

The oration delivered before the Medical Society of London, at their sixty-second anniversary, March 9th, 1835 / by Walter C. Dendy.

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Dendy, Walter Cooper, 1794-1871.
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Publication/Creation

London : printed by W. Clowes, 1835.

Persistent URL

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THE
ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Medical Society of London,

AT THEIR

SIXTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY,

MARCH 9th, 1835.

By WALTER C. DENDY,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN LONDON; FELLOW AND HONORARY LIBRARIAN
OF THE SOCIETY; HONORARY MEMBER OF THE PHYSICAL SOCIETY OF GUY'S HOSPITAL;
SURGEON TO THE ROYAL INFIRMARY FOR THE DISEASES OF CHILDREN, &c.

PRINTED ACCORDING TO THE REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY,

LONDON:
PRINTED BY W. CLOWES, 14, CHARING CROSS.
1835.

ORATION.

MR. PRESIDENT,

IT would not be possible for me, under any circumstances, to address an assembly like this without feelings of diffidence. Were mine the first oration delivered before the Medical Society, I must even then have craved its mercy to temper its judgment; but I reflect on the eloquence of former days, especially on that still fresh in our memory, the able discourse of my learned predecessor—I know that I am about to address many of the *Αθάναι* of the Profession—men on whose opinions I have been accustomed to hang as on the inspired responses of an oracle, and those Cincinnati of this Society, to whom it would become me more to listen than to talk; and I should quail beneath the duty, were I not to lean on this consolation—that courtesy and lenity of criticism are not found among the unlettered and the vulgar, but among the enlightened and the learned; who, acknowledging with Socrates the deficiencies of the most perfect in the field of science, have learned to palliate and forgive the faults of its more humble student.

In the present æra, Gentlemen, when authorship is the order of the day, it is equally difficult to select a theme for this address as to avoid the imputation of plagiarism. The paramount question of the day presents a field of argument fertile and deeply attractive; but if I contemplate the myriads of words, the volumes of voluntary opinion and extorted confession with which the reform investigation has been deluged, how may I presume to influence that assimilating power which is to reduce this mass of evidence into a system and a law. The shades of opinion will ever vary as the contour of feature, "*quot homines, tot sententiæ.*" Almost every one would play the legislator, and would form, were his power equal to his will, a code of laws to suit his own notions—his prejudice—his interest. To amalgamate and reconcile this conflict may be an Herculean task for the legislature: in decreeing the forfeiture of cherished monopolies and darling privilege, the line must be delicately drawn between vested right and vested wrong, or the constitution of the profession may resemble that painting which was converted into a *tabula rasa*, by the privilege granted to every fastidious connoisseur to blot a fault with his critical brush.

It would be affectation to assert the faultless constitution of our Colleges: their errata indeed were indirectly encouraged by the former apathy of their unprivileged members. It is not likely that the lion

of reform will so slumber at the present period : the revolutions of time—the march of science in its progress towards perfection—and the constant remodeling of society itself, demand corresponding changes in our charters.

The conviction of this truth is the ground of those arguments and efforts, in which the *Permissi* and *Members* of the Colleges have been engaged, involving points of deep and important interest:—the usurpation of the fellowships—the absolution of the chartered councils from their responsibility—the form and fee demanded for surgical disfranchisement—the disqualification for high professional office entailed on the induction to the practice of pharmacy—and the clause in the Act of 1815, which tacitly implied a sanction to the home practice of the chemist, by which concession indeed the worshipful Company unwillingly forfeited their birthright.

From these alleged errata spring the vital questions of legislative contemplation:—the eligibility and the mode of transfer or combination of collegiate power—the system of concours—the extension of suffrage or elective right—questions too delicate and far too difficult to be here determined : for the ardent spirit of the age will almost aim at a new creation, while it is the instinctive characteristic of those who have attained seniority to dislike innovation ; the halo of youth is not around them, which casts an

inspired reflection on new things—they brood over the pleasures of possession, and exclaim “*Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari.*”

But when, in rendering the just tribute of *suum cuique*, I reflect on the rank and esteem which have attached to the professional name through the influence of collegiate learning, I may, without o’erstepping the limits of courtesy, express a hope that laws may be untainted by the spirit of party, which, if it does not sacrifice principle to policy, often mars where it should make, and just as idolatry or prejudice may influence, is too often induced either to worship or revile.

For me to aim at the full scope of medical policy would be presumption ; I will rather direct your thought to the associations and the influence of that which is the object of its laws—the basis of its practice—*professional* SCIENCE. I will venture a moment to digress, for the purpose of glancing at those dark ages in which the professors of every art laboured without chart or compass, and to that dim twilight of professional sophistry which ushered in the dawn of science. Reflection on the infancy of knowledge will afford us this conclusion, that the practice of medicine was originally either accidental or imitative. In appropriating to the requisitions of nature, especially in reference to appetite, the vegetable productions which adorned and enriched the earth, discoveries of their

virtues, and their influence on the body, were continually made, and then adopted as remedies, where the functions over which this influence prevailed were excessive or deficient; and this study was not illumined by anatomy and pathology, for Galen had not dissected, and Vesalius had not published his "Epitome."

In Babylonia, according to Herodotus, the patient was often laid on the public way, that he might be treated by any passing traveller, whose memory might suggest that remedy which blind experience had proved efficacious in similar cases: thus the early *practice* of medicine preceded its *theory*.

In contemplating the history of the revolutions of medicine, extreme defects in its early study will be deemed a natural consequence. The division of labour among the ancients was of necessity so lightly appreciated, that one man professed as many callings as the illustrious Barber-surgeon in the farce of the Review. Arms, poetry, religion, were successively combined with the mystic art of healing.

Among the heroic practitioners of ancient Greece, Nestor was honoured by the duty of applying cataplasms to the wounds of Machaon himself. Thus, like the viper, whose fat is said to destroy the venom of its fang, the hero carried the bane and antidote along with him. Among the poetical doctors, if we may judge from the miraculous influence of his lyre

in reference to melancholy, mania, and the bite of the tarantula, Orpheus will stand supreme.

It was among that class, however, which exerted an almost preternatural influence over the minds of men, that we witness the most unblushing assumption of the art; and it must be confessed that the superstition and blind faith with which their proselytes regarded their wondrous powers, combined with the imposition of charm and amulet, contributed much to the efficacy of remedy. The priest of Egypt, of Chaldæa, and of Jewry—the Brahmin of Indostan—and the Druid of ancient Britain and of Gaul, at the same time ministered to the fanaticism of religion and the absolute quackery of medicine. The practice was one tissue of imposture, which has descended even to our own day: it was the practice of Mahomet—it was the practice of Hohenlohe. It is curious to note how, in later days, in our own island, the tables have been turned on these pretenders—by the grafting of theology on medicine—in the instances especially of the second English physician, Nicholas de Ferneham, and Ægidius; and Hugo of Evesham, who was elected into the holy conclave of Cardinals at Rome. The realm of poetry has been invaded by Goldsmith, Garth, Armstrong, Akenside, and others.

The æra of legitimate medicine commences when, after the melodramatic mummeries in the temple of

Æsculapius, the schools of Cos, and other Grecian towns were established, and the star of Hippocrates beamed on the world with a lustre which the accumulated learning of after-ages has not been able to eclipse; for the study of symptomatology then afforded ample scope for illustration. The record of every fact was indeed a captivating discovery, and the combination of these truisms still bears the high title of aphorism.

In leading you through the various revolutions of medical science in Persia, in Greece, in Egypt, in Arabia, in Rome, it might gratify the longings of the antiquary were I to trace systematically its progress—to comment on the fatal influence of judicial astrology over the practice of the Persian physicians—on the literary incendiarism of past ages : in Greece, when Paracelsus burnt the books of Galen and Avicenna, declaring if God did not inspire men with the science of physic, it was right to consult the devil; in Egypt when the Alexandrian library was destroyed by the fanaticism of the caliph Omar, whose creed was based on the all-sufficiency of the Alcoran—or when Servetus and his writings were burned at the stake, for his theological arguments against the doctrines of Calvin, by which homicide, probably, the immortal discovery of the circulation was reserved for our own Harvey. It might amuse curiosity to expatiate on the various *nostra* of the visionary and

the empiric, from the *Catholicon* of Paracelsus to the Balm of Gilead of Solomon, a successful alchymist indeed in one point—the transmutation of vegetable matter into gold ; and it might satisfy the mere historian to tell of the vagaries of the *sects*, as they were termed—and of the shallow and illogical doctrines which prevailed until Phreas struck at the revival of Greek literature, and Linacre by the founding of the College purified physic from the dregs of monastic empiricism, and Sydenham, by inculcating the study of Nature herself, rescued the theory of medicine from the trammels of the schools ; but I should not be justified in this excursion, however inviting it may appear—the relative influence of *modern* science is a subject of more interest ; and having, for the purpose of contrast, glanced at the confusion which marked its earlier ages, I may presume to allude as courteously as I can, to those points which tend to control, to foster, or to vitiate its influence.

I will not pause to comment on preliminary tuition, on the aid which thought, and analysis, and deduction receive from mathematical study ; on the elucidation by the Greek and Latin classics, of technical and compound terms, or the diffusion of knowledge through the medium of modern languages ; the benefit is self-evident ; and equally clear is it that in the first stage of professional study, the pupil should not be doomed to the bondage of long apprenticeship—a

drudge in pharmacy, rather than the student of a scientific profession. The high discipline of his mind will soon afford proofs of its advantage, not the least of which is the power it will confer of resisting those influences which tend to perplex his study. I know that I am touching a delicate point when I allude to the contrasted precepts of our schools, and that *Cacoethes Scribendi*, which in obedience to the fashion of the day has produced so many hypothetical flights of fancy, ushered forth for the purpose of building up a reputation.

“Some books,” says Lord Bacon, “are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.” Were books but a series of interesting and important facts, we could rarely read too much—the pages being but records of nature, nature would be our book, such books should be digested. But in the multitude of councillors there is not always wisdom, and it is in some degree to this heterogeneous suction of knowledge, that we may ascribe the *logomachy* or war of words, which often composes the sum of what is termed animated debate, and the eccentricity and conceit of the embryo philosopher, who, like the soldier in “Phrenologasto” between two points of equal attraction, does not attain either, but is propelled in a diagonal equidistant from both.

But how is the garden of literature to be weeded?

In this age, this land of freedom, it is an act of literary despotism to hint at the imposition of fetters on the liberty of the press ; and if I feel the difficulty of that question, how much more of this which follows.

If we reason abstractedly, no one will be so bold or blind as to express his regret at the diffusion of knowledge ; but it may be doubted if extreme facility of acquirement always administers to the benefit of society, if the profusion of lecturers whom the crowded ranks of the profession often drive to that source of emolument in default of practice, do not increase the evil they complain of, and commit a species of professional suicide.

I will not assert that in mechanics and in medicine there is an analogous law, that the gain in celerity or space is a loss of power, but at least there is in the latter this impediment—superfluity of numbers. Does the honey-bee seek its balmy treasure in those gardens where the swarm of locusts had alighted—the leaves and blossoms of which they had devoured ? and will not this superfluity (although the schoolmaster, who is abroad, may brand my assertion as illiberal) blight the hope of remuneration for expenditure and laborious study.

Let me be understood. If the Profession were not glutted with embryo practitioners, if professional success bore an exact ratio to professional attainment,

I would not venture to argue as I do. But is it not a fact, that the precincts of Bridge Street have been deluged by applicants, who jostle each other like lacqueys in a lobby, and rush with the ardour of an Olympic struggle, for the privilege of gaining—what? the post of professional drudgery, and that for a miserable pittance, compared to which the wages of the powdered coxcomb in the hall of affluence were a princely revenue. Can I heighten this picture? Yes, I will place before you the accomplished child of genius and of study, whom disappointment has rendered up a prey to melancholy and despair—his hope blighted—the mine of learning within him unexplored and useless—his life a blank. We may meet him, perchance with pale and haggard visage gliding slipshod through the streets of this metropolis, a beggar—or with a sensitiveness closely allied to genius, shrinking with instinctive dread from the disclosure of his penury, and at length, like Savage, and Otway, and Chatterton, (but more wretched still than these, for they had the golden rays of poesy to illumine *their* dying hour,) yielding his miserable life within the walls of a hovel or a prison. This is no exaggerated picture, it is sketched from the life; and yet, with these truths before us, there are some who would open still wider the door to these miseries, who even advocate unrestricted practice, opposing all attempts to raise higher the scale of professional education by which alone this mighty evil can be checked.

And is the proposition of the high curriculum a recent innovation? In so remote an æra as the eleventh century, the school of Salernum, founded by the Duke of Normandy, decreed a test of attainment as severe, according to the existing knowledge as now; and in the reigns of Maria Theresa and Joseph II., five years of study and severe examination were essential for the degrees of Doctor in Medicine or Surgery, the only legalized practitioners in Germany.

Then, the Pharmaceutical Association of Great Britain, enrolled in 1794, represented the necessity of a higher grade of education, but their bill was strangled in its birth. In adherence to the wish of this Association to appropriate to themselves all compound pharmacy, its principle was vitiated. Thus ran the preamble of their petition: "As the apothecary necessarily attends patients without any emolument but what arises from the profits of the medicines he may vend"—

By this preamble, which truckles to the system of remuneration for goods delivered, the vendors of physic excited the jealousy of opulent and successful rivals. This fallacy, this anomaly in principle, was the ruin of their petition; it emasculated the practical clauses of 1815, and I fear it will undermine the basis of any attempt at improvement, so long as an actual identity of the science and the trade is fostered by the profession, and winked at by the legislature.

The reflective mind will not deny the wisdom of the high curriculum. The framing of the minutiae may be subjects of difficulty. The suggestions of Green, and the brochure of Louis, comprehend every essential point, in reference to the preceptor and the pupil, although the first may be too aristocratical for the levelling system, and the second too utopian for the *auri sacra fames* of the day.

The notion that this system would drive the student to foreign schools is a fallacy. Without an absolute restriction, the requisitions of attainment may be raised so high as to render continental study no attraction in point of economy, and yet not to lay an embargo on the free trade of science. A protecting duty against the importation of knowledge could only emanate from the barbarity of the dark ages, shrouding half our wisdom, and destroying those sacred links of fellowship, with which peace has united the scientific world.

And if any science may be sought for its own intrinsic excellence, is it not that which contemplates man's nature? The poet thus addresses the philosopher :—

“ Go, wondrous creature, mount where science guides ;
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and calculate the tides.”

Yet the sciences of Geometry—of Pneumatics—of Astronomy, glorious as they are, cannot, like the physiology of man, so deeply “ inspire the love of

truth, and of that supreme and eternal mind which contains all truth and wisdom, all beauty and goodness."

And are the cabals and recriminations, which shake the profession to its centre, calculated to inspire such sacred feeling, or to elevate its members in the estimation of the community? Will the mind be imbued with philosophical quiet amid the heat and distraction of political dispute; or will the suffering patient repose full confidence in the blessings of medicine, while envy openly rankles in the breasts of its professors, disjoining those whom the laws of philanthropy, nay, the stimulus of self-interest, should unite in brotherly kindness and charity?

The wisdom of *Æsop*, ages since, read a lesson to man, the moral of which is always on his lips, but which he blindly fails to improve. I allude to the wrangling of the lion and the bear over their prey, while the crafty fox creeps in and steals away the prize. The rivals of Pall Mall, of Lincoln's Inn, and Blackfriars, have not read this lesson wisely; hence the compromising concession in the act of 1815; hence the intrusion of those unblushing impostors, who, like the German mountebanks of old, filch the gold from the pockets, while they infuse their poison into the veins of their victims, and are allowed to deluge the press with indelicacy and falsehood, although this demoniac sentiment may be

read on their very labels—" *quærenda pecunia primum, virtus post nummos.*"

It were well if the nostrum of the empiric were a mere pious fraud which might agreeably deceive the patient while Nature effected the cure ; but by ignorance and depravity the pruning-hook is converted into a spear—the blessed antidotes of nature into a baneful poison. With a deluded confidence (and we have illustrations fresh in our recollection) the patient rests his hope on the specific, as the traveller sinks into slumber beneath the shadow of the poison manchineel, and wakes in agony, or perchance sleeps to wake no more. And all this is with the sanction and encouragement of those who pretend to govern according to the precept on the Roman tables—" *Salus populi suprema lex,*" for the yearly revenue of some £50,000, which the stamp-duties and advertisements fling into the chests of the Exchequer.

For these abuses the remedy must be—the subduing of unqualified practice and quackery, not through the proscriptive evidence of *private* and interested party, by which the law is reduced to a mere scarecrow hung up to frighten the pickers and stealers, but by an influence like that of the *Proto Medicus* of Austria, who is invested with a power of putting down quackery as it were by *ministerial* prosecution.

To set perfectly at rest our professional differences were to remodel the human mind—to constitute on

earth, amidst its competitions and its rivalries, an age of gold: indeed, it would require an internal effort of the scientific classes incompatible with our present anomalous *unions* and *subdivisions*.

In the olden time, I believe it to have been perfectly essential that one person should manufacture—compound—prescribe—dispense—and descend to the “culling of simples:” it was not difficult, for the pharmacopœia was then as limited and as simple as the scale of speculative theories. With us the necessity vanished with the influx of Italian chemists. We have our importer of dry drugs—our exotic and our native herbalist—our distiller—our operative—our dispensing chemist; and yet, with this nominal division of labour, science, while itself is dismembered, is still unwisely associated, the great majority of the Profession constituting a kind of *υστερον προτερον*, on whom no satisfactory title has yet been conferred.

There may be nothing in a *name*, but in the *principle* lies the error. To buy for little—to sell for much, alienates the mind where science should bear sway to mercantile views (in *themselves* most honourable), which point to the Profession as a source of *ad valorem* profit, while science is held but secondary. This tends to sully its purity, and a fatal stigma is cast on the Profession by this impression on the patient—that he is drenched with useless, if not *baneful* potions. With all this it is vain to

hope for the fulfilment of the wish expressed by our learned colleague, Dr. Uwins, in his *Essay*, a more discriminating connoisseurship among the people of the value of our medical ministration.

The ancient *subdivision* of the Profession was the result of the restriction of certain grades to mere manipulation ; the practice of the barber-surgeon, who was scarcely allowed to breathe a vein unless the physician dictated, and of the antique apothecary, who was less an aspirant, nay less *entitled* to professional fame than the pharmacien of France—the druggist or counter doctor of this nineteenth century.

But has not this system been essentially changed ? With all the respect and honour due to the members of the most learned college, I may presume that on the establishment of the higher scale of education, in the early days of science, distinction would have been the natural result of individual selection, and not of legislative interference.

From this point springs a subject which has been regarded with no slight suspicion, and which I, above all others, must approach with diffidence—the system of *levelling upwards*.

With sincere courtesy I ask this question—What is the present relative condition of the Profession ? It is true that, in the nooks and obscure crannies of this metropolis, we here and there stumble on one

of the ancient staunch apothecaries, whose shelves, like his of Mantua, are decorated with

“ Green earthen pots, bladders, and musty seeds,
Remnants of packthread, and old cakes of roses.”

But such an association is itself a libel on the present fame of the worshipful Company, which enrols among its members men, whose learning and whose wisdom would not quail in argument before a senior wrangler hot from Cambridge.

X The surgeon, once the lowest grade of all, although no station has yet been granted him in the courtly order of precedence, has long since emerged from his chrysalis state.

The memory of Hunter—of Cline—of Home—of Abernethy, will live while science lives; for they have contributed to elevate the study of a mere manual art into a sublime and beautiful philosophy. And here I shall only echo the sentiment of all who hear me, if, for a moment, I lament with France the loss of him who was so lately one of her chief ornaments and blessings—Dupuytren. Whatever his eccentricities—his errors—his life was one unremitting course of scientific labour; and he has left a proof, more impressive than any the storied urn can record, of his ruling passion strong in death, in the splendid legacy of 500,000 francs, the endowment of a lectureship, and an asylum. Taught by similar be-

reavements of her own, Britain has learned to sympathize with all her sister nations; and with sincerity and regret she will bestow her eulogy and her tear over the grave of the illustrious Foreigner!

From the living lustres of surgery I will not presume to select; but for whom, I may ask, is the high scale of study more essential than for him whose practice is attended by extreme danger, and whose failures are so fearfully exposed to the ordeal of public scrutiny. The practice of physic is the sailing on a calm and summer sea—that of operative surgery on a dark and stormy water. The stigma and the penalty of *mala praxis* are fixed on the slightest errors of a surgeon, which his more learned brother escapes, for he is sworn on the Rubric to practise *tuto, cito et jucunde*, and happily the secrets of their prison-house are not often unfolded by the hepatic, the cardiac, or the pulmonary tissues.

Believe not that I speak thus in the spirit of invidious distinction, in prejudice of those Corinthian pillars of science which support and adorn the most learned college. This were to place one rank in array against the other, not in the pure and goodly fellowship of scientific ambition, but in the vain aspiration to mere *ceremonial* honour, the “whistling of a name.” No: I will rather hope for that conciliation of the classes which shall destroy this many-headed Hydra of Distinction, which may constitute a fellow-

ship not merely of this college or of that, but a fellowship of science—that the olive branch of peace may entwine round the staff of Æsculapius, and the broken shaft of Machaon.

Is this union of practice a speculative novelty?—No; I might revert for refutation to the reign of Henry VIII.—I might cite the instances of Winslow—of Harris—of Harvey. I may refer to the practice of more modern surgeons, and to the declaration of scientific physicians of the present day before the Parliamentary Committee; and, may I add, that such union would release us from the dilemma of the French monarch, who, being urged to place a barrier between the physician and the surgeon, shrewdly inquired on which side he should place the patient?

And is this equalization?—No. The tree of learning, like that of the forest, requires not a variety of strata in which to strike its roots, but its *branches* are not all of equal length—its flowers and its fruits not of equal beauty and flavour. Nor is equality of artificial growth; the manufacture of an edict or a law. These may confer title—they cannot ensure fame; for study and wisdom and age will still be honoured, still be sought for, though uncherished by courtly favour, though unadorned by the tassels of a college robe.

After this unfinished sketch, may I now remind

you that history of past ages will be useless, unless it may conduce to a progressive improvement of the present; that legislation itself were a dead letter, unless in our own breasts is established that court of conscience, before which there is no witness but our own reflection, no presiding judge but truth; that the most elaborate system of ethics were vain, if it does not teach philanthropy.

I have spoken of the CULTIVATION of science—its DIFFUSION is no less the mark of a liberal and enlightened profession. The nostrum vender, who hugs his secret, is but a shade deeper in the scale of depravity than he who refuses to impart his knowledge but for gold; who reads and thinks, and yet, like the misanthropic anchorite, goes down to his grave unhonoured, and drags with him to his coffin his unprofitable talent. It is the duty of each to impart the result of his study—“*nihil est nisi hoc sciat alter.*”

We may not always desire a costly folio, or hope for the development of intricate physiology, for novel or bold strokes in surgery, as torsion, or the ligature of an aorta, or the ingenious inventions of percussors, of stethoscopes, and spygmometers. The minute fragments of experience, which the student of nature is daily collecting, form a volume of deep and intrinsic value, illustrating obscure points in pathology, and testing the efficacy of therapeutics,

even though they are the fruits of mere accident—for two of our most valuable remedies “we are indebted to a madman and a savage.”

To prepare a field where these minutest seeds of science may be scattered ere they wither, where the germ may be ripened into fruit, is the object of scientific association; and I may be forgiven, if attachment prompts me to place in the foremost rank an institution still glowing with health and vigour amid more than sexagenarian honours, the Medical Society of London. Ancient in its foundation, rich and rare in its stores of antique and modern learning, it has witnessed the spring and prosperity of other institutions, yet not with the jaundiced eye of jealousy—for science is the object of all—but that pride with which the Roman Cornelia ushered in her children—with which Philip beheld the rising glory of Alexander.

Its once illustrious Fellows need no eulogy from me; but I will not conceal my honest pride in associating with those who *were* their companions in study, who *are* their equals in wisdom; and in being placed in this chair, which was consecrated by a Lettsom, who reared the sheltering roof over our infant society, and by Fothergill, who adorned its neck with the golden medal, more precious than the hero's badge of honour;—the jewel of the Bath is bestowed for prowess in the *destruction* of man—*this*

is the reward of science, which ministers to his *preservation* *.

I may not, in his presence, eulogize as I wish my valued friend the President †; but it is my duty to remind you of those high objects over which he has so courteously, yet so firmly, presided:—the establishment of professional honour—the conciliation of professional friendship—the cultivation of science—the elucidation of truth.

This Society is not like the political institute, an arena for invidious contention; its treasures are not like the yellow dirt of the gambling-house, which some must lose when others win. Its members constitute a joint-stock company of knowledge, in which the interest is mutual—in which all are winners; for in scientific as in civil society,

“Man, like the generous vine, *supported* lives;
The strength he gains is by th’ embrace he gives.
Thus God and Nature link’d the general frame,
And bade self-love and social be the same.”

It is by mutual interchange of mind that science, within the last century, has accomplished such gigantic strides. The inspired genius of Archimedes, of Newton, of Davy, may effect sublime dis-

* The presence of Dr. Clutterbuck forbade my alluding to his energetic aid, when the Society was in a state of almost suspended animation.

† William Kingdon, Esq.

coveries in the closet or the laboratory; yet it is by the accumulation of scattered facts, the collision of opinion, and the analysis of knowledge, that we are often led to the construction of a pure theory. For professional fellowship constitutes a practical school of ethics, a centre in which the rays of science converge. And in great emergencies,—in that, for instance, when at every step we were startled by

“ The deep racking pang, the ghastly form,
The lip pale quivering, and the beamless eye
No more with ardour bright,—”

the community will regard such institutions as the *fons et origo* of wise and efficient sanitary laws.

The travelling over many minds so enhances the value of each, that life may be said to be prolonged, and the *βίος βραχὺς* of Hippocrates *almost falsified*. An expression—a word may often call up a train of reflection in a deeply thinking mind, which may prove the ground-work of some splendid discovery: thus the prattle of his children from the play-room led Galileo to the invention of the Telescope; and Mr. Abernethy confessed, that the doctrine which gained him so much fame, was suggested by the observations of a pupil.

On the contrary, some vain notion, which was about to be ushered to the world with much pomp and display, has been proved wanting, and wisely con-

signed to the tomb of the Capulets ; for discussion is a book subject to immediate criticism, a safe substitute for literary censorship, which is fraught with too much danger of favour and caprice to render its adoption justifiable. The extreme sources of our pathological doctrines are the devotion to the pathology of tissues, and the study of mere symptomatology. It is here that these antipodean points may be approximated ; for to develop truth, each requires the reflected light of the other. What value would attach to the indications of the stethoscope, if dissection did not associate sound with organic change ; or if, like the Chinese, we regarded the pulse as all in all, and morbid anatomy as nothing in the formation of diagnosis, should we not, like them, be mere diviners and false prophets ?

It was in default of this interchange that the visionaries of the olden time spun their flimsy sophisms, which would have vanished instantly if submitted to the test of argument. It is no wonder that the lust of gold should tempt the unprincipled quack to abuse the credulity of man ; but when we see Philosophy blindly deceiving the community and itself, what is the explanation but mere closet study.

The panacea of some ancient *sages* was little less pernicious than the quackeries of our time. The *primitive physie* of John Wesley was as gross a libel on the Profession as the abusive slang of the modern

Hygeist. Few of our present quacks puff their *nostra* with more effrontery than did Avicenna his powder of *mummy*. The *Universal Elixir* of Roger Bacon was but another name for the *Universal Medicine* of Morrison; and the *Currus Triumphalis* of Basil Valentine, which killed so many monks, was but a prototype of the destructive imposture in Harley Street.

By the test of society too, *professional* empiricism is curbed, and the mind of a mere theorist is weeded from those spurious hypotheses which are too often the rank growth of enthusiastic minds. The productions of the brain, like those of the soil, are not always flowers and fruit. In illustration, may I point to the illusions of Homæopathy, and the amusing modification of the *similia similibus* system, the curing a consumption by the substitution of a catarrh; and (if I may travel to Asia for a fact) to the items which even now grace the bills of native doctors in Calcutta—gold leaf, and pearls, and the navels of goats and monkeys. May we not believe too, that on a fair analysis of many modern specifics by discussion, less ink had been shed in their eulogy, and less disappointment felt at the comparative failure of cubebs, of iodine, and the vaunted wonders of veratria and kreosote.

But we may have heard, perchance, an idler depreciate association, by pointing to the struggles for victory, the profusion of display, and the inconclusiveness of discussion. It were well, indeed, if the

confession of our failures and our faults formed a more prominent feature in debate—distinguishing the philosopher from the mere self-eulogist. Such confessions are the buoys on the ocean of science—the light-houses on the hidden rocks of practice: and who so skilful in laying down their bearings as those who have once struck upon them; but the sensibility of our nature quails beneath the lash of public criticism, and this is not the day when such castigation is administered with a very sparing hand.

It were well, too, that, on practical points, the simplicity of the Athenian areopagus were more emulated—that argument were divested of that oratory which charms the ear, while it deceives the judgment. But shall we ingloriously fail to seek Truth, because we cannot worship her in her very temple? I will remind you, that the splendid beauties of the Alps and of the Andes burst in succession on the enraptured traveller, although he may not reach the summit of Mont Blanc, or the crater of Cotopaxi: and what treasures has not the crucible of the alchymist developed for us, although he has failed in the perfect realization of his golden dream. Science will ever be progressive—the laws of nature are not all developed—the wonders of chemistry still lie deep within the bowels of futurity; and as the sun stood still, and the earth revolved on the destruc-

tion of the Ptolemaic system, some embryo philosopher may be even now engaged in overturning the gravitation of Newton.

And what then, gentlemen, should be the great motive—the aim of medical science? Is it the mere accumulation of wealth? Alas, that may be more easily done by the most debasing avocations.

Is it the acquirement of fame, of dignity, of honour? in arms—in the church—in the law—such may be the splendid objects of ambition. The garter and the peerage may be conferred on the conqueror—the mitre is surmounted by the ducal coronet—and on the woolsack sits a lawyer, the representative of his King; nay, a wealthy usurer can, with a tithe of his riches, purchase of the State more honours than were ever conferred on the brightest ornaments of our Profession.

But the glory of the physician should be transcendently beyond all this. The minister to the sufferings of human life—the sacred depository of secrets, holding domestic felicity in his keeping—the confessor of repented error in the boudoir of beauty,—whose evidence in the criminal court may almost be said to wield the sword of justice,—the physician becomes the trustee of the physical, the moral, and the legal life of man; and if he faithfully and honourably fulfil this duty, he may claim a title

higher than the crown can confer—*Philanthropist*;
and he may blazon on his shield a motto beyond all
that the colleges of arms can grant—

“Nulla re, propius ad deos homines accedunt, quam salutem
hominibus dando.”

