

On the education and conduct of a physician / by Sir Henry Halford, bart.

Contributors

Halford, Henry, 1766-1844.
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Publication/Creation

London : J. Murray, 1834.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/bgtqppub>

Provider

Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh

License and attribution

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. The original may be consulted at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. where the originals may be consulted.

This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



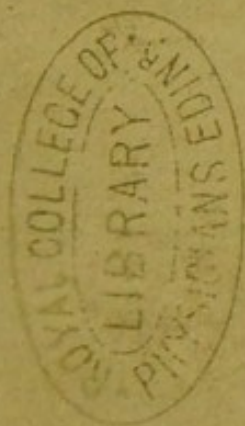
Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>



ON THE
EDUCATION AND CONDUCT
OF A
PHYSICIAN.

BY

SIR HENRY HALFORD, BART., M.D.,
PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE
OF PHYSICIANS.



LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

MDCCCXXXIV.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Duke Street, Lambeth.

EDUCATION AND CONDUCT OF A PHYSICIAN.

IT was a favourite remark of a very accomplished Roman, Pomponius Atticus, that 'sui cuique mores conciliant fortunam;' and the motto of William of Wykeham, to whom many of you may have been indebted for your education, was, 'Manners maketh the Man.'

Now, we shall do great injustice both to the Roman senator and to the illustrious ecclesiastic of our own country, if we interpret the 'mores' of the former, and the manners of the latter, by the mere personal demeanour of a man. They must be construed into his principles, his generous sentiments. What is in a soldier his honour; in a lawyer

his integrity; in the churchman his exemplary carriage and conduct; and in a physician all that is enjoined in the oath of Hippocrates—not only a consummate knowledge of the resources of his art, but a gentleness of manner; a sacred reserve as to the affairs of families into which he may be admitted; a delicacy and a chastity proof against all temptation. In short, he must not have witnessed sacrifices to Moloch, or the rites of Flora, ‘ubi Cato spectator esse non potuit.’

But manners, in this sense of the word, are the result of education. Uneducated man knows nothing of sentiment. He is governed by two predominant and paramount objects—the gratification of his passions, and the appropriation to himself of everything to which he may take a fancy. Education, conducted upon Christian principles, eradicates this selfishness gradually, and finally

makes him fit for society. He is taught to see the propriety, as well as the immediate advantages, of reciprocal kindness; of conceding something which he possesses to the wants of others, and of receiving in return similar accommodation. Presently he anticipates the wishes of his companion, and volunteers the gratification of them; and thus lays the foundation of a friendship in the 'idem velle adque idem nolle.' At length, by good examples, he acquires the essential principles of good breeding, 'nunquam se præponens aliis, adversus nemini;' and, so far as proper feelings are concerned, which are best obtained and improved by communication and close intercourse with those who possess them, he is prepared to fulfil his duties in society.

Whilst the 'mores,' the result and manifestation of the moral principle, are thus developed and enlarged, in the process of

which enlargement and development an uncompromising adherence to truth is rigidly enforced as absolutely necessary to future character, the reasoning faculties are strengthened, and the mind advances in power. A disposition to make observations on what is passing arises, and must be encouraged; comparisons must be instituted in order to teach the drawing of correct inferences; a knowledge of mankind must be acquired, as far as books will teach it; the classics, those depositories of the wisdom of ancient days, which allure all men that are studious into that delicate and polished kind of learning, must be pored over night and day;

Vos exemplaria Græca
Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.

But it should not be forgotten that it is a mistake, and a perversion of learning, when men study words, and not matter; and fail to acquire something when they read

which they can fairly call their own ; for,
he who reads

Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and a judgment, equal or superior,
Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
Deep versed in books, and shallow in himself.

MILTON.

But if the study of the classics be directed with judgment, it will be found that they exhibit the best models of order and of taste. In them may be traced the origin, progress, and decline of knowledge ; they contain the history and display the picture of a world gone by, which has left specimens of the cultivation of the arts, and of the efforts of human intellect, which no subsequent age has equalled, much less surpassed. Classical knowledge, therefore, will be applicable on ten thousand occasions to illustrate and adorn science. It is interesting to each of the learned professions : to that of the lawyer, who, though he look no

higher than the age of Justinian for the first systematic digest of law, yet may he find in the Greek and Roman orators the most luminous expositions of complicated details, and the most powerful appeals to the reason of an audience. To that of the churchman, by presenting to him, amongst other attractions, a valuable system of ethics, though it be deficient in the great points of general benevolence and charity, and is altogether much inferior to that which we have all the happiness of possessing in the New Testament; nor can he fail to find a perfect intellectual enjoyment, in comparing the songs of the favoured people of God with the beautiful hymns of pagan poetry.

But to the physician, whose profession is of all countries and of every age, they are doubly attractive, because he perceives, in the ancient historians, the origin of many of the terms of his art; the earliest mention of

some remedies, whose value has since been confirmed by time and use; and in the poets, the most touching descriptions of the effects of moral causes upon the health of the human system; to say nothing of the pure delight of such sources of innocent amusement as those which are opened in these fountains, and which are so well calculated to heighten the pleasure of future success, and to soften the adversities of possible disappointment. The mathematics may now be cultivated with advantage, because they assist in forming the mind to clear perception and to accurate reasoning; and, further, as they open the road which must hereafter be travelled in pursuit of all science. But with these studies must be mixed a large acquaintance with those divine truths which are the port and sabbath (to use Lord Bacon's words) of all human contemplations. It must never be forgotten,

in any system of education, that religion is the cementing and preserving principle of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort.

A pupil thus sent forth, accomplished in a virtuous discipline, fitted to procure him attention and respect in his place in society, may now commence the study of our profession; a profession which calls for the constant exercise of a quick perception, a sound judgment, a perfect knowledge of all the resources of our art, and an indefatigable industry; all which will be amply rewarded by what is better than honours and wealth—the blessings of thousands on his successful skill.

His first care will be to make himself fully acquainted with the curious structure of the human frame; the functions of every part in a state of health, and its deviations from that sane and healthy condition under dis-

eases; the symptoms of which he must next learn to discriminate with the nicest care. After this, he will inform himself profoundly of the various remedies of our art, whether they be supplied by the botanist or the chemist, or come from whatever other source; and, lastly, with the appropriate application of medicine to particular disease. I forbear to enter more minutely into the order in which lectures should be attended. Every medical school has its own arrangements.

But it may not be unnecessary to guard the student against being seduced to pay a disproportionate attention to any one branch of the course. To become exclusively the botanist or chemist, or even the anatomist, where the one great object is the cure of diseases, will narrow both his resources and his mind, and will make him incur the risk of failure in the end. Philosophy, to an intellect now so well prepared to investigate

its hidden truths, and to make discoveries in the ample field of general science, presents, it must be admitted, most seductive charms. But the example of Hercules, in the interesting story of his choice, must govern the student's conduct; and he will do well to remember the rebuke of Menedemus in the play, 'Chreme! tantumne in re tuâ otii datur, aliena ut cures, eaque ad te quæ nihil attinent?'

No: the cure of diseases, I repeat it, is the physician's object, and he must not allow anything to divert his eye from that great mark. Botany and chemistry, enchanting as they are, only furnish tools to the hand of the workman. They are but subsidiary instruments, wherewith to execute, not to form, great designs.

Nor is it safe to attach himself to the consideration of some one particular disease. If exclusive and particular attention be given

to *one* malady, with the ambition of acquiring early fame by it, suspicion will arise that this physician's mind is less comprehensive than is necessary to take in all the objects within the horizon of science. Nor is it less impolitic and prejudicial in another point of view ; for if any one case turn out ill in the hands of such a person, his good name will be put into jeopardy immediately, on the conclusion (lame and impotent it may be) that if he could not cure a disease to which he had paid such extraordinary attention, how should he master another which had not duly engaged his mind ?

Nor must he addict himself to any particular system, nor swear by the opinions of any master. He must exercise his own judgment, and be ready to profit of occasions—' *scire uti foro,*' according to the Roman proverb ; and to accommodate himself to circumstances as they arise, either

by the adoption of a new treatment by new remedies, or by the use of accredited ones in new and unusual doses, remembering another remark of that great master of human nature, Terence :—‘ Nunquam ita quicquam
‘ bene subductâ ratione ad vitam fuit, quin
‘ res, ætas, usus semper aliquid apponent
‘ novi, aliquid moneant, ut illa quæ scire te
‘ credas, ea quæ putaris prima, in exercendo
‘ ut repudias.’—(Vide *Adelphi*.)

He must be patient, he *should* be healthy, (for good health implies cheerfulness, and the best condition of the temper,) and disengaged from all other pursuits whatsoever. He ought to be kind, and strictly honourable to his associates. He should have a quick perception of propriety, a ready sense of the ‘ quod decet et decorum est;’ and must not indulge in any peculiarity of humour or bad habit. If there be some vicious mole of nature in him, any thing which carries the

stamp of one defect, (to adopt Hamlet's phrase,) he must do his best to correct this—

His virtues, else,

Be they as pure as grace,

As infinite as man can undergo,

Shall, in the general censure, take corruption

From that particular fault.—HAMLET.

He should possess a heart, though firm enough to encounter appalling scenes, yet full of sensibility and tenderness; one which shall respond quickly to the feelings of another, and so be likely to conciliate the sick man's confidence and attachment. Nor is this kind and tender feeling utterly incompatible with an unpolished manner. We have seen it united with a homely carriage, yet succeed in more than one memorable instance in our own time. But I would rather state it, that their powerful acquirements had made these estimable persons succeed, *not by* a bad manner, but in spite of it. This it is important to impress upon

your minds, lest some of you be misled by their examples, unwittingly, to be careless of your demeanour, the sole trait of these great departed characters unworthy of your imitation.

I am tempted here to add what Plato said of his master, Socrates ; that he was like the gallipots of the druggists, which had on the outside apes and owls and other grotesque figures, but contained within sovereign and precious balms ; acknowledging, that to an external report he was not without superficial levities and deformities, but was inwardly replenished with excellent virtues and powers. But this good feeling of which I have spoken, is necessary, not to the patient alone, but to those who are surrounding his sick bed. He himself may have been rendered insensible, by the pressure of his disease, to the kindest offices of those who are attached to him : but they

want the physician's balmy consolation to assuage the smart of their affliction; and as his sympathy will have been manifested in moments of tenderness, the impression it makes will be remembered and acknowledged by future confidence and esteem.

Of his duty towards the family in making them acquainted with the patient's danger as soon as he himself shall perceive it, I have spoken on a former occasion; and you heard me with so much attention, that I need not trespass on your patience by repeating my observations.

So much for the proper education and conduct of a physician; and surely it will be allowed, that a person gifted with a good intellect, so chastised and enlightened, increases the respectability of the profession generally, and creates a strong claim to the esteem of its members.

The point on which I presume to insist

with most earnestness, is the necessity of a preliminary strict and virtuous education. Having been taught to search for truth, the mind is better prepared to look for it, and to find it. To embark in an undertaking which requires so much thought as the attempt to unravel the perplexities of disease, without having learned the first principles of reasoning, can lead only to empiricism, or the practising upon receipts; and when that profession is to be exercised in the very interior of domestic privacy, unless the bad propensities of our nature shall have been subdued, and kept under severe habitual control by moral discipline, there will be danger perpetually of bringing the whole faculty into disrepute. Let these first principles be acquired carefully, and let the student's mind be taught to expand and enlarge itself by a knowledge of the wisdom of former ages. Let him converse with

Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates, as Friend, and Mead, and Warren, and Heberden, and Sir George Baker did; and let reason and the moral sense, enlightened and strengthened by religion, have gained a firm ascendancy and rule over the passions. Let him be careful to adopt the sentiments and the manners of a gentleman, by preferring such associates as are distinguished by their elevation of mind, their sound principles, and their good manners. The latter have been classed amongst the minor virtues, and are better taught by example than by precept. It is indifferent to me where these acquisitions shall have been made, whether in our own universities or in foreign schools; for I am not so illiberal as to conclude that nothing Attic can be taught *without* the walls of Athens. I know, however, that in our own universities, good men are to be found,

who are as incapable of an ignoble sentiment as of an unbecoming demeanour; and that sound learning, such as will capacitate a man as well for the highest employments in the state as for the less ambitious pursuit of our useful profession, and the most efficient systems of moral discipline, are taught and practised. And if they must yield to the capital in the larger facilities afforded here of acquiring a familiarity with disease, and a knowledge of the practice of physic, be it so—their merit is not diminished by this consideration; for when the appetite for the knowledge that is wanted has been sharpened by the air and wholesome habits of the universities, if it do not find the food it desires there, it will migrate in search of it into whatever regions it is most likely to be found. Harvey went to Padua, Mead to Utrecht, Sir George Baker to Leyden;

and those physicians of later times, who, fired by the light of these brilliant examples, have endeavoured to tread in their steps, have sought, after due preliminary study, their physic in the successive schools of celebrity, as they have been eminent in their turn; and so has there never been wanting a succession of learned and able men, who have been distinguished by their great attainments, and have added a dignity to our profession which has raised it pre-eminently in England above the consideration which it obtains in any other country in the world. *Esto perpetua!*

Here I ought to stop; but it is impossible for me to allude to the discipline of an English university, without dwelling for a moment on the character of the eminent Chancellor of Oxford, who has been taken from us so recently by death; and in whose life all the merits and advantages of that

system of education were so conspicuously displayed.

Lord Grenville, though he was descended from a noble family which had served the country in successive generations of statesmen, yet laid the foundation of his own fame, as a minister, at Oxford. I dare not presume to speak of the gravity and wisdom which he brought to political councils, in the presence of those illustrious persons who were his associates in the cares of government, and who are, at the same time, the most competent, as well as the most candid judges of his merit.

He had withdrawn himself many years from the rivalry of parties, and had sought his happiness in the bosom of his family, and his employment in a recourse to those studies by which he had distinguished himself in his early manhood. To value Lord Grenville as he deserved to be valued, it

was necessary to know him in his interior and domestic life,—

In his happier hour
Of social converse, ill exchanged for power.—POPE.

Not that I would construe this expression in the exact sense in which the poet probably applied it to Walpole; for the conviviality of Lord Grenville was chaste and temperate, and his discourse altogether intellectual, Tusculan. For his mind was fully imbued with literature, which flowed in conversation as from an inexhaustible fountain; and a daily accumulation of classic lore precluded that tedium of life, which men long engaged in the business of the world are apt to feel so irksome and insupportable after they have retired to privacy. It was of an essential advantage to him, moreover, in his valetudinary health, and assisted his physician much in administering to him

under illness; for, at every pause of his disorder, he resumed his books, which disengaged him from a gloomy contemplation of his symptoms, and restored, at once, his spirit and his cheerfulness.

Nor was he less interested in the cause of science, nor less disposed or alert to assist its votaries by his counsel, and by the influence of his high offices. A proof of this we have before us daily, in the magnificent museum of the late Mr. Hunter, purchased for the public during his administration; and for which the friends of medical science and of natural history have never ceased to feel grateful to his colleagues now present, who assisted him in commending this great object to the munificence of Parliament.

No day passed heavily with Lord Grenville; his enjoyment of the beauties of

Nature was exquisite, and he found their improvement by art a perpetual source of amusement and delight.

He was a scholar amongst scholars; an exemplary Christian in the midst of those whose duty and whose pleasure it is to encourage and confirm our faith in Christ.

His fondest wishes were for the prosperity of his country; his recreation, literature; and his comfort, religion.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Duke Street, Lambeth.