Inaugural address delivered at the opening of the 148th session (1884-5) of the Royal Medical Society, 7th November 1884 / by Thomas R. Fraser.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Delivered at the Opening of the 148*th Session* (1884-5)

OF THE

ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY,

7th November 1884.

BY

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

Mr President and Gentlemen,—I consider it a high honour and privilege to have the opportunity of addressing the Royal Medical Society to-night, and of introducing the work of the 148th session of its existence. Since 1868, when the custom of inviting others than acting Presidents of the Society to deliver inaugural addresses was first introduced, the task has been entrusted to several of my former teachers and to several of my contemporaries, whose merits and position well entitled them to be selected. I gladly follow them, although I can claim no other title in my favour than a hearty interest in the welfare of the Society, and a conviction, at least as great as that of any of my predecessors, that the Society has conferred, and is destined to continue to confer, great benefits upon the medical students of Edinburgh.

As I am now addressing many who have not become initiated in the work and objects of the Society, I may be allowed to state that it was founded, in 1737, by students of medicine, "for the purpose of discussing subjects of professional interest." From small beginnings the Society quickly increased in importance. In 1775, it acquired a building in the old Surgeons' Square, and in 1852, it removed to its present home in which we are to-night assembled. During this long period, the Society has fulfilled a valuable function in the professional and social education of its members, and through them it has exerted a most beneficial influence upon the students and teachers of medicine in Edinburgh. The weekly dissertations and discussions have supplemented the teaching of the University and Extra-Academical Lecturers, by concentrating attention on subjects of scientific and practical importance, and by stimulating thought and originality; business habits have been acquired by the care given to the private affairs of the Society, which have always been managed by the members themselves; and study has been encouraged, culture has been fostered, and valuable and lasting friendships have been originated by the excellent opportunities afforded in the reading-rooms and library, and in the daily intercourse of the members.

It is sufficient to glance over the roll-book of the Society to learn how those advantages have been appreciated in times past. Among the names of many of the foremost representatives of medical science and practice we find those of Andrew Duncan, Marshall Hall, Richard Bright, William Cullen, Charles Hastings, Robert Christison, William Gregory, James Simpson, Martin Barry, John Reid, William Carpenter, John Goodsir, Warburton Begbie, William Sanders, Charles Murchison, and Hughes Bennett. I refrain from mentioning the names of members still actively engaged in maintaining the reputation they first acquired in the Royal Medical Society; but I am tempted to recall the *personnel* of the Society in my own time, when my contemporaries included Alexander Dickson, John Anderson, Joseph Bell, Crichton Brown, Crum Brown, Pettigrew, John Duncan, Gamgee, Rutherford, Duckworth, and Annandale.

By not a few of these former members a just and well-merited tribute to the life-long benefits which the Society had conferred upon them has been placed on record. In his interesting autobiography, Dr Charles Williams, the author of the *Principles of Medicine*, states:—"The library of the Royal Medical Society supplied me with books, and also with apparatus for carrying on investigations. I joined the Society in my second year, and found it of great utility, not only for the use of its valuable and extensive library, but also in its debates, which were carried on every week during the session, giving its members opportunity for public speaking and discussion. I soon took an active part in these meetings, and became intimate with many of its members."[1] Dr George Wilson, in his life of John Reid, characterizes the Society as being "unquestionably the most distinguished among the student societies of Great Britain devoted to the prosecution of science;" and after detailing its history and objects, he proceeds to state—"It may seem to unprofessional readers a needless matter to make so lengthened a reference to a single society. But those who know how great is the interest taken by the majority of the intelligent students of medicine in Edinburgh in the Royal Medical Society will not wonder at the special notice of it taken here. It is as truly an educational institution as the University or the medical schools."[2] And in describing Dr Marshall Hall's connexion with the Society, his biographer observes,—"This institution is said to have exerted an influence on the medical students of Edinburgh, and on their career through life, second only to that of the University itself."[3]

The truth of this last observation has recently been impressed upon me when looking over a list of the titles of the dissertations

[1] *Memoirs of Life and Work.* By Charles J. B. Williams, M.D., F.R.S., 1884, p. 15.

[2] *Life of Dr John Reid.* By George Wilson, M.D. 1852, pp. 48 and 50.

[3] *Memoirs of Marshall Hall, M.D., F.R.S., &c.* By his Widow. 1861, p. 13.

read by former members. The influence of the Society in confirming and establishing early tastes cannot, I think, be more clearly shown than by observing the subjects brought before the Society by members who have afterwards most honourably identified themselves with special departments of medical science and practice. Selecting only a few of these, I find that the dissertation of Sir James Simpson was on Diseases of the Placenta; of Dr Murchison, on the Spleen; of Dr Sanders, on Causes of the Motion of the Heart, and also on Asiatic Cholera; of Dr Hughes Bennett, on the Light thrown by Pathology, and by Experiments on the Lower Animals, on the functions of the Brain; of Dr Gamgee, on Spectrum Analysis; of Dr Rutherford, on Cellular Pathology; of Dr Dickson, on the Seed-vessels of Phanerogamic Plants; of Dr Joseph Bell, on Epithelial Cancer; of Professor Crum Brown, on Chemical Types; of Dr Annandale, on Diseases of Fingers; of Dr Chiene, on Diseases of the Mamma; of Dr Grainger Stewart, on Reflex Action; and of Dr Lauder Brunton, on Mercury.

Gentlemen, I have referred to my appreciation of the great privilege which has been granted to me of addressing you at this time. The time is one that is eminently significant in the history of medical education as well as of our University. The reform of medical education has at length reached a crisis in its history; and after the distractions produced by unsuccessful efforts on the part of the State to satisfy persistent and clamorous demands for change and innovation, it appears as if the immediate future of the profession is to be left in its own hands and under its own guidance. During the last twelve years, successive bills, introduced by the Government, have one after the other been withdrawn under the pressure of opposition from various of the Licensing Bodies and Medical Associations, and, I think it must be admitted, under the pressure, also, of political exigencies which have interfered with their proper discussion. The attempts to carry these bills may be allowed to imply the existence of a conviction that changes or improvements are required in some quarters. The evidences of the existence of this conviction are not so clearly to be discovered in Scotland as in England. In the latter country, the giving of qualifications to practise after incomplete examination, and probably, therefore, incomplete education, must be regarded as one of the most potent as well as one of the best founded incentives to the demand for legislation. In Scotland, however, this incentive has had no existence for many years. The Universities and Corporations of this country have, from a remote period, conferred their diplomas only after examinations which included medicine, surgery, and midwifery. As to the quality of these examinations, opinions might vary in regard to several of them; but a machinery, that of inspection, was long ago created, though it has hitherto been only imperfectly brought into operation, whereby a sufficiently high standard of examination could everywhere be insured. Instead of

strengthening this machinery and compelling its efficient application, the attempt has been made to introduce radical and iconoclastic changes; and, therefore, it has been that the University of Edinburgh has not been able to accept all the provisions of the Government measures. In the last Bill, the provision to subject our students to the hardship and pecuniary loss of passing, in addition to the final examination required by the University for its degrees, an examination conducted by an outside authority, and from its objects necessarily implying a lower standard than the University examination, could not be favourably regarded, nor, indeed, be accepted by us. I believe the full significance of this provision had not been understood by Government. When it was explained to them by our able representative in Parliament, its injurious tendencies were acknowledged in the most complete manner by the acceptance of the now well-known Playfair amendment. This amendment was also accepted by the other Scottish Universities, by the Universities of Ireland, and with the addition of a proviso, in which we concurred, by the Universities of England; and, I believe, also by the corporations of the United Kingdom. With this concession, the University of Edinburgh accepted the Bill as a solution of a disquieting subject, and so far as this University is concerned it might have become an Act of the last session of Parliament. I think it proper to make this statement, as the history of the Medical Bill of 1883 has been otherwise described.[1]

It is probable that politicians will in future hesitate before again introducing a measure of so sweeping and elaborate a character as the Bill of last session. Their hesitation may be confirmed by the opinion announced only last month by the President of the General Medical Council, who expressed himself as follows:—"I venture to hazard the statement that three short clauses" (the last Bill contained seventy-two clauses), "to which no serious person could object, would, if passed into law, shortly relieve the teachers and students of medicine in this country of almost all their present educational uncertainties. The *first*, directing the Council not to admit to the Medical Register, after a given date, any person who had not passed examinations, satisfactory to the Council, in medicine, surgery, and midwifery; the *second*, empowering the Crown to appoint, in such manner as it deemed expedient, one or more assessors to every Examining Board . . . . ; the *third*, making it clear that the Council can, under clauses 18, 19, and 20 of the Medical Act, inquire into the modes of teaching by the

[1] In the Report of the Medical Reform Committee of the British Medical Association, published in the *British Medical Journal* of 26th July 1884 (p. 191), the following remarkable sentence occurs,—"First, the herbalists and illegal practitioners have taken alarm, and are pressing forward petitions against the Bill; but chiefly the Scotch universities and corporations, together with the Irish corporations, are bestirring themselves to defeat it." It is sufficient to remark that, in so far as this sentence refers to the University of Edinburgh, it is altogether incorrect.

schools, as well as into those of examining by the licensing bodies." Sir ~~Thomas~~ Acland proceeds to express the opinion that these desirable propositions might be given effect to by the existing licensing bodies and schools themselves, thereby implying that further legislation would be unnecessary. If, however, this anticipation should not be confirmed, and a short Bill should be found necessary, I think that the University of Edinburgh would have good reason to urge the adoption of a *fourth* proposition, to the effect that it should receive a representative for itself in the General Medical Council. With its unrivalled position among the medical authorities in the kingdom, it at present possesses only half a representative, and at the present moment can exert an influence on medical education and licensing only through the channel of a member of the Council appointed by another Scottish university. This joint and utterly inadequate representation constitutes an anomaly to which attention must be drawn whenever medical legislation is again attempted. It is indefensible, in view of the fact that the Universities of Durham, Oxford, Cambridge, and London are separately represented on the Council, a privilege which they enjoy along with each of the medical and surgical corporations of Great Britain and Ireland,—all of which, unlike the University of Edinburgh, take either no part, or almost no part, in the great work of medical education.

But, gentlemen, a Medical Bill, restricted to the propositions formulated by the President of the General Medical Council, can have very little influence upon the course of education or of examination in the University of Edinburgh. The mere fact that such propositions should be advanced as the embodiment of what is considered sufficient to obtain, in great measure, the confidence of the public, might justify us in entertaining the most unbounded self-satisfaction, were we not conscious that we have not yet attained a position of perfection, and were we not desirous of adopting, as occasion permits, every means in our power for improvement.

It cannot be said of any institution that improvements and modifications are not required in it. A foreshadowing of changes in the University has been indicated by the introduction, for the second time, of a Government Universities' Bill. It is not a Bill, however, that was originally intended directly to influence the interests which we in common share. The occasion for its introduction is to be found in circumstances and requirements outside the Faculty of Medicine; but as it provides for a Commission with large functions of inquiry and regulation, it is impossible to predict to what extent and in what directions medical education may be affected by its proceedings. Such reforms as seem to me to be called for in the Faculty of Medicine are, indeed, of a nature which the existing powers of the University would be able to effect without further legislation. They are included in

changes in the curriculum, in the regulation of examinations, and in an extension of teaching.

The nature of the *first* is exemplified by one of the most recent improvements effected in the examination for medical degrees, by which, at the first professional examination, candidates are now, in certain circumstances, permitted to appear for examination sooner after attendance on the classes where the subjects of examination are taught than they formerly were. The results of the first occasion in which this change has been satisfactorily tested have been of the most gratifying description. One of the examiners, Professor Crum Brown, is reported to have stated, that "by this new arrangement there was a more intelligent acquaintance with the subject exhibited among the candidates who had just passed that examination than was often the case among their predecessors; the reason being, that when the examination was too long delayed after the period of study, the subject was forgotten, or the candidate feared that he had partially forgotten the subject and had recourse to reading little books upon it. In that way memory was revived in some of the things connected with the subject; but a good deal came in a mechanical manner, and without a proper or intelligent understanding."

I should be very favourable to the extension of this principle to the second professional examination also; where I believe the education of the student would be benefited by a subdivision of the subjects,—the examination in anatomy and physiology being made in all cases to precede the examination in materia medica and pathology. By these two changes, the greater number of the subjects included in the first and second professional examinations could be overtaken earlier in the course of study than is at present possible, and more time could be given to the important subjects of the final examination.

An extension of the curriculum to five years does not appear to be called for. There are many men who are able satisfactorily to overtake the studies required of them in a four years' course; and it would be a hardship to oblige these men to extend their course beyond the time that they find to be necessary. Those who consider a four years' course to be insufficient may, at their own option, continue their studies for five years, or for as long a period as they find it necessary to do so. It is a vain delusion to suppose that either a four or a five years' curriculum is sufficient to complete the education of a medical practitioner. He cannot be produced, Minerva-like, mature and fully endowed, from the brains of even the most accomplished of teachers, after so short a gestation as either four or five years. During this time he undergoes an apprentice training with all the advantages of unrestricted attention, and he acquires so much knowledge as should enable him to continue his studies more efficiently than otherwise he would be able to do so. These studies, however, must be continued for many years longer; and

the teachers who have had the responsibility of his preliminary training will have every reason to be gratified if, in the great school of experience and self-education, the search after knowledge should endure during the lifetime of the student.

In reference to the *regulation of examinations*, my suggestion is one that can be very briefly and simply stated. It should be an established principle that no questions are asked of candidates which cannot be answered from the instruction given in the prescribed curriculum course of the subject of examination.

My *third* suggestion is in reference to the extension of teaching in the University. This process is one which naturally takes place with the growth of knowledge, but there are obstacles to its sufficient extension which might be removed. The University has done something towards facilitating extension within the last few years by the foundation of lectureships in mental diseases and in ophthalmology. The duties which the Legislature requires from practitioners in carrying into effect the appointed means of providing for the care of the insane and in regulating their relations to the rest of the community, impose an obligation upon all medical educational bodies to impart instruction on the subject of mental disease. It therefore becomes a question whether this instruction, in a shape sufficient for these requirements, should not be obligatory on all students of medicine. Something more, however, seems called for in encouraging the special teaching of this and other important subjects; and I would venture to suggest that this might be done, and the advancement of the subjects at the same time fostered, by the introduction of a system of University certificates or diplomas for important specialities, to be granted, as in the case of the degrees in public health, only to holders of the ordinary degrees in medicine, and after special studies pursued subsequently to the acquirement of these degrees. A certificate or diploma in mental disease or in ophthalmology would undoubtedly prove a valuable acquisition to the graduate in medicine who proposes to specialize his practice in one or other of these departments.

Other departments, such as those of diseases of the skin and ear, of pharmacy, and of dentistry, might also be definitely recognised. In the case of the two latter, a degree in medicine or surgery, or attendance on the full curriculum for these degrees, would certainly be altogether uncalled for. The student of pharmacy would with advantage study all or several of the subjects of the first professional examination, and would then diverge into a special course arranged for his further studies. The student of dentistry would study the subjects of the first and second professional examinations, and, after passing the examinations, would apply himself to the special course best qualifying him for the practice of this specialty.

A university whose function it is to recognise and assist in developing all true advancement of knowledge may, by too long delayed recognition, impede the progress of knowledge, and un-

justly withhold some of the great benefits it has the high function to confer.

With these few words and suggestions on the subjects of medical and of university reform, I pass now to consider what we must all regard as the most important event of the last session, the celebration of the third century of the existence of the University. The record of the gratifying events of that celebration, transcending the most sanguine anticipations, has already been compiled in a convenient form by the industry of a member of this Society; and in a few days a further and more detailed history will make its appearance. I suppose, however, that we have all ourselves taken an actual share in the celebrations; and events of so unexampled a kind impress themselves deeply upon the memory, and need no printed record to recall them. It is not my purpose to dwell on the circumstances of that celebration, but I cannot make even a passing reference to them without congratulating the Royal Medical Society on the great success of its contribution to the festivities. The entertainment given by this Society was worthy of its position in the history of the University, and worthy of a Society which can claim a foundation almost coeval with that of the Medical Faculty of the University. Its success was, I am sure, an ample reward for the care and attention which must have been bestowed on the arrangement of its details by the Presidents of the Society.

Prominent among the events of the tercentenary celebration was the inauguration of the New Buildings of the Faculty of Medicine. By a happy chance, the completion of those buildings coincided with this memorable event in the history of our University, and the opportunity was afforded of associating with the inauguration some of the most distinguished representatives of science and literature in the world. We may, I believe, congratulate ourselves that never before had a temple of Æsculapius been consecrated under more brilliant and auspicious circumstances. Upon us, teachers and students, to whom has been assigned the task and the privilege of making the best use of this magnificent gift, a grave responsibility is laid. We are called upon to continue the traditions of a school of medicine which, by the devotion and earnest labour of a long succession of teachers and students, has reached a position of unexampled prosperity. This task has been entrusted to us at a time when medical art and knowledge have entered a new era, as clearly to be distinguished from the era that has passed as the New Buildings are to be distinguished from those we have departed from.

In its origin, and for many succeeding centuries, medicine had of necessity but slight associations with science. Even when the collateral sciences, whose importance we now recognise, had made considerable progress, medicine was slow in appreciating the immense value of the assistance to be derived from them. After a

long isolation, important departments of science have been absorbed, the process of absorption first occurring with botany, zoology, chemistry, and anatomy, then with physiology, and, much more recently, with the varieties of physiology which we recognise as pathology and as pharmacology. The result of this absorption has been entirely to change the aspect of medicine. The methods of study have been transformed, and a new era has been entered upon, whose characteristics will be retained for many years, and probably during the remainder of its existence.

This era is that of observation and experiment—the methods of all true science—of investigation of the sciences concerned with life, carried on independently of any immediate bearings upon the healing art. In the construction and arrangements of our New Buildings its distinguishing stamp has been amply recognised. In the older buildings the provision for medical education consisted of large lecture-rooms, having in a few instances incommodious laboratories attached to them. In the New Buildings, extensive ranges of large laboratories, affording abundant opportunities for work, have attached to them lecture-rooms which constitute appendages to the laboratories rather than the main features of the buildings.

These important changes have not been effected too soon. If we desire to take our share in the developments of medical science that are now proceeding, and to maintain the position of the Medical School of Edinburgh as a great centre of education, we must actively engage in the cultivation of the collateral sciences from which the art of medicine is now receiving so many valuable accessions. The past history of medicine emphatically teaches that the devotion of centuries to the mere observation of disease and the recording of the impressions of experience has led to but disappointing results, whereas the accessions that have been obtained from the cultivation of scientific methods have produced results which have entirely altered the aspect of medicine. As one of our most philosophical and widely informed writers, John Simon, has stated, "The progress which has been made from conditions of vagueness to conditions of exactitude has in many respects been greater in these twenty-five years than in the twenty-five centuries which preceded them; and with this increase of insight, due almost entirely to scientific experiment, the practical resources of our art, for present and future good to the world, have had, or will have, commensurate increase."[1]

Patriotism, and the desire to benefit mankind, which will, I trust, always continue to be incentives in this School, urge us to realize the altered circumstances that are now in operation, and to engage in those lines of research which are so emphatically indicated as the paths to progress. It should continue to be our ambition to lead

[1] Presidential Address delivered before the Section of State Medicine, International Medical Congress, 1881.

and not to follow in the advancement of medicine. A great step has been gained by the acquisition of the New Buildings, and of the magnificent opportunities for practical observation afforded in the adjoining Infirmary. I see no reason why, in the course of time, these advantages should not result in placing Edinburgh in the position of a great School of research as well as of medical education. With fully equipped laboratories, with teachers conducting courses of instruction in all the important departments of systematic and practical medicine, a School might here be organised which would serve as a centre for the diffusion of medical knowledge to all English speaking people. I do not think it is an illegitimate ambition to aim at this result. We owe great debts to teachers of medicine in Germany. To the class-rooms and laboratories of that country a considerable number of the students and graduates of Great Britain and of the British Colonies resort, year after year, for the purpose of learning methods of scientific research, and even of supplementing their knowledge of the practical departments of medicine and surgery. They do so at much inconvenience and under many disadvantages. The mere difference of language is to many an obstacle, and months are spent in overcoming it, to the procrastination of the objects they have immediately in view. I do not think it is a narrow feeling of patriotism which urges us to endeavour to replace these inconveniencies by instituting in Edinburgh a great School—more successful in the attainment of the highest objects of medical science and art than the School which at present exists, and which, on its entry upon a new epoch, may owe much of its future development to its present teachers and students. To attain this object, it is almost unnecessary to remark that something more than class-rooms and commodious laboratories are required. I pass over the loyal and hearty co-operation of teachers and students, which, I have no doubt, would be freely given; I pass over changes and further developments in the course of instruction, to some of which I have already referred, for their discussion would require a more detailed consideration than I am able, on this occasion, to bestow upon them; and I pass over the great obstacle to scientific research in this country, which a sentimentalism, neither robust nor reasonable, has compelled the Legislature to impose upon biological science, as I have little doubt that, in the course of time, the rewakened intelligence of the country will cause this obstacle to be removed. In addition to these requisites, there remains one—the obtaining of sufficient pecuniary assistance—which I also think should not constitute a serious hindrance. The laboratories that have been so generously constructed require to be furnished and maintained, and this can only be done at considerable expense. The researches that may be undertaken would necessitate expenditure for apparatus and materials; and the workers—who, in most instances, would be students and the younger members of the profession—could not be expected, unless some provision were made

for them, to spend their time and best energies in investigations, which, however certainly they may fructify hereafter into valuable applications, would, in all probability, yield no immediate pecuniary reward. It is in the highest degree encouraging to know that, within little more than twenty years, the University has received the magnificent sum of £232,000 for the foundation of bursaries and scholarships, a liberal share of which has been bestowed upon the students of the Faculty of Medicine. With some conspicuous exceptions, these foundations are not, however, applicable to purposes which I would venture to describe as the most important. They are generally applied to reward diligence in the ordinary studies of the students; to pay students, in other words, for doing that which they join the University to do, and which they should do to the best of their ability without the incentive of such rewards. I have long entertained the opinion that this application of money is not the best that might be made. When consideration is given to the incalculable services that would be rendered to humanity, as well as to our University, by the appropriation of these sums of money to the furtherance of original research, their too frequent application to purposes of comparatively little value is much to be regretted. A few thousand pounds devoted to the foundation, in each of the experimental departments of the medical curriculum, of research fellowships, and of endowments to supply the apparatus and materials, without which modern science can make little advance, would be productive of the greatest benefit. It is hopeless to look for assistance from the Government of this country, which, in its dealings with the Scottish Universities, refuses to follow the lead of Germany and of other enlightened nations, in fostering the developments and aims of the higher education. I trust, therefore, that future benefactors of the University, endowed, it may be, with the princely resources and generosity of a Vans Dunlop, may be induced to give us their assistance. Their gifts could not be bestowed for a more worthy object than the advancement of research in the medical sciences, where each discovery increases the utility of the healing art, and widens the sphere of the application of the charity which is inseparably linked with the practice of medicine.

I cannot conclude this reference to the New Buildings, and to the suggestions for improvement which their inauguration and the celebration of the tercentenary of the University so strongly bring before us, without some allusion to the fact that, in the arrangements that have been made, and in others that are yet unfinished, a great advance has been effected in providing for the comfort and convenience of students. When we contrast the old class-rooms, characterized by their imperfect ventilation and lighting, and their generally meagre altitude and insufficient capacity, with the abundantly airy, well-lighted and spacious rooms for which they have been exchanged, we recognise one prominent evidence at

least of this advance. I hope, however, that in the course of a few weeks it will be shown that in other respects consideration has been given to the wants and comforts of students. The work has been commenced of preparing for their use two rooms in the New Buildings, which will supply a want, from which, I fear, they have already too long suffered. One of these rooms is destined to serve as a students' "common room," where some opportunity for social intercourse will be afforded, and the other as a reading-room, in which a considerable library of medical books will be placed.

It has occasionally been advanced as a reproach against the majority of the Scottish universities that the social side of student-life is too much neglected by them. This reproach has had some foundation; but I do not think we are prepared to take extreme measures to remove it, especially if their tendency would be to destroy such a valuable feature of our system as the fostering of independence, or would entail the imposing of conditions which are not suited to the circumstances of a large proportion of our students. At the same time, it is gratifying to find that, among recent reforms, increasing consideration is being given to this very important element in university organization. The advantages of a closer intercourse among students must be almost incalculable in a university, affluent in the number of her students, who have been collected from the most distant parts of the world, and who are necessarily composed of individual elements and groups imbued with the greatest diversity of ideas and tastes. The institution of the Students' Club and the movement to found a Students' Union are entitled to every commendation, which may very appropriately be bestowed in the hall of this Society. For many years the Royal Medical Society has afforded to the students of medicine some of those advantages which it is hoped will be conferred by the Students' Union upon the general body of the students. In its magnificent library, in its museum, reading-rooms, and public hall, it constitutes an establishment unique in its advantages and conveniences among all the student institutions of the country. Perhaps the members would permit me to suggest that its attractions might be increased were they to introduce popular literature into the Society more largely than is now done. I make the suggestion to some extent from my own experience as a former member, and I think that if one of the rooms were set apart for newspapers and the best non-medical periodical literature, the attractions and usefulness of the Society would assuredly not be lessened.

In the direction of further improvements of a social description, it is worthy of consideration if the institution of a students' residence hall should not be contemplated. I would strongly deprecate, even if it were possible, the general introduction of a collegiate system into our University. The experience of the Royal Medical Society, however, has shown that, among the students of medicine, a certain number find in this Society conditions which favour their

tastes and minister to their wants. Among the large number of students of the University it is not unreasonable to suppose that there are some to whom a residence college would be a great benefit. In my capacity as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine this want has, time after time, been impressed upon my attention by those who have the best of reasons to be interested in the welfare of students, and especially of colonial students. The great obstacle to the introduction of this reform is one which I am afraid I have already had occasion to indicate — the necessity which it implies for pecuniary assistance. It is essential for the success of the scheme that a large building should be erected, capable of accommodating about one hundred students, and that it should be endowed with means sufficient at least to secure a warder of good parts. It would be most important to avoid any lavish extraction of money from those who live in the college, such as occurs in residence colleges elsewhere. The expense to the students should, indeed, be restricted to a reasonable sum for board. As it may be anticipated that such an establishment would be mainly occupied by colonial students, who number upwards of 260 at the present time, and as we are told that in the colonies large sums of money are sometimes amassed, even by members of our profession, I would commend this scheme to the best consideration of colonial enterprise and benevolence!

I must now conclude the remarks that have been suggested to me by the specially memorable events of the time at which I have the privilege of addressing you. I offer no excuse for having brought these topics under the notice of this meeting. The experience of the past has shown that in this Society many of those who have exerted the most powerful influence upon medical progress and education have received a valuable portion of their training. The present circumstances of the Society encourage me to hope that this influence will be continued in the future. That the Royal Medical Society may always meet with success and prosperity must be the fervent wish of every one who has at heart the best interests of the Medical School of Edinburgh. I trust that in this new session, and in subsequent sessions, still larger numbers may join the Society than have hitherto done so; for then there would be conferred upon increasing numbers of students the high educational and social training which has in the past been so eminently effective in elevating the tone of our profession and in increasing the reputation of our University.

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