

**Introductory address to the students of the Edinburgh School of Medicine
on 1st November 1875 / by John Chiene.**

Contributors

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With Mr Chiene's Compl^{ts}

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INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

TO THE STUDENTS

OF THE

EDINBURGH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

ON 1ST NOVEMBER 1875.

BY

JOHN CHIENE, F.R.C.S. F.R.S.E.,

LECTURER ON SURGERY; ASSISTANT SURGEON ROYAL INFIRMARY; EXAMINER IN ANATOMY IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

EDINBURGH:

1875.

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OF

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GENTLEMEN,

A great deal has lately been said against the continuance of Introductory Addresses. Surely on the present occasion I might be justified in upholding that view. I might dyspeptically give an Introductory on the uselessness of Introductory Lectures. I might, in still worse taste, dilate on the folly of choosing medicine as a profession. I am too proud of my profession to do so. Perhaps, however, it is only right to tell you that if your object in this life is to make money, the sooner you try something else the better. You must remember that a life of continual endeavour to benefit your fellow man is worth some worldly sacrifice. On the other hand, if you work honestly you will have money sufficient for your wants—a sufficiency, with happiness, as distinguished from riches, with its accompanying troubles.

Your teachers, in asking one of their number to begin the session to-day, are of opinion that some little good may follow an Introductory Address. However imperfectly I may fulfil my task, I have an inward feeling that there is a certain value in the custom. The few words that I have to address to you to-day, appear to me like the bugle-call to the regiment; before it sounds the men are standing here and there—a crowd. After it has sounded the men are the same, but instead of a crowd they are now a well-ordered mass of soldiers, willing and ready to obey the word of command: such, I hold, to be the use of an Introductory Lecture.

I address you as members of the Edinburgh School of Medicine in the widest acceptation of the term. Some would divide this School in its interests, in its usefulness, and in its power for good, into two divisions—the University and the Extra-Academical School. Its strength lies in their combination; the division is only in name. There are Professors, there are Teachers: they are all one body, whose sole object is your training as efficient members of the medical profession. The remarks I have to make are in your interests, and with an earnest desire for your welfare as students of a School which knows no divisions.

I would ask, Why are you students of this School, with its old Infirmary and its shabby class-rooms? In order to answer that question, I must ask another. To what is the success of the Edinburgh School due? Sir Robert Christison, in an instructive and interesting history of the University of Edinburgh, delivered at the Meeting of the British Medical Association in this City in August last, directs attention to certain of the reasons of the continued success of the Edinburgh School. It may not here be out of place to point out to you other reasons for the fact, that the School to which you belong holds a pre-eminent position amongst the training establishments in this Country.

I believe one of the greatest causes of our continued prosperity is, that alongside of the University there is an efficient teaching staff, which acts, so to speak, as a tonic to the University Professors, encouraging a friendly rivalry, which is constantly spurring them on to continued effort, and by insisting that they perform their work in a thorough manner, directly advancing medical science. Competition is the greatest incentive to good

manufacture. Free trade in commerce has increased the mercantile position of this country. Free trade in the teaching of medicine has brought students to Edinburgh, and has sent them away well educated and well prepared for the practice of their profession. The presence of an Extra-Academical School of Medicine is, in my opinion, the principal reason why the Faculty of Medicine is more prosperous and more famous than the other Faculties in our University. The establishment of an Extra-Academical School in Arts and Law, with the same privileges as we at present possess as medical teachers, would be an advance in the right direction, and would, I feel sure, be followed by greater efficiency in the teaching in these Faculties, and by a marked increase in the number of students.

It must be matter of regret to all interested in the Edinburgh School, that our Professors are not endowed. I hope that some rich person may see his way to leave his money for this purpose. An endowment of the Chairs of the Medical Professors would necessarily soon be followed by an abandonment of the privileges which they at present possess. Their present privileges are their endowment. These privileges are against the teachers outside the University walls; and it may with truth be said, that the endowment comes at present directly out of the pockets of the Extra-Academical teachers. It would, undoubtedly, be for the benefit of the University if all restrictions could be removed. Endow the Professorial Chairs,—give the Lecturers equal privileges and equal rights with their Seniors inside the University—and the result would certainly be a still further increase in the prosperity of this School. In the meantime, it is for the advantage of the Lecturers that these privileges of the

University should be maintained; because they—or their equivalent, an endowment,—are necessary for the well-being of the University, on which the welfare of this School principally depends. Without the University in a flourishing condition, the School must go down. While this is true, it is necessary also to remember—more especially as, at the present time, there seems in the minds of some a tendency to consider the University as the Edinburgh School—that without a powerful Extra-Academical School the University influence would necessarily decline. Neither alone can draw the students to Edinburgh. Both working together, with a well regulated Infirmary in common, have now for many years stood the test of time, and have seen the rise of many powerful Schools in London and the provinces, but have, in consequence of their inherent strength, suffered but little in the competition.

Another reason, which has a very material bearing on our success, lies in the fact that here each teacher is free to choose his subject. He begins early as a lecturer on some particular branch. Any one can, after obtaining permission from the Royal College of Physicians or Surgeons, and from the University Court, commence teaching; and if he has the ability, he will certainly draw to his class-room a proportion of the students. An early and special training in teaching is the only way to true success. As Captain Webb says, ‘to be a good swimmer one must begin young;’ to be a good teacher also requires years of special study. Speciality in practice may degenerate into quackery; speciality in teaching never can. A teacher is always subjected to a scientific cross-examination; a practitioner is not. In this way the future occupants of our Professorial Chairs are being thoroughly

educated. Teaching is like a trade—in trade a lengthened apprenticeship fits a man to turn out good work—in teaching, an apprenticeship served as Extra-Academical teachers makes successful Professors, and enables our University to turn out good students. But this is not a training school for our Alma-Mater alone; it not unfrequently supplies our sister Universities. In every Scotch University there are now Professors who once were efficient Lecturers in the Extra-Academical School of Edinburgh. Since the delivery of the Introductory Lecture of 1874 two of our Lecturers have thus been promoted. Dr Pettigrew has been appointed Professor of Anatomy and Medicine in the ancient University of St Andrews, and the University of Aberdeen has chosen Dr Stephenson as Professor of Midwifery. I need not tell you how honestly these gentlemen worked as teachers in this School. I feel sure that they will faithfully represent and uphold the character they have earned here. While we, teachers and students, regret the loss to ourselves, we rejoice in their promotion, and heartily wish them success. Their places will be filled by men who feel that they are fitted for the task. There is no surer road to success than a belief in self. It is this self-belief, this individuality, which this School fosters. Any one is free to try the experiment; the result, if he fails, will be disastrous only to himself; he will know if he succeeds, when he draws to his class-room a few earnest students, who can only be attracted by *himself*; their progress his encouragement; his earnestness their best example.

It was this earnestness that endeared John Goodsir to his pupils. The noisiest spirit was quiet when Goodsir taught. His truthfulness hushed to silence the largest

class in the University. As a teacher he led his men onwards to a victory over ignorance. They followed because they believed in their leader. An earnest man searching after truth was the secret of Goodsir's power.

This essential feature of our method—to allow each to choose his place on our teaching staff—directly encourages the individuality of the teachers, and this in its turn encourages the individuality of the taught. Individuality means freedom. You are free to choose your teacher, and in most branches you have an abundant choice. You choose your teacher on account of his individual worth. He may have certain peculiarities; it is desirous that he should ventilate them. He may believe in his methods of conveying instruction; he can put them to a practical test, and if he is a true prophet, his labours will be followed by well-merited success. Glasgow, I am glad to see, is beginning the good fight; all success to those gentlemen who have obtained permission to lecture in the Royal Infirmary of that city. The results to themselves will be self-improvement; the result to their University will, I feel sure, be an increase in its efficiency.

The self-additions to our teaching staff, on the principle just laid down, are this year comparatively few in number—Dr Underhill as a teacher on Midwifery, Dr Andrew Wilson as a teacher of Natural History. The former branch has already many votaries. To Dr Wilson is due the credit of filling up a blank in our curriculum. Dr Underhill has to compete with his seniors; he has to fight an uphill friendly battle. Dr Wilson has an open field before him.

It is a subject of congratulation that Dr Wyllie, one of our Lecturers on Pathology, has been appointed Patho-

logist to the Royal Infirmary. It is right that the science and practice of Pathology should be combined.

In order to true teaching then, individuality and freedom must have the sway. In order to true learning, I believe the same rule holds good; to interfere with the individuality of a student appears to me the great mistake of the systems of the present day.

Carlyle in his *Life of Schiller*, when describing the time Schiller spent at a school in Stuttgard, in consequence of a well-intended act of patronage by the Duke of Wurtemberg, says: 'The Stuttgard system seems to have been formed on the principle, not of cherishing and correcting nature, but of rooting it out, and supplying its place with something better. . . . Everything went on by statute and ordinance; there was no scope for the exercise of free-will, no allowance for the varieties of human structure. A scholar might possess what instincts or capacities he pleased; the regulations of the school took no account of this; he must fit himself to the common mould, which, like the old Giant's bed stood there, appointed by superior authority, to be filled alike by the great and the little.'

The system of medical education of the present day has certain of these features. Rules, regulations, statutes, visitors of examinations, assessors, councils, are the order of the day. The result, perhaps, is a better training of the mass to mediocrity—a necessity, no doubt. Would that it could be attained without damaging and distorting the individuality and freedom of the student. There must undoubtedly be a certain amount of restraint, but let it be as little as possible. There must be examinations, but let them be more frequent and less formal. The student

should be allowed to pass in any *one* subject, always supposing that he knows it thoroughly. To judge of this thoroughness, the standard the examiner has to remember is, that an extensive knowledge is not so much required, as that the knowledge should be precise and accurate. A mistake is infinitely worse than an omission. The man who does not know, has only to learn; the man who is in error, has to unlearn and then to learn.

These remarks regarding the individuality and freedom of this School, cannot but recall to many present the recent death of perhaps one of the greatest of our *teachers*—John Hughes Bennett. The time has hardly come for a proper estimate of his character. His individuality was too marked, and the freedom with which he expressed his opinions too apparent, to enable us at present fully to estimate our loss. Professor Bennett was an enthusiastic teacher; his love of his work, his natural talent for teaching, fostered by years of special study, the clearness of his lectures, the impress he made on the minds of his students will not die. In our wards where the essential features of his system of clinical instruction are almost universally adopted, in our laboratories for the teaching of practical physiology, in the privacy of our studies when at work with the microscope, Bennett still lives. His career of untiring industry, of ardent application to his professorial work, were the characteristic features of his nature. Years will pass away before we can properly estimate the good work John Hughes Bennett did in the Edinburgh School.

I am now brought from the past to the future. What is the future of our School? To be successful we must go forwards. Our motto must be 'Excelsior;' and the new

Infirmary and University buildings show that this is not forgotten. But in order that the new University buildings may bear proper fruit, we must soon have outside the University more appliances for the teaching of such subjects as Anatomy and Physiology. The efficient teaching of the so-called practical subjects, Medicine, Surgery, and Midwifery, do not depend on appliances. A warm, comfortable class-room, with a self-made museum which no money can purchase, are the stock-in-trade of these lecturers. It is different with Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, and Chemistry. For the well-being of any school, well paid demonstrators are required for these subjects. This is more especially true of Anatomy. To teach Physiology, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a well-equipped laboratory; so also with Pathology and Chemistry. These necessities cannot be attained in this building, and, in my opinion, the time has now arrived for building new class-rooms and laboratories for these subjects. But it is as reasonable to expect the Professors to build their laboratories, as it is to ask our Lecturers to build theirs. We cannot, I fear, expect the public to contribute. To whom, then, are we to apply? It appears to me that the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons should undertake the work. There is a great deal of talk about the uselessness of such bodies, and there is at present a cry that their work should be taken from them. The result would be a feeble existence—a second childhood—reminding us of Paget's classical description of a natural decay. 'For,' he says, 'it is natural to become feeble and infirm, to wither and shrivel, to have dry dusky wrinkled skin, and greasy brittle bones, to have weak fatty hearts, blackened inelastic lungs, and dusky thin stomachs, and to have every function

of life discharged feebly, and as it were wearily, and then, with powers gradually decreasing, to come to a time when all the functions of bodily life ceasing to be discharged, death without pain and distress ensues.'

Such a picture is too painful to dwell upon—our relationship is too near. I will only say that some apparent good done by these august bodies will be the best answer to their accusers. What could be more worthy of their existence than the strengthening of the School to which they belong, and on which, if the truth must be told, they live? The College of Surgeons started the Anatomical School, the College of Physicians the Royal Infirmary of this city. Let the same spirit now rule their councils, and let them see that before very long we owe to their joint efforts a well-equipped building, with well-paid demonstrators, in which the scientific subjects may be taught with comfort to both teachers and taught. I lately visited the Medical Schools of Liverpool and Manchester, and the lesson I learned there is, that such Schools as these, with their splendid equipments for practical study, will, if we do not look to our appliances, dazzle and intercept many of our students. Lastly, am I asking the Colleges to run too great a risk? The College of Surgeons kindly built this class-room, I forget how many years ago, and they perhaps can give their sister-college an idea of the interest they have received on their original outlay. A good rent, coupled with a good name, will, let us hope, ward off the evil day which, prophets say, is drawing nigh.

In the name of the lecturers, and on behalf of the students, I ask this of the Colleges. I ask it in no spirit of rivalry to the University, for my firm belief is, that the

better the appliances without, the greater will be the success within the walls of the University.

I have not time to do more than mention certain other improvements which would, in my opinion, add to our efficiency.

We require a Lectureship on Public Health—it is too important a subject to be tacked on to Medical Jurisprudence, thus injuriously curtailing the lectures on that important subject. I sincerely trust that some one will take up Professor Stephenson's mantle, and continue the Lectureship on Diseases of Children. I would also wish to see the addition to our curriculum of a short summer course on Diseases of the Ear. Specialty in teaching is, as I have already said, a good thing. It is the only way to make thoroughly sound practitioners.

We are now not far distant from what must be to all of us an interesting event in the history of our School. We are soon to leave the old Infirmary, which for 150 years has done such signal service to medical science. A history of that institution would indeed be a record of medicine and surgery. It was at one time my intention to devote the time at my disposal to-day, to a short recapitulation of the important discoveries in medicine and the improvements in medical teaching, which have taken birth within its walls. I found, however, after considerable investigation, that in the time at my disposal even an abstract of the good work done was impossible. I trust that some one will undertake the task. A History of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary will be a valuable work of reference in time to come.

If, however, I cannot even very hurriedly allude to the past, I may for a moment dip into the future. With

new buildings, well-regulated wards, and clinical lecture-rooms, with increased facilities for clinical instruction, is there nothing that can be done still further to improve the bedside teaching?

Our managers are fully alive to the fact that the welfare of the patients, and the well-being of the students, are inseparably connected. The diagnosis and treatment of every case carefully sifted by a teacher in the presence of an intelligent, sharp-sighted, perhaps somewhat fault-finding audience, is the best guarantee for a judicious diagnosis and a careful treatment. There is no class of patients so carefully treated as the patients in any well regulated Infirmary attached to a large school of medicine. Take any hospital without students; go round with the physician or surgeon, and the visit, instead of being a carefully performed duty, is generally a hurried run through the wards, and a general acquiescence in the treatment of the house-surgeon, on whose shoulders rests the greater part of the treatment. How different is the visit of the teaching physician or surgeon; with him to teach is to learn, and the daily visit to his wards is to him both the most profitable and the most pleasant period in his daily work.

A studentless hospital reminds me of a private picture-gallery; splendid pictures, but no one to look at them. An hospital with students is like one of our National Galleries, through which thousands yearly pass. The pictures sustain no harm from being looked at, and the chances are, that they are better cared for than even the most valuable private collection. Your interests, the interests of your teachers, the interests of the managers as representatives of the general public, are one—the wel-

fare of the patients. The more thorough the system of medical instruction, the greater is the public fame of the Infirmary.

Is it right that during three of the four years of your student life, only one hour is given by the authorities to clinical study? The hours from twelve to two should be sacred to the hospital. The result, as the classes are at present arranged, is that the student spends about three-quarters of an hour in the Infirmary. It will, I think, be generally allowed that this time is too short. By careful consultation between the University Professors and Extra-Academical Teachers, the classes could be arranged in such a way as to meet this want. There are many ways in which the change could be made; this, however, is not the place to discuss the question.

Might not the out-patients be utilized more than they are at present, for the teaching of the elements of medicine and surgery? There is surely a quantity of material running to waste, which might be made use of for the teaching of the junior students. Before visiting the wards of the surgical hospital the junior student might learn the elements of Practical Surgery; so also in the medical house, auscultation and percussion could be taught in the medical waiting-room. Such preliminary study would lighten materially the labours of the surgeons and physicians.

One of the weak points of our School is the small number of beds, as compared with the large number of students. Our wards are uncomfortably crowded. An organization of the out-patient department would undoubtedly lessen the number of students attending the wards.

When the new Infirmary is opened, the Sick Children's Hospital and Chalmers' Hospital will be within easy reach. I sincerely trust that every encouragement will be afforded by these institutions for clinical study. Practically at present they are studentless hospitals. In this way also the crush of students would be relieved.

The appointment of a special Professor of Clinical Medicine appears to me another improvement worthy of consideration. Glasgow has taken the lead in this matter. Surely it is an anomalous position to have a Professor of Clinical Surgery, and none on Clinical Medicine. The Professor of Practice of Physic must have wards to illustrate his Systematic Lectures, but there should be one man who is the acknowledged head of Clinical Medical Instruction. Such an appointment would, I believe, directly benefit our School.

I cannot help hoping that the managers will be able to allot special wards in the new buildings for the study of Diseases of Throat, Diseases of the Ear, and Skin Diseases. At present our students have to go to the Continent for such special instruction. It is also absolutely necessary that the department for the study of Syphilis should be thoroughly equipped.

I think that the time has now arrived when these points should be discussed. My wish is your good, as long as it does not interfere with the welfare of the sick-poor. I have tried to show that your interests and theirs are inseparably connected. These remarks regarding certain changes which might, in my opinion, be advantageous to our Infirmary, are made in no complaining spirit. We are governed by an enlightened board of management; we are proud of our hospital, proud of our clinical

teaching; but, I feel, that to keep our place as the leading medical school in this country, we must not stand still. Progress in the right direction will result in greater fame, will directly benefit the patients, and will, if possible, still further widen the range of the grand motto laid down by the founders of our Infirmary—“*This Hospital will be open to all the cureable distressed, from whatever corner of the world they come, without restriction.*”

I have to-day avoided offering you advice regarding your duties and your studies. Any recommendations as regards your duty to yourselves and to your teachers are unnecessary to the great majority present. I am addressing men who have begun the business of life. For the few who, perhaps, require to be told their duty to themselves, any words spoken in general terms would, I feel, have little good effect. I could not be particular enough. The advice given would not exactly fit each recipient, and the result would be an abandonment of what really was applicable. Instead of advice as to your general conduct, I might speak regarding the proper methods of study, the order in which you are to take your classes, your text-books, note taking, etc. The objections to this are, that general advice is rarely followed. The student has to drop his individual sense, and merge into the common run of humanity. Such advice would directly interfere with what, in my opinion, is above everything else to be encouraged—your individuality. Any interference with this essential to your healthy existence would be as disastrous to our School as would be the loss of that essential amongst your teachers. All of you, perhaps, wish some point cleared up. To-morrow meet your individual teachers as individuals, and explain your individual wants.

More benefit will be derived by a few minutes conversation than by listening to an Introductory Lecture teeming with generalities.

In conclusion, I have simply to bid you all welcome. We, as teachers, will try and do our duty; we expect you to try and do yours. Our sincere wish for you all is happy honest work. The teacher is your steersman; you are the rowers. Remember that a single bad oar spoils the whole boat.

Junior Students—You have chosen a School with a name and a fame, with a reputation for work. The maintenance of these qualities depends on you. You have in your seniors many bright examples of how that reputation is to be maintained. Follow in their steps, and be prepared to take their place when another Introductory comes round.

To the Senior Students I say—Go on as you have begun—do not abate your efforts. More is expected of you the more your opportunities. Be proud of your School; endeavour that your School may be proud of you; and when you leave us, may your chief pleasure be in the recollection that you were once Edinburgh Students.



