

**An introductory address, delivered at the London Hospital Medical School,
at the opening of the session 1850-51 / by Nathaniel Ward.**

Contributors

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To the Editor of the
Monthly Journal &c.
in the Author's Compt.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE LONDON HOSPITAL

MEDICAL SCHOOL

BY

WILLIAM WARD, M.D.

PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE

AND REGISTRAR IN MEDICINE TO THE LONDON HOSPITAL

WITH AN APPENDIX

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY W. H. COX

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INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT

The London Hospital

MEDICAL SCHOOL,

AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION 1850-51.

BY

NATHANIEL WARD, F.R.C.S.E.

DEMONSTRATOR OF ANATOMY,

AND ASSISTANT-SURGEON TO THE LONDON HOSPITAL.

LONDON:

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INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

It is one of the prominent features of a liberal education, that man aims at acquiring his livelihood not merely by manual labour, but by the exercise of those mental faculties which have been nurtured and developed during the period of youth. As he emerges from the scene of scholastic rule, and approaches the boundaries of independent thought and action, he becomes sensible of having passed through one epoch of existence, and should pause in deep and serious reflection, to take a review of the past, and make provision for the future.

The result of his meditations, however they may deviate from the path of candid enquiry and careful argument, however they may be intruded on by the fanciful visions of unearned happiness and prosperity, should be the practical conclusion, the

irresistible conviction that his position in life, as a useful and responsible agent, must depend on the correct and assiduous application of his intellectual endowments. Now the requirements of society at large, in all their varied and complicated relations, call as much for the exercise of these capabilities as the wishes of the individual should prompt him to employ them. These demands are so numerous and diversified in character, that ample scope is given for the application of talent the most varied, and it becomes merely a matter of decision on his part into what channel he should direct his energies. The selection should mainly depend on the nature and extent of his preliminary knowledge, the power and inclination of his mind, his capability for sustained exertion, and the opportunity which the circumstances in which he is placed afford for the further advantageous development of them all. The different steps in this important enquiry should be conducted with the utmost care and discrimination, the most rigid self-examination should be instituted, and the opinions of those calculated to bring about or to interfere with a correct estimate should be carefully canvassed. The consideration of these points is, no

doubt, beset with difficulty, and it becomes at times a painful effort to regard them in their proper bearing, to separate the genuine from the factitious, the one-sided from the disinterested. Daily experience teaches us, in fact, that many a man enters on the earnest duties of life with lamentable uncertainty and indecision of purpose; the unreflecting victim of those probably who have reared him up from early infancy in an atmosphere of flattery, who have more than gratified every wish, however frivolous, and who have thus warped his judgment and sapped the fresh vigour of his mind, never thinking, in the blinded conceit of their own peculiar perception, that such a course is fraught with the greatest mischief to society, and imperils even the welfare of him who is about to enter it as a self-acting member. We would not for one moment attempt to disparage the advantage of well-judged advice, or urge on the youthful aspirant after independence, that he should set at nought, or even lightly estimate, the opinions of those who have learned their lesson of life in the exercise of untiring usefulness and assiduity; and who, having made a judicious and profitable investment of their talents, have carefully studied from their proud and enviable position the inward work-

ings of human nature. It is, however, of vast, nay paramount, importance to him, to whom advice is tendered concerning the part that he should undertake in the realities of existence, be it given by parents, relations, friends, or associates, to be firmly convinced that such advice is consonant with his own conclusions, provided they have been worked out according to the rules of sound reason and common sense. Were determinations based on such considerations as these, more frequently arrived at, the world at large would materially benefit by the proper adjustment and exercise of the human intellect, and numbers who now wander heedlessly about, haunted, as it were, by the spirit of their prostituted powers, would have found a congenial soil for the cultivation of their abilities, and taken their active part in the onward movement of civilization, instead of acting as a dead weight to its progress.

We sincerely trust that the decision, you gentlemen, whom we have the pleasure of meeting here for the first time, have arrived at, is well established, and that the foundation you have laid during the period of your primary education is fully capable of

sustaining the superstructure you are about to erect on it. If this be not the case, you will have either to repair and add to the one while you are raising up the other, a task fraught with intense unceasing toil and anxiety; or else you must necessarily accommodate the dimensions and degree of solidity of the one to the sustaining power of the other.

We hope you have well weighed these things. We can hardly doubt that the majority of you have a vivid recollection of the labour you have gone through, and of the compensating gratification you have derived from the manner in which you have directed the by-gone discipline of your understanding; and in the language of an eminent author, "Well and happily has he conducted it who has learnt to derive, from the exercise of it, regular occupation and rational delight, who, after having overcome the first pain of application, and acquired a habit of looking inwards upon his own mind, perceives that every day is multiplying the relations, confirming the accuracy, and augmenting the number of his ideas; who feels that he is rising in the scale of intellectual beings, gathering new strength with every difficulty which he sub-

dues, and enjoying to-day as his pleasure that which yesterday he laboured at as his toil. There are many consolations in the mind of such an one which no common life can ever afford, and many enjoyments which it has not to give. It is not the mere cry of moralists and the flourish of rhetoricians; but it is *noble* to seek truth, and it is *beautiful* to find it. It is the ancient feeling of the human heart that knowledge is better than riches, and it is deeply and *sacredly true*! To mark the course of human passions as they have flowed onward in ages that are past; to see why nations have risen, and why they have fallen; to speak of heat, and light, and the winds; to know what man has discovered in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath; to hear the chemist unfold the marvellous properties that the Creator has locked up in a speck of earth; to be told that there are worlds so distant from the sun, that the quickness of light travelling from the world's creation has never yet reached us; to wander in the creations of poetry, and grow warm again with that eloquence which swayed the democracies of the old world; to go up with the great reasoners to the First Cause of all, and to perceive in the midst of all

this dissolution and decay, and cruel separation, that there *is* one thing unchangeable, indestructible, everlasting;—it is worth while in the days of our youth to strive hard for this great discipline; to pass sleepless nights for it; to give up to it laborious days; to spurn for it present pleasures.”*

It is by the continued spirit, if not by the letter of such discipline as this, that we trust you, gentlemen, who are about to undertake the responsible duties involved in a qualification for the medical profession, will be actuated;—that you will be urged forward in your onward course by the permanent impulse of industry and enthusiasm, dedicating to the attainment of your object an amount of energy and rational devotion, commensurate with its importance and extent. It is not a mere worldly speculation in which you are about to be engaged, and from which you may expect to derive the maximum of proceeds from the minimum of labour. It is, on the contrary, an undertaking of deep and earnest interest; not only fully capable of gaining for you a respectable position in life, but of exalting the mind, and enlarging the boundaries of intellectual

**Sketches of Moral Philosophy.* By Rev. Sydney Smith.

enjoyment. To pursue it with a due sense of its grandeur and nobility may well be looked on as an ennobling occupation; but to come to its investigation with a wayward feeling of flippancy, is virtually to cast an insult on nature and her Author, to trifle with reason, and to tamper with the best and purest feelings of the heart.

That you regard the prospect before you with hesitation and distrust, we can well imagine; the *wisest and most gifted* of men have done so before you; not with any want of decision or determination, but from an innate sense of the incalculable disparity between their own individual efforts and the exalted truths, to the elucidation of which they have been directed. It is, however, through this feeling, this humility of mind, that the greatest and most substantial advances have been made, not only in medicine, but in the collateral sciences. Associated with strength of intellect, steady mental activity, great powers of observation, and integrity of purpose, it has led on to the conclusive, *because cautious*, explanation of numerous natural phenomena. It was this sentiment that guided the enquiries of a Harvey, a Haller, and a Hunter; of

a Davy, Dalton, and Linnæus; and it was this that adorned the life and guided the thought of one of the greatest of philosophers, who, when he had reached the maturity of his understanding, deemed it no condescension, even then, to confess, in language the most touching and simple, that he had not in anyway "a mind equal to the majesty of nature." You will pardon me, if I quote his well-known remark:—"I know not," said he, "what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been merely a boy, playing on the sea shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

Now the short period of three or four years is the time allotted for your probationary studies in the science of medicine, before you will become entitled to carry out the duties of qualified practitioners. Compare this for one moment with the period you have dedicated to the knowledge you have already stored up, and so arranged and appropriated, as to render it adapted for that you are now about to acquire. It represents, at the lowest calculation,

but a third of the time occupied in your preliminary studies ; and this comparatively short interval is all that is at your command ; and what have you to accomplish in it ? You have to qualify yourselves for the prevention and judicious treatment of the maladies to which the human frame is liable. In order to perform this, what a multitude of subjects crowd upon the mind ! You have not only merely to *contemplate* man as he exists, on the one hand, in all the enjoyment of physical and mental health ; and on the other, the victim of disease, both of mind and body ; but you have also to direct your best energies to as complete a comprehension as possible, of the processes and of the laws that determine the varied changes in the one state and in the other. You will have, consequently, to study the relations of man to external nature, and in this pursuit, to go through a series of attractive enquiries conducted into many divisions of the inorganic kingdom ; to penetrate into the arcana of animal and vegetable life, to study

“ Their bearings and their ties,
 Their strong connections, nice dependencies,
 Gradations just ;”

to trace the progressive elaborations of creative power, from the simplest to the most complex form of organization; to become acquainted with the chemical and mechanical operations that are constantly going on in the human body, presided over and regulated by the vital force during life, and acting by themselves on its cessation. You will have to extend your researches to the relations which the different organs of the harmonious system have to each other during the distinct stages of their existence, their characteristic structure and functions, and their adaptation to the ends for which they were designed. You will have, also, carefully to consider the disturbing causes which interfere with their normal condition, either in the form of congenital defect or induced derangement. But not only to the examination of the varied conditions of man,—the most exalted form of animated existence,—must the attention be sedulously directed, but to the relation which he bears to those of his own type of structure, to the society in which he moves, and to the influence which the latter exerts in maturing or arresting his physical powers, and his moral and intellectual faculties. With the exception of the last

subject, an extended acquaintance with which is not comprised in the curriculum laid down by law for a medical man, the prospectus before me gives you a specific detail of the various courses of study which the above very general expressions embrace, and all of which have a more or less direct bearing on the study of the healing art, as arbitrarily represented by medicine and surgery. Now, as every teacher in each particular department of knowledge, is well acquainted with its peculiar tendencies to a given end, and takes every possible opportunity of forcibly inculcating the same, I shall not in any great extent anticipate their intentions, and shall, consequently, refrain from endeavouring to analyze the relative merits of the different pursuits which have been prescribed for you by the legislators of your professional education. To become intimately familiar with them all would be a task of great difficulty, and far beyond the mental grasp of the many; but to learn enough of them for a full comprehension of the principles of our scientific art, is within the range of every average mind that has been, and will be, trained with industry.

The regions of enquiry before you, have, in fact,

been broken up into many cultivated districts by the united exertions of the great masters of our profession. Daily and hourly, as in years past away, the progress of cultivation still advances, not only by the labour, of their hands, but by that of those in every department of related science. You enter then not a mere wilderness, through which you have to find your way, as it were, by intuitive perception, without chart or compass ; but you are conducted along well ordered highways, in which the chief difficulties of your progress have been cleared away. You have not by your own unaided efforts, to interpret the intricacies of the language of nature, but to learn them as expounded, and to apply them as a key to the solution of the obscure and mysterious, which otherwise would take more than a life time to unravel. To endeavour to shackle the aspirations of genius, or prescribe limits to its originality of thought and innate power of expansion, would be tantamount to folly. We would, however, strongly counsel you at the outset of your career, to check the outbursts of independent action, and not be led away by the deceptive whisperings of too great self-reliance.

“The first draughts of knowledge,” remarks an eloquent divine, “are too apt to intoxicate the soul. A deep acquaintance with the mysteries around him may, indeed, tend to humble any man, by fixing his eyes on his own absolute lack of knowledge, rather than on his relative superiority. But as he emerges from the mere level, it is rather with those below him, than with the heights which soar far above him, that he is apt to contrast his standing place; and so the lowest eminence may swell easily into a mountain, and the half-learned man may be fearfully elated with an amount of knowledge which would seem to one above him to be nothing but a marvellous ignorance.”* Study carefully, therefore, the record of facts; sift well the meaning of the phenomena you meet with, as interpreted by many of those who, though dead, still live amongst us in their writings, and who have almost hallowed the ground on which you are to tread; examine carefully, but impartially, the bearings of the main road, as pointed out by your teachers here, and as laid down by those elsewhere, ere you have the boldness to stray into the bye-paths of original research, where, perchance,

* *Pride a Hindrance to True Knowledge.* By Samuel Lord Bishop of Oxford.

in the windings of a labyrinth, the clue to correct observation and induction may be lost, and you discover, too late, that you have sacrificed the means of gaining sound and solid information, in following up an object which has but an ideal existence, in pursuit, in fact, of a mere phantom of the mind.

We are far from attaching exclusive value to traditional authority. It can be but matter of regret, however, to those who are really anxious concerning the welfare of our profession, and the integrity of its status, that the above line of conduct has not been more strictly acted up to; and that the animus which characterized many of our predecessors, in accumulating materials for the erection of a rational system of medicine, has too frequently been departed from. Groundless hypothesis, fanciful speculations, generalizations on meagre and imperfect data, have too often clogged the way, and cast a gloom over the avenue to truth. Scanty, superficial information has decked itself out in the borrowed garb of science, without possessing any of its essential attributes; and the *mere* professor, disdaining to acknowledge the loan, has either

turned apostate from the faith he had pledged himself to venerate, and enlisted among ranks where he could find a more appropriate sphere for the application of his ornamented ignorance; or he has lurked about as a masked traitor in the camp, depreciating knowledge he had not the industry to acquire, and making light of difficulties he had not the courage to cope with. Much has been said, and more written, concerning the obstacles which interfere with the progress of our profession towards full public appreciation, and the inroads of charlatanry have been dwelt on forcibly, as constituting the main impediment. It would not, however, be difficult to prove that some of its severest and least endurable home-thrusts have been inflicted by those, who, during the period of their pupilage, have neglected the extended opportunities offered them, and have either sank into degrading obscurity, or found their way to notoriety and pecuniary emolument by "tactics and short cuts known only to adepts," making with every proselyte to their creed a fresh sacrifice of honest, conscientious feeling. A premium has thus been held out for the daring pretensions of those who palm off their effrontery

and ignorance as wisdom ; bring to bear as their implements of persuasion, arguments, at the best, only equal to the special pleadings of sophistry ; and who, by pandering to the fickleness and feebleness of the multitude, succeed in stealthily or openly abstracting large portions of our professional birthright, and—to borrow the language of an energetic writer,—in “ living like princes on the exhaustless revenue of human absurdity.”

Thus, gentlemen, not only your own interests, but those of every individual who has the privilege of following our calling, are intimately wrapt up in the manner in which you go through your medical studies. We look to you both to bind firmer the connecting links, and to repair many of those that are broken, of that great chain that should bring together the members of our profession into unity of intention and into harmony of action.

Now, notwithstanding the inroads of the unprincipled, and the malevolent efforts of secret enemies, our profession maintains a strong hold on public regard, and makes daily advances in its esteem. This has arisen, not only from the functions which

its members are called on to perform within the contracted limits of domestic life; but from the general usefulness it has evinced in administering to the wants of society at large, and correcting abuses as they exist in their aggravated form and intensity.

To regulate the destinies of a great nation, and to uphold its dignity in its transactions with the rest of the civilized world, has ever been one of the great moving principles of legislative power. For the maintenance of this dignity and position, the applications of science in every branch of commercial industry, at home, abroad, or among the colonies; in every department of naval or military operations, have been found of the most essential service; and our country may well be proud of a glorious superiority. The permanence of this, however, must for the future chiefly rest on the increasing scientific information of its rulers.

But while administering to our external dignity among nations, government has laid itself justly open to the charge of melancholy ignorance of, and inattention to, the internal and domestic happiness of the people. This neglect has operated most banefully on

the poorer classes,—the healthy and vigorous application of whose industry has ever been regarded as the only stable foundation of all national greatness. Every grade of society, from the most indigent to the most wealthy, has participated, directly or indirectly, in the neglect of those measures of reform which have for their object the improvement of the public health, and which are in every way calculated to contribute to the comfort of the land, and, as a natural sequence, to enhance the happiness and add to the prosperity of all.

It is principally from among the body of the medical profession that individuals have come forward, and directed the attention of legislators to the great necessity of a correct system of sanitary government. This has been enforced by an appeal to statistics, by experiments, by analogies, existing in the conditions that influence the manifestations of animal and vegetable life, and by many more convincing methods of argument, which the candid and scientific seeker after truth can alone fully substantiate. Influenced by no party spirit, many of them have dedicated their time, talent, and property, in the true spirit of philanthropy, to a rectification of these abuses, and

have aroused the reflecting part of the world to a recognition of the immensity of the evils to which the inhabitants of large towns and cities had become, from long familiarity, apparently to a great degree indifferent. It would be tedious, probably, to run over the varied subjects which have met with their disinterested attention. There is not a single department, however, in the entire range of hygiene in which it has not been eagerly and devotedly engaged. The proper supply of pure air and water; the untaxed light of heaven; the abolition of intramural interment, and efficient sewerage, are among the many subjects which have found a prominent place in their consideration. The imperative necessity of these has been so cautiously deduced, and the arguments so supported by an appeal to fact, that their consummation cannot be long postponed. These are among the current topics of the day, and, unlike the temporary excitement of foreign politics, have taken firm hold on the public mind.

Well may we be proud of reckoning among our number the promoters of such grand improvements. Well may we hold them up to you as brilliant patterns of extended Christian charity; of the un-

biased devotion of philosophy to the attainment of a definite object, fraught with peace, with health, with plenty, to many whose lives, at the present moment, are debased and embittered, and whose death is prematurely accelerated. In pointing them out to you, we refer your attention to no one among them with greater pleasure, with purer satisfaction, than to George Alfred Walker, whose name and whose deeds will ere long occupy more than one bright page in the annals of fame. Had his suggestions been acted up to, before this, many a dreary void in society, which it will take an age to fill up, would not probably have occurred, and we even might still have had among us an eminent man,* who was hurried into his grave in the midst of professional honours, public and private utility, universal respect and regret. He was the architect of his own greatness, and rose principally to the prominent position he filled in life, not from what is called genius, but from unceasing industry, unflinching devotion to duty, the source of all true distinction.

We have alluded to these matters, gentlemen, to

* Charles Aston Key, Esq.

show you that the tendency of your studies is to an expanded, generous, and liberal mode of dealing with mankind; and that the feeling of self-aggrandisement and grasping cupidity,—the distinguishing characteristics, by the bye, of every form of quackery,—cannot, from the nature of your pursuits, be the sole absorbing thought, the sole excitement.

Let us turn now from the consideration of these subjects, as forming part of the broad bond of union which connects us to society at large, and take a glimpse of those ties by which we are related personally to the members of which it is constituted; of those ties which every conscientious practitioner makes it his duty and endeavour to strengthen by the careful and judicious use of the knowledge he has acquired amid the scenes of disease and of death.

There are but few, who, in the hour of need, in the time of bodily affliction, do not gladly avail themselves of his dearly purchased information, acquired, not unfrequently, at the sacrifice of domestic comfort, ease, and health, and often at the risk of life. The parent and child, the wife and husband, the desolate and orphan, are by turns entrusted to his

care; and it would be difficult to name any, from the highest to the humblest, from the peer to the pauper, who does not come within the range of his remedial power, and draw consolation from his extended experience. He is called on, not only to administer to the ills of the body, but to allay the fretful anxieties of the mind, and the piercing pangs of the heart. To him is confided, at one time, the responsible keeping of interests of momentous import; and on his decision and judgment hang, at another, the worldly welfare and prosperity of hundreds. He is *then* the professional adviser; *now* the friend and counsellor, and from the confidence reposed in him in the trying scenes of the sick chamber, his advice is sought and acted on with satisfaction, in matters totally unconnected with his calling. Thus his utility is great and his responsibility as extensive.

His immediate occupation forms no recognized barrier to his admission into the best society, where he can strengthen and refresh his powers by healthy interchange of thought, and reasonable recreation. His solid education, also, not deficient in the feelings of a Christian, in the accomplishments of a

gentleman, and many of the elegant accessories of refined life, find him a welcome into every circle. The intelligent are glad of him as a friend; the gloomy and the gay of heart greet him as a cheerful companion; the sad look to him for solace; and the ignorant for instruction.

Thus, gentlemen, have we endeavoured to convey to you, we fear imperfectly, a sense of the importance which is attached to the medical profession; of the high position which a well-educated medical man holds in the scale of life; of his general and special aptitude for furthering the vital interests of the public, and relieving the frailties of the individual; of the numerous and varied occasions he has of fostering his moral feelings, and of encouraging his scientific or literary tendencies; and of the necessary extent of appreciation which links him, as it were, in brotherhood with all mankind. Does not this high calling hold out sufficient inducement to you for steady exertion? Is not this enough to stimulate you, not only to vindicate your own claims as rational practitioners, but to uphold, by every available appliance, the lofty character of that profession with which you are about to become associated?

To attain to this desirable state, you must go through your career with a full determination not to treat with indifference that which at first sight may appear to have no particular practical tendency, and not to regard many subjects that come before you in a mere utilitarian point of view. We readily concede that by such means you may make *useful* practitioners; but you will be, to a great extent, *deficient in those resources which are the passport to good society, and which the mind pants after in the intensity of labour*, to the fatigue and exhaustion consequent on which bodily repose alone is at times perfectly inadequate as an antidote. It is in diversity of occupation, rather than in entire cessation from toil, that the soul finds out its *real* refreshment, and rises to its defined task of duty with renewed zeal and vigour.

Follow up with pleasure, therefore, those pursuits which have but an indirect bearing on your abstract medical life; and keep up and improve on your acquaintance of the studies you have pondered over with delight during your more youthful days, as possessing both of them, within themselves, the germs of future gratification, which

in time to come will bring forth the most agreeable fruits.

Here, in this vast metropolis, you will have ample opportunity of verifying the statements we have made. We heartily congratulate you in having selected it as the scene of your exertions. Here you will find that the standard of excellence is high, and that the immediate steps from it downward to the lowest degradation, are each marked by their appropriate features. You will discover every form of honourable emulation, and every possible stimulus that can be brought into play, in order to elicit the latent powers of the mind. The enterprise of the young you will see held in check, toned down, and tempered by the experience of the old, and the latter spurred on to further exertion by the ardent enthusiasm of the former. You will discover, also, that the picture of good is not less pronounced than the picture of evil; that while, on the one hand, a career of honesty and rectitude is always well rewarded by self-approval, and usually by the approbation of the world; that, on the other hand, a life of reckless indifference to what is right, though it *may* have many a period of excitement, rapture, and fascination,

comes sooner or later to a dead pause of depression in the depths of remorse and the apathy of despair. In your conduct in this particular school, where you will be *taught* the *principles* of your profession; in this hospital, where you will *learn* its *practice*, bear in mind the motto of this noble establishment—

“Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.”

In the relations among yourselves, your fellow-pupils and your teachers, and the patients that may come under your treatment, and the governors of this institution, as represented by the committee, follow out this noble principle. Do everything that can become a man; avoid everything that can degrade him. Let this ever be your guiding rein of thought, of word, and of deed. Not only during your course here, but when you have left these scenes of your early struggle after eminence—

“Be fervent in doing well with every nerve,
Still pressing on
And panting for perfection, far above
Those little cares, and visionary joys,
That so perplex the fond impassioned heart
Of ever cheated, ever trusting man.”





