very sure that what is termed good luck or good fortune is but a broken reed to rest upon, for the Goddess Fortuna commonly sells very dear what she appears to bestow as a gift.

The Governors of this Royal Charity have furnished you with a splendid structure, one well supplied with everything you can require for the successful prosecution of your studies. As for the Staff of teachers connected with it, nowhere, I am sure, will you find any better able, or more willing, to impart instruction. And whenever you experience a doubt on any subject, have a difficulty to surmount, or a scrape, even, to get out of, the wisest thing you can do is to consult those teachers, in whom you will find friends both competent and willing to assist and advise you. And, I say it in all seriousness, it can be through no shortcoming, save your own, if you fail to attain to a competent knowledge of your profession.

With reference to your future teachers, it appears to me quite superfluous to praise them or their work. The choice you have made of this School is the best practical proof you can offer of the high estimation in which you hold the medical instruction here afforded; while, were I to mention them by name, the enthusiastic greetings of the senior students would sufficiently indicate the affectionate regard they entertain for those teachers, and their appreciation of the labour that has been bestowed upon them. This is in itself a great reward, and proof—were proof

needed—that the work of the man who really strives to teach, is most thoroughly appreciated. The intercourse of the teacher and student should be always cordial. In after times you will hold in kindly recollection those who took you by the hand on entering your chosen career, and led you patiently and faithfully to the wished-for goal. The echoes of their voices will long linger in your memory, and far into the still evening of your lives.*

Were I inclined to be hypercritical, Gentlemen, I might perhaps point out one drawback in our school buildings; I mean the alluring prospect from the windows, a prospect which may perchance entice the student sometimes from his book. The broad old river flowing ceaselessly past our hospital walls, its constant succession of floating craft, the handsome bridge that spans its waters, the noble pile that rises grandly from the further side, with the magnificent Embankments that line the shores, complete a picture that may well challenge a parallel in any capital of the world.

And yet I do not fear such distractions. It is good to gaze at beautiful things, for they call forth beautiful thoughts, and beautiful thoughts prompt to good acts. Is it too great a stretch of fancy to believe that such noble surroundings must influence beneficially the student's career, and urge him to excel in his after course through life?

Gentlemen, even hospitals are proud of

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* "Graduation Address," Oliver Wendell Holmes.

their pedigree, and the Royal Hospital of St. Thomas forms no exception to the rule. I might spend all the time allotted to this Address in recounting traditions of a Foundation now flourishing under its present constitution more than three hundred years. Old associations always exercise a peculiar charm, and speaking for myself, my recent connection with the hospital only tends to render them additionally attractive.

In a book dated so far back as 1652, I found printed the Orders for the better government of the Royal Hospitals. It is stated in the preface, "the publick might well marvell how many are there relieved and there maintained, considering the excessive prices of all things at this day;" and yet the daily dietary of each patient cost but twopence.

In the same work, "the chirurgians," it is mentioned, are charged faithfully and truly, to the uttermost of their knowledge, to help to cure the griefes and diseases of the poor in the hospitall, setting aside all favor, affection, gain, or lucre, and that as well for the poorest, destitute of all friends and succour, as to such as shall peradventure be better friended." And this they have done, Gentlemen, and do even to the present day.

Nevertheless, surgery was at a discount rather in those "good old times." For example, we read in the orders of St. Bartholomew, dated 1633, "that no chirurgeon, or his man, doe trepan the head, dismember, or perform any great oper'con, but with the approbation or by the direction of the doctor." So

recently even as in Mr. Pott's time, this rule was revived and enforced. And we find that at the Mansion House, in 1572, before the Lord Mayor, the Bishop of London, and various learned persons, it was debated whether a surgeon could lawfully prescribe internal remedies, whereupon it was decided that he could not—not even in *Morbo Gallico.* The physicians, however, reserved the right of dabbling in surgery for themselves.

Special operators were also appointed to cut poor persons for the stone, and a Mr. Mullins performed that function in the "several hospitals of St. Bartholomew, and St. Thomas in Southwarke." Bone-setters for a long period treated all persons suffering from dislocation and fracture; and strange to relate, a female doctor had charge of the cases of scald head, and received more money thereby than did any other member of the Staff.

In France the follies and extravagances of certain members of the faculty were about this time lashed by Molière. There were those who used to bleed for every possible disorder until no more blood would flow. The use of Enemeta was cultivated by some almost as one of the fine arts, while Antimony was vaunted as the sovereign remedy in the hands of others. When the treatment employed did not very shortly relieve the patient, they would often begin it over again with a result that needs not to be further specified.

"We cure the sick," says Guy Patin, "when over eighty years old by blood-letting, and also infants not more than two or three months, with

as much success and as little inconvenience." Unlucky, indeed, were those who rebelled against reigning opinion. A well-known physician told the doctors who wanted to bleed him that he would much prefer to die naturally than to be bled to death, and die he did. His exasperated confrères consoled themselves by saying, that at any rate the Devil would surely bleed him in the other world, as rightly befitted an impostor who refused to die according to prescribed forms.

Yet blood-letting, rightly practised, may prove an excellent thing after all, and the new generation may see it freely resorted to once more. But never again can it be insisted upon as a creed, or as a practice considered applicable to every kind of disorder.

In the middle of the last century lived two men, Cheselden and Mead, whose names ought to be familiar to everyone connected with this hospital. Of Cheselden, personally, too little unfortunately is known, but his good work lives after him. In a letter to Swift, Pope writes that "he is the most noted and deserving man in the whole profession of chirurgery, and has saved the lives of hundreds, by his manner of cutting for the stone." This, however, was but one of his numerous achievements.

Mead was a man of polish and refinement, and, like his contemporary and friend Boërhaeve, much devoted to literary culture. It is said of him, that of all the physicians who ever flourished, he perhaps gained the most, spent the most, and enjoyed the highest favour—not only in his own but in foreign countries.

It is, I believe, a good thing to look back sometimes at the work of our predecessors, were it only to judge the distance we have come, and the rate at which we have travelled. We are, indeed, a little ungrateful to them, apt to prove unmindful that it is through their efforts we have been able so far to surpass them. The successes of the present are founded on the labours of the past—on the thought and toil of those who are no more.

Old Ambroise Paré observes that they who follow us mount as on the shoulders of giants, whence an ever widening horizon opens to their view. We must not, therefore, wantonly displace the leaders of the past from their thrones. There is, in truth, much that is interesting, much also to be learned, from the records of bygone surgery and medicine; and these records do not merit the systematic neglect in which they are too much buried.

"Vergiss die treuen Todten nicht."

Körner.

Not to speak of Paré, or Richard Wiseman —who has been called the English Paré—and very many others, how comparatively few now-a-days read such a work as that of Pott, which, for its time, is simply admirable. His correct taste and masterly language, combined with the utmost precision and clearness, place his writings high in the rank of medical literature. I have seldom perused any work with greater pleasure than that of William Hey, who flourished at Leeds about a hundred years since. The Heys were, I believe, among the pupils of this hospital.

White, of Manchester, who was one of the first to practise the excision of diseased joints, also a pupil of St. Thomas's, has left "Cases in Surgery with Remarks" that teem with manifold interest. These and similar works were written with the single purpose of advancing science and benefiting mankind. They embody the results arrived at by able intellects, and are far removed from those crude statements or sweeping conclusions, that are derived from an insufficient experience.

I would willingly illustrate my meaning further did only time permit. But do not mistake me, Gentlemen. Not for a single moment would I praise the past at the expense of the present. I only mean to say that it is neither wise nor magnanimous to kick, as of no account from under us, the ladders by which we have scaled the heights of modern science. Much as I respect the past, I agree with the author of the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," who, in an Address to the Graduates of Harvard University, said he would rather be in the hands of the most newly fledged practitioner of the present day than in those of Fabricius Hildanus, could he only reappear amongst us.

Of the new studies which you must begin, Anatomy is of first importance. And here a retrospective glance shows what immense difficulties surrounded the pursuit in former days—difficulties the recollection of which should but stimulate you to increased zeal in taking advantage of the great facilities that fortunately now subsist. From its

cradle up, anatomy has been hampered by prejudices that absolutely forbade the exploration of the human body after death.

It would be here out of place to dilate on the history of anatomy. You will soon become familiar with the names at least of some of the great anatomists of the past—Cotunnius, Eustachius, Fallopius, Sylvius, Spigelius, Arantius, and Vesalius (the greatest of them all), have left memories that will last as long as man.

Vesalius, who flourished about the time this hospital was founded, left all previous anatomists far behind. He taught at Padua, and when only twenty-five, published a complete anatomy of the human body, the first of its kind. The splendid plates in this work if not, as was supposed, from the pencil of Titian himself, are at least drawn by his favourite pupil, Calcar. We can scarcely realise now the intense devotion to science shown by Vesalius and his fellow-workers. "They prowled," says Hallam, "through charnel houses by night, dug the dead from their graves, and climbed the gibbet in fear and silence to steal the mouldering carcase of the murderer." The age when this was done was both cruel and superstitious, one that did not hesitate to condemn the living to the flames, the rack, the thumbscrew, and the wheel, and yet pronounced the pursuit of anatomy a sacrilege and a crime. Vesalius did much also for the teaching of surgery and medicine, to both of which in his anatomical writings he makes frequent reference. He rightly de-

clared a correct knowledge of anatomy to be essential to the physician and surgeon alike, and many an Address, Gentlemen, delivered this first day of October will urge, I am sure, a like necessity, just as did Vesalius three hundred years ago.

This man, to whom we owe so much, died in banishment, friendless and unknown, only saved indeed from ignominious death at the hands of the Inquisition by the powerful influence and high favour of the Emperor Charles V.

Among anatomists of more recent times no one perhaps stands out more prominently than does Xavier Bichat. French surgery was then in the ascendant. All eyes in Bichat's youth turned towards the brilliant Dessault, whose friend and pupil Bichat was. To Bichat we owe the division of anatomy into general, descriptive, and surgical. He was among the earliest to insist on the necessity for experiment on the lower animals in order to gain a clearer insight into the otherwise hidden secrets of the human organism, a necessity which, in spite of prejudiced opposition, must sooner or later be fully admitted. Like Fallopius, he died young, at the age of only thirty-one; and of him it has been well said,—

"Personne en si peu de temps n'a fait tant de choses."

But I may dwell no longer on these brief references to anatomy. The greatest difficulty with which you must now contend is your own natural inactivity. Overcome this, and few other obstacles will present themselves. Were you

to ask me how you should best study the subject, and what books you ought to read, my reply would be to throw open the dissecting-room doors, and pointing, somewhat as John Hunter is said to have done, to the bodies lying upon the tables, exclaim "There are your books!"

I have already said, Gentlemen, that I did not mean to trouble you with much advice. To one point, however, I must advert. I would most strongly counsel you to acquire a competent knowledge of at least one modern language in addition to your own. Among the things which strike one in perusing the biographies of eminent persons is the circumstance that almost always were they conversant with several tongues. Parodying the words of Mithridates, the Emperor Charles V. is reported to have said that the man who knows two languages is thereby rendered twice a man. In an address delivered not long ago at King's College, Mr. Forster spoke strongly, and yet not too strongly, on this matter. "It was scarcely possible," he said to the students, "to estimate the unpleasantness, the inconvenience, the positive loss even, arising from not being thoroughly conversant with French." Not to advert to the grace, terseness, and clearness of this language, it has become indispensable in respect of the pursuit of literature and of travel. But not less indispensable, let me assure you, is a knowledge of the German tongue, which in vigour and pathos perhaps excels the French, while for purposes of scientific study it appears to me to

have become an absolute necessity. The labour of acquiring languages other than our own is a useful mental effort, and a pleasure-giving one as well. Those who would take advantage of their opportunities must keep in view the ever-broadening expanse of modern scientific culture. There are workers everywhere; but how are we to benefit by their work unless we understand their language? We may, indeed, avail ourselves of translations, but these at best are but diluted transcripts, bereft of all the life and verve of the original, and mostly come too late to prove of much advantage. We are, in fact, somewhat prone to wrap ourselves up in our own insularity, if I may adopt the expression. Insularity may be an admirable thing geographically speaking, but in science it is too often fatal.

From the French and German standard authors very much indeed is to be obtained, and we are indebted for many things to the labours of the workers of both countries. In surgery France has given us much. The ligation of arteries was an inspiration of French surgical genius. The torsion of these vessels, now so largely practised for the arrest of hæmorrhage, comes also from France. To France too we owe the introduction of the aspirator, with its many valuable uses. For how many excellent operative procedures, mechanical and other expedients—the sphygmograph, for instance, and others far too numerous to mention, are we not indebted to this country. Whatever may be their shortcomings—and what people are devoid of them?—French physicians and

surgeons are practical men, and have ever held in view the welfare and advantage of their patients.

In Germany at the present day the number and ability of the scientific labourers are hardly to be counted. With us it is somewhat rare to find men able and willing to work for the sake of Science alone, whereas each German University provides a centre for scientific effort, pursued often without any immediate, or perhaps even prospective, pecuniary reward. The ophthalmoscope, which issued perfect from the hands of Helmholtz, comes from Germany. It is a thoroughly practical achievement, and has completely revolutionised the diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the eye. The same might be said of the laryngoscope in respect of diseases of the throat. The galvano-cautery, which serves so many admirable purposes, is of similar origin, and was first introduced into this country by our illustrious Senior Surgeon, Mr. Simon. Subcutaneous tenotomy, with whose magical simplicity and efficacy we have become familiar, was discovered by that great surgeon Stromeyer, whose recent visit to us most of you will remember. The practice of subperiosteal operations, by whose means an excised joint may often be restored to all but perfect shape and function, we owe to the not less distinguished Langenbeck; and to Esmarch are we indebted for one of the most remarkable improvements in modern surgery—the means of performing operations, the most tedious and difficult, without one drop of blood obscuring the vision of the operator or being lost to the patient.

Gentlemen, for those of you who can compass it, it would be well at a later period of your studies to spend some time at a foreign school. You would thus at once acquire increased experience and enlarged views.

But we have also reason to be proud, and justly proud, of the achievements of the physicians and surgeons of our own country. "From the time of Hunter to the present day English surgery," to quote the words of Billroth, "has had about it something noble." I cannot here enumerate even a small portion of those achievements, but were I to point out what I consider the chief characteristic of English medicine, I should say that in England—more, perhaps, than anywhere else—the advantage of the sick person is the one grand object to which all others are made subservient. We are termed practical because to this end we turn all our science, all our knowledge. And surely this is the noblest aim of medicine, the most beneficial to our kind. But we do not, therefore, appreciate knowledge or cultivate science any the less; and to this single-mindedness of purpose do we owe, I believe, the high place which Medicine in this country occupies.

If now we but cast a glance across the Western Sea we behold a Continent teeming with resources, and, like some young giant, trying to surmount difficulties and promote progress. Young as is America, she has done much for surgery. Her surgeons are fertile in resource as is the soil to which they belong. It was there that a surgeon first dared to perform ovariotomy—an operation now brought in Eng-

land to the highest pitch of perfection by an old student of St. Thomas's, Mr. Spencer Wells. From America first came the inestimable boon of anæsthesia. It was there that the distinguished surgeon, Marion Sims, first employed silver sutures, and by their happy aid and his own great skill, was able successfully to remove one of the most distressing inflictions from which a woman can suffer.

No European nation, probably, can point to such a monument of industry, so great a mass of invaluable material, carefully preserved and digested, as are the Records of the United States Army Medical Department. It is an undertaking simply gigantic, and reflects equal credit on the Government that originated and the medical men who so ably carried it out. Such records prove of the utmost service, not merely to military, but also to civil surgery. There is, indeed, no essential distinction between the two, except that the military surgeon must be prepared to bring all his resources to bear at a moment's notice, to exert them to the uttermost, and often in respect of very large numbers of men.

Whenever wars occur, we are sure to find the foremost in our profession anxious to take a share in mitigating their horrors. In the Crimean campaign there were present many civil surgeons whose names are now well known in London and elsewhere. Sir Astley Cooper, Sir Charles Bell, Tyrrell, Aston Key, and others, went to Brussels after Waterloo. Their great contemporary Dupuytren left the wards of

the Hôtel Dieu, of which he was so fond, to join the French army in the field. In Germany and France large numbers of civilian surgeons served during the recent campaigns with the armies and in the hospitals. It would, indeed, be difficult to name a single man of note in either country who did not take some part, often a very large one, in the work.

Stromeyer and Langenbeck, Esmarch, and Billroth, are eminent authorities in military surgery, and yet are they all University professors. On the French side, Ricord, Demarquay, Verneuil, Le Fort, and many others—all hospital surgeons—were quite as prominent.

A curious contrast might, indeed, be drawn between the wars of ancient and modern times. Henry the Fifth of England had but one principal surgeon with him when he invaded France—Thomas Morstede. Even at the battle of Agincourt, Morstede was the only surgeon connected with the army. Fifteen assistants were, however, employed; but they were required to do a little fighting as well. Three of them, in fact, acted as Archers.

And yet, possibly, strange though it sound, the wounded may have received as much attention then as they did during many of the battles of the Franco-German war. In the two days' fighting of the 16th and 18th August before Metz, at Mars la Tour, and Gravelotte, 42,000 men fell dead or wounded on the German side alone. What, I ask, could even the best concerted measures avail against such a mass of suffering? Alas! nothing, or next to nothing. In the small village of St. Marie aux Chênes,

the Surgeon-General of the Saxon army told me that immediately after the battle of the 18th there were 10,000 wounded men, chiefly the picked soldiers of the Prussian Guards, under his immediate charge with but a small staff of assistants.

Never shall I forget the events of what may well be called a second Waterloo, as fought before Sedan on the 1st of September, 1870. I had reached the place the day before, with the intention of joining MacMahon's army and the front. Not a soldier was to be seen in the entire fortress. Then, during the night, arrived the French Emperor, almost unattended. The battle, which lasted the entire day, began next morning at early dawn; but ere the day was spent 120,000 fighting men, half-starved, demoralised, and in retreat, were to be seen tumbling one over another into the small town. Next morning, when the news was known, we heard the shouts of victory from the conquering hosts outside the walls. We saw them muster to salute their leader, the Prussian King, while the French legions were shortly after marched to German prisons. A startling page it was in the world's history.

How many wounded French there were I really know not, but they filled the houses, the churches, the theatres, while hundreds lay scattered about the roads and fields untended where they fell. During that eventful day I and those who were along with me had to deal with a thousand or more of badly wounded men. A more painful feeling of the little value of life at such a time, of the utter impossibility of coping

adequately with so much misery, I trust I may never again experience. It was a heartrending spectacle—a profligate waste of human life.

Yet, so far from there being any chance of lasting peace, Wars, I feel convinced, are but too certain to recur, and to increase in magnitude. I have even heard the probable date assigned for the next great European struggle. Some amongst you may have the opportunity of taking a part in it, and it will be well for you, therefore, to gain an insight into the principles of military surgery, which, despite our insular position, we cannot afford completely to disregard.

And now, before I conclude, may I be permitted to say a word on a subject which cannot, I think, be considered inappropriate? I would urge each one of you to cultivate a taste for some study or other not entirely professional—a taste, which so long as it is in itself laudable, will not fail to prove a solace and resource when the cares of the world begin to press, or its anxieties to harass. A man without some such resource is but badly equipped for the battle of life. And if I may mention one pursuit of many within your reach, I do not think I could well urge anything better deserving your attention than that of general literature. "Give a man but this taste," says Sir John Herschel, "and the means of gratifying it, and you can scarcely fail to render him happy. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history, you make him a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages."

A German poet, Gentlemen, in most beautiful verses, has sung the lay of the life of man. The "Song of the Bell" has often been translated, but its exquisite beauty—that beauty which belongs to form—expires in the process. "So full is it," declares Lord Lytton, "of pathos, spirit, and variety, so complete its mastery over language, that were even an English Schiller the translator, much of its excellence must be lost."

Its opening lines, if I may quote them, appear very closely to apply to your present position—

Fest gemauert in der Erden
Steht die Form, aus Lehm gebrannt.
Heute muss die Glocke werden !
Frisch, Gesellen ! seid zur Hand !

Von der Stirne heiss
Rinnen muss der Schweiss,
Soll das Werk den Meister loben ;
Doch der Segen kommt von oben.

Zum Werke, das wir ernst bereiten,
Geziemt sich wohl ein ernstes Wort ;
Wenn gute Reden sie begleiten,
Dann fliesst die Arbeit munter fort.

Gentlemen, these stirring words declare the sterling metal of the Bell which we must jointly endeavour to found. Its tones hereafter shall ring out clear or cracked, according to the foundation which now and henceforward we shall prepare to build. Worldly success you may or may not achieve, but desert, so infinitely superior to mere success alone, is completely within your grasp.

Gentlemen, I have done, though very much of what I could have wished to say must now remain unsaid. Would that I could have brought a fuller measure of competence to enlarge upon my theme, the culture of surgical science, the alleviation of the miseries of man. But I have done my best. Fain would I hope that you will bear away with you this day the firm determination to do the work that lies before you ably, faithfully, and honestly. I have tried with such ability as I possess, and as befits an occasion like the present, when so many of you are about to begin that struggle with disease and suffering which is to continue to your life's end,—I have tried to be in earnest, and may you, too, Gentlemen, ever strive to be the same.

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