

A short account of the commencement, progress, and present state, of the buildings belonging to the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh.

Contributors

Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh.
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Publication/Creation

Edinburgh : P. Neill, 1819.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/g2txgp8e>

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>

*To Mr Donaldson
from the Editor*

A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
COMMENCEMENT, PROGRESS, AND
PRESENT STATE,
OF THE
BUILDINGS
BELONGING TO
THE ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY
OF EDINBURGH.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY P. NEILL.

1819.

THE ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY
OF EDINBURGH.
BUILDINGS
OF THE
PRESENT STATE,
AND
COMMENCEMENT, PROGRESS, AND
SHORT ACCOUNT

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY T. NEILL.

1819.

R14682

PREFACE.

THE Medical Society of Edinburgh, coeval with the School of Medicine in the University, was incorporated by Royal Charter in the year 1778. By that charter, the property which they had acquired in buildings, books and other effects, was secured to them in perpetuity. But notwithstanding the increasing prosperity of the Society, for near a century, some parts of the intended plan for the advancement of Medical Education, by means of this Society, particularly a Chemical Laboratory and Anatomical Museum, had never been properly carried into execution.

To supply this defect, at the end of last winter session, a Committee, consisting of Drs ANDREW DUNCAN *senior*, JAMES GREGORY, JOHN THOMSON, WILLIAM BEILBY, Messrs JAMES RUSSELL and ALEXANDER GILLESPIE, together with the
four

four annual Presidents, Drs EDMUND TURNER, WILLIAM CULLEN, CHARLES COINDET and WILLIAM STROUD, were appointed to take such steps as they might think most advisable, for the attainment of these important objects.

That Committee, directed by the opinion of an able architect, have projected several improvements and additions to the present Hall. These additions, without any encroachment on the ordinary funds of the Society, they hope may, as well as the original building, be executed by a voluntary Subscription among the Members, many of whom are now eminent medical practitioners in every quarter of the globe. To promote this subscription, they now submit to public inspection, the following short Account of the commencement, progress, and present state of the Buildings belonging to the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh.

Medical Hall, 27th October 1819.

AN
ACCOUNT

OF THE
SCHEME for building a HALL for the MEDICAL SOCIETY at Edinburgh.

Printed and circulated in 1771.

THE Medical Society of the students at Edinburgh was instituted in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-seven. For a long time past they have been allowed by the Managers of the Royal Infirmary to hold their weekly meetings in that hospital; since which period, the money formerly employed in defraying their expences at a tavern, has been appropriated to the purchase of books. The library thus formed amounts now to some thousand volumes, and has hitherto been kept in a room, for which they are likewise indebted to the Managers of the Royal Infirmary.

A

From

From a situation so honourable for themselves, they probably would never have thought of moving, had it continued as convenient for their purpose as it was at first. But, by the gradual increase of their library, the room allotted for it became insufficient for containing all their books. In this situation, they were again obliged to apply to their former benefactors, who have favoured them with the use of another small room, so long as they shall think it can be spared from those purposes for which the hospital is particularly intended.

By this indulgence, the inconveniences under which they formerly laboured are at present in some degree removed. But, although they are convinced that the Managers of the Royal Infirmary will, with the greatest cheerfulness, afford them assistance in every circumstance which is not incompatible with the interest of the hospital; yet it is obvious, that the present is but a temporary and an uncertain relief. Besides this, their books are not in such a situation as could be desired, either with regard to conveniency or preservation.

From these considerations, the Society were naturally led to think of some means by which the inconveniences above stated might be most effectually remedied. With this view, a subscription was begun among the attending members, during the last winter-session, for the purpose of building a HALL, to be appropriated solely to the use of the Society. At the conclusion of their meetings for last season, the sum subscribed for the intended hall amounted to one hundred and thirty pounds. Since that time, many subscriptions, from one to five guineas, have been received from different parts of Britain, by which the fund for their hall is now increased to two hundred and ten pounds. Although this sum is by no means sufficient for completely executing their intended plan; yet they think it advisable, that the work should be begun with all convenient speed; and they are not without hopes, that, before it be much advanced, new subscriptions will enable them to complete it without delay.

Many have already subscribed to this scheme, from a grateful sense of the advantages they formerly

merly derived from the Medical Society ; and it is not doubted, that others who have formerly been in the same situation, will soon take an opportunity of following their example. It is even imagined, that numbers who have never been connected with it will chearfully encourage an institution which has had no inconsiderable share in raising and supporting the reputation of a medical college in Britain.

Those who incline to promote this undertaking, may transmit their subscriptions either to Doctors WILLIAM CULLEN, JOHN GREGORY, or ANDREW DUNCAN, physicians in Edinburgh, who, with the annual presidents of the Society, are the committee to whom the direction of this affair is intrusted.

INTRODUCTORY

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS
TO THE
MEDICAL SOCIETY
OF
STUDENTS AT EDINBURGH.

Read 2d of November 1771.

BY ANDREW DUNCAN, M. D.

Veritas simplex, quibus est amori,
Hos amo, amplector, video libenter ;
His mihi seros sociis senectus
Impleat annos.

BUCHANAN.

ADDRESS

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

TO THE

MEDICAL SOCIETY

OF

STUDENTS AT EDINBURGH.

Read 24 of November 1771.

By ANDREW DUNCAN, M.D.

Veritas simplex, quibus est veritas.

His omni, amplius, video liberis: non in in-

His mihi vero sociis erectus

Insuper minor.

Procedere.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN,

YOU are now assembled for the first time this session, and are to begin the business of the Medical Society. In imitation of the example of former Presidents, it is my duty to recommend the concerns of this Society to your serious attention.

I well know, that, to those who have had an opportunity of hearing former introductory exhortations, any thing I can now offer will be in a great measure superfluous. I am persuaded also, that, with all now present, a sense of interest and of duty will enforce the obligations I mean to inculcate, in much stronger language than I can employ. Permit me, however, to comply with established custom: excuse me if I disappoint your expectations; and accept of what I have now to offer, at least as an apology for what might have been expected.

None

None of you, I dare say, are ignorant of the nature of that profession in the study of which you are now engaged. Medicine is an art which proposes for its object the preservation of health and the cure of disease. An acquaintance with the means by which these ends may be obtained, is by instinct impressed upon the brute creation. Mankind seem to have derived their first knowledge of them from the same original. But instinct is not the only motive which prompts them to the study of medicine. The exercise of an art so essential to sublunary happiness is daily enforced by every motive of humanity. It is not then surprizing, that the cultivation and improvement of it should have been attempted by an exertion of all the superior powers of reason, bestowed on the human race.

The progress which mankind have made in the advancement of arts in general, has been very considerable; among others, medicine has not been neglected: and the improvements already made greatly facilitate the labour of present practitioners. But neither can any one ex-

pect to receive from instinct all that knowledge which the experience, observation, and study of ages, have gradually acquired ; nor will those who wish to practise the healing art with safety to others, or credit to themselves, incline to remain ignorant of any improvement which time or attention has discovered. To facilitate the otherwise tedious labour of acquiring information, schools of medicine were first established, and have been carefully attended by all who mean to exercise that profession on solid, rational, or satisfactory principles.

The inhabitants of this island were long indebted to their neighbours on the Continent for instruction in medicine. But, from a liberal and independent spirit of inquiry, a school of medicine was established at this place, by a set of men, whose memories will be respected and honoured while the annals of that art are preserved. Coeval with this school is the Society to which you now belong ; your first founders were animated by the example of their professors ; and, while they paid them all that defe-

rence to which longer experience or superior abilities could entitle them, they did not hesitate to examine their opinions without reserve. They well knew, that, by such an examination, they could best arrive at truth, which was the grand object of their inquiry. The advantages which they derived from this Society have been sufficiently evidenced by their known abilities, as well as their repeated acknowledgments.

At the establishment of this Society, the system of Boerhaave maintained in Europe a sway as universal as ever that of Galen had done before. But the founders of this institution, while they were far from being the least sensible of the high merit of so great a master, did not hesitate to shake off a blind veneration for his errors. Reason, philosophy, and experiment, were their constant and their only guides. By these means, by such men, and in this place, were the foundations of the Boerhaavian doctrine first shaken. By a liberal spirit of inquiry, and unwearied assiduity in the pupils, as well as in the professors, the University of Edinburgh became
one

one of the first seminaries for medical education in Europe ; and, wherever the fame of the University extended, that of the Medical Society was not unknown.

Such was the beginning of this Society. The distinguished merit of its founders soon placed them at the head of their profession in every quarter of the British empire. An example, from men so eminent and so worthy of imitation, has hitherto been properly followed, and the character of the Society uniformly supported.

I have thus given a short account of the origin and character of the Medical Society. I need not observe, that the end which you have in view, is the same with that formerly gained by your predecessors. Nor need I mention, that, for the attainment of this end, you enjoy almost every advantage which, as a Society, you could either desire or expect.

The different branches of medicine are at present taught in this University by a set of professors,

fessors, in no respect inferior to those who first raised its reputation. While they exert the most unwearied labours in the pursuit of medical inquiries, they are unwilling that any farther deference should be paid to their opinions than arises from conviction. They know, that in this room their opinions are compared without partiality or prejudice. They are not ignorant of the freedom with which objections to the doctrines they teach are here started; and they approve of your endeavours to impugn these doctrines. In every particular in which their patronage can be of any service, it is always cheerfully afforded.

But the abilities of the professors, and the countenance which they give to this institution, are not the only advantages you enjoy. You are now, as a Society, the proprietors of a Medical Library, by no means inconsiderable. From the present state of your funds, you are able to purchase every new medical production which deserves a place in any well chosen collection. Some of your absent members have not been
unmindful

unmindful to add to your library, by sending presents of their own publications, not only from every quarter of Europe, but even from the continent of America. It is indeed true, that at this place there is no scarcity of medical books, either in public or private libraries. But the limitation of this collection to the members of the Medical Society, the facility with which they can at all times obtain books from thence, and the unlimited command which they have of these books, are circumstances which render this library no inconsiderable advantage, at a place where the concourse of medical students is very great.

By the increase of your library, some inconvenience has, it is true, arisen from the smallness of the room in which it is kept. But you have reason to expect that this will soon be remedied. I need not remind you, that at the close of last winter-session, a subscription was begun among yourselves, for the purpose of building a Hall, appropriated solely to the use of this society; but, I may inform you, that,

that, since your last meeting, the funds for this purpose have received very considerable additions.

The Medical Professors in this University have unanimously subscribed. Many of your absent members, in different parts of Britain, now connected with this Society by no other tie, but a grateful remembrance of the benefit they formerly derived from it, have likewise promoted this undertaking. In due time, you may, with some degree of confidence, expect returns to your circular letter, from members at a greater distance. There is also reason to hope, that, should resources from yourselves be insufficient, there are many, who, although they have never been connected with his institution, yet, from a desire to favour the advancement of science, and to support the reputation of the University of Edinburgh, will cheerfully encourage a scheme which has met with the unanimous approbation of the medical Professors, and of which they have undertaken the direction.

The

The application of what has been delivered, to your present situation, is by no means difficult. When you consider the example which has been set before you, the benefit which others have derived from this society, the peculiar advantages with which you prosecute your studies, and the encouragement with which, as a society, you are favoured, you can be at no loss to determine what should be your conduct in this place.

The name of the Medical Society stamps a certain degree of reputation upon all its members: This reputation you obtain even before you have done any thing to deserve it. You owe it to your predecessors, and it is your duty to pay it to posterity. If the present professors have been able even to add to the former reputation of the University of Edinburgh, shall those who have the benefit of studying under them, fail in supporting that of the Medical Society? Or, shall it be said, that the present members of this society neglect a duty, which, by the strongest ties of honour, they are bound to perform?

But

But interest, as well as honour, should prompt you to consult the welfare of this society. Your own private emolument is here intimately and inseparably connected with the public good. The advantages which every individual derives from this Society, will always be proportioned to the vigour with which his own personal abilities are exerted for your common interest.

For the discovery of truth in matters of science, it is necessary candidly to examine different opinions on every question which has been a subject of controversy. After this examination, it is requisite that every one should determine for himself. By submitting the opinions you have in this manner adopted to the examination of others, if ill grounded, they will most readily be overturned, if established upon truth, they will be still farther confirmed. By freely proposing doubts and difficulties, you may often receive information yourselves, and frequently instruct others. By united endeavours, and noble emulation, great and rapid progress in the knowledge of this science, in the study of which

you

you are now engaged, may with confidence be expected; and your most sanguine expectations in resorting to this school of medicine fully answered.

It may indeed be alleged, that the reward of labour in matters of science is very uncertain. It is at the same time an undoubted fact, that many other particulars are much better introductions to practice than a profound knowledge in medicine. Accomplishments of a different nature I mean not to despise. Many of them, if not absolutely necessary, are at least convenient and proper. But, where the lives of others are at stake, a thorough knowledge of the profession itself is the first and grand essential. Assiduity and attention employed in acquiring this knowledge, constitute a degree of merit which at least deserves success. But, to deserve success, is to do more than succeed; for many have succeeded without deserving it. I trust, however, that all who now hear me, while they live in hopes that they shall one day enjoy the emoluments of their profession, will

not neglect to ensure whatever merit can command.

Let me, however, admonish you, that your task is more difficult than that of your predecessors. It is an easier matter to acquire than to support a character. Expectation raised to a high pitch is difficultly satisfied, and disappointment never fails to magnify evils. Nothing, then, but the strongest exertion from this Society, as a body, will be sufficient to support its former character. But, an exertion from the Society consists in an exertion from every individual. Let no one then trust to his neighbour. Let no one plead example as an excuse for indolence ; but let every member consider it as his duty to act in the same manner as if upon him alone the character of the Society entirely depended.

By a conduct of this nature, your former members merited and obtained the highest rank in the public estimation ; and many of them are now living monuments of the utility of this institution.

stitution. When you are animated by such examples, need I recommend it to you to follow a tract pointed out by men, who have not only supported the dignity, but even advanced the honour of their profession.

By a conduct similar to theirs, you will best be enabled to improve yourselves and instruct others. By this alone can you transmit, undiminished to your successors, that character which has devolved to you. By this will you be able to set an example, which, properly followed, may perpetuate the Medical Society while the science of medicine continues to be taught at this University.

I trust, Gentlemen, that you are not less sensible of your interest, or less jealous of your honour, than any of your predecessors. With confidence then, I expect, that this session of the Medical Society will be inferior to none since its first institution.

attention. When you are animated by such examples, need I recommend it to you to follow a tract pointed out by men, who have not only supported the dignity, but even advanced the honour of their profession.

By a conduct similar to theirs, you will best be enabled to improve yourselves and instruct others. By this alone can you transmit, undiminished to your successors, that character which has devolved to you. By this will you be able to set an example, which, properly followed, may perpetuate the Medical Society while the science of medicine continues to be taught at this University.

I trust, Gentlemen, that you are not less sensible of your interest, or less jealous of your honour, than any of your predecessors. With confidence then, I expect, that this session of the Medical Society will be inferior to none since its first institution.

ADDRESS
TO THE
MEDICAL SOCIETY

OF
STUDENTS AT EDINBURGH,
Upon laying the FOUNDATION of their
HALL,

APRIL 21st 1775.

BY
GILBERT BLANE,

ANNUAL PRESIDENT,

Now Sir GILBERT BLANE, BART.

ADDRESS

MEDICAL SOCIETY

STUDENTS AT EDINBURGH

Upon having the pleasure of their
HAIL
This is one of the most important and
for occasions on which the Medical Society ever
assembled, it is with pleasure I beg to
congratulate you on your appointment to fill your
attention to the subject of the present meeting.
GILBERT H. A. N.
ing and congratulating you on this auspicious
event. It is an annual important feature on the
advantages of our institution and to be continued
Now Sir GILBERT H. A. N. HART
to you a becoming and attention to it in
erent. It would be insulting you to suppose
that your own experience had not convinced you
desirable of the many benefits to be derived from

ADDRESS

TO THE

MEDICAL SOCIETY.

GENTLEMEN,

As this is one of the most important and joyful occasions on which the Medical Society ever assembled, it is with pleasure I endeavour, in compliance with your appointment, to call your attention to the utility of the present undertaking, and congratulate you on this auspicious event. It is not my purpose to enlarge on the advantages of our institution, nor to recommend to you a becoming zeal and attention to its interest. It would be insulting you to suppose that your own experience had not rendered you sensible of the many benefits to be derived from
it ;

it; or that any suggestions of mine could enlighten or animate you in your duty. I mean only to represent the advantages of this undertaking, and to solicit your attention to the importance of it to ourselves, to our successors, and to the medical art.

The laudable and liberal views of the venerable founders of this Institution, can never be enough admired; and, let us not fail, on this occasion, to pay them our tribute of gratitude and applause. We know not whether to admire most, the noble enthusiasm of soul, the generous ardour for knowledge, or the sound judgment and ability which first suggested the plan of this institution. Our predecessors perceived that it was not merely the frigid plodding on books, nor the doctrines and precepts of age and authority, nor the little detail of an empirical practice, that could inspire that taste and spirit, and give that manly turn to our inquiries, which alone can render study agreeable, vigorous, and successful: They perceived, that it was in Society alone, by the mutual communication and reflection

reflection of the lights of reason and knowledge, that the intellectual as well as the moral powers of man are exalted and perfected. I will venture to appeal to every one's experience, if, in the glow of social debate, he is not conscious of a vigorous exertion of mind, of an energy of thought, unknown in the solitary hour.—To discover truth, to detect falsehood, to develop the seeds of genius, and to emancipate the mind from the fetters of authority and prejudice, were the grand objects of this institution.

Such were the feelings and reflections of the founders of this Society; and the happy effects of it upon their character and conduct have been proved, not only by their own testimony and that of their successors, but by the testimony of the world. They confess that this was the scene of their most solid pleasure, and of their greatest improvement; and the eminent figure which many of them have since made in their profession sufficiently justifies this assertion. Here they learned to reason and think for themselves; here they combated prejudice and error, however

sanctified by antiquity and authority, and (what is not to be omitted) it was here they learned to love and esteem each other, and to cement the bonds of true friendship; a friendship sincere and durable, inasmuch as it was founded on a virtuous and liberal intercourse.

These advantages have descended through a series of successors for near forty years, and have at length devolved upon us. During all this time, one thing was wanting to complete the utility of this establishment, and to give it all the advantages of which it was capable. A place of meeting which should be our own property, was long and ardently wished for, by those who meant well to the Society; and a scheme for this purpose was at length set on foot, by two Gentlemen*, who have long adorned it by their uncommon medical and literary accomplishments†. One of these was long the Father‡

* Dr Duncan, and Dr Goulding.

† Dr Goulding.

‡ This is an appellation given to the senior annual President for the time.

of the Society, and, in being the first mover of this undertaking, testified, in a peculiar manner, his paternal attention. They were seconded with liberality and zeal both by present and former members; and, with reliance on some farther aid, we have now the prospect of seeing their plan accomplished. I cannot help here remarking, that most of those who have contributed their assistance to this undertaking, are such as, from their distance, or their standing in medicine, could have little hopes of reaping its advantages. I would from this draw an inference, both in favour of their character, and of the utility of this Institution. For, as liberal and generous minds alone are capable of such disinterested attachment, so such an attachment could be created only by a sense of the useful tendency of its object. The happiness of seeing the sanguine wishes of our worthy predecessors realized, was reserved for us; and I hope every one here present felicitates himself upon seeing this day, and in being a member of the Medical Society at so auspicious an era of its history.

We have hitherto been indebted to the indulgence of public bodies for a place of meeting, and those of less sagacity or zeal might be disposed to trust to so precarious a tenure. But, not to mention several known inconveniences that have arisen from this circumstance, it is obvious that no association of men can exist without a property in some permanent external object, to give them a common interest, and prove a bond of union. Even the perishable property we possessed could not be reckoned secure, while we had not a spot on the surface of the earth that we could call our own. However the laudable desire of improvement might of itself instigate some individuals at all times to continue the institution; it is only by appropriating a piece of ground, and erecting a building, that we can expect to give it perpetuity and stability. Formerly, we had nothing to unite us but an empty name, and our existence floated on a breath. It is only such a *palpable* monument as this, that can thoroughly attach and interest the mind: It is only in such a situation that we can enjoy that independence and security which
alone

alone can give due ardour and spirit to our pursuits.

In this undertaking, it is proposed to furnish us with a commodious and spacious place of meeting, and a repository for our books. Besides these, there will be some other apartments, which are intended for the cultivation of several branches of science subsidiary to medicine. The University of Edinburgh will thus enjoy a means of improvement, unknown in any other school of medicine; and, I hope, we may flatter ourselves, that, as its medical fame has been in some degree promoted by this Society, so this undertaking will tend, not only to support, but to add to its present lustre. While the several departments of medicine are here filled by gentlemen, who are as remarkable for their candour as for their great ingenuity and extensive erudition, and who wish their doctrines to stand or fall by the test of reason and experience alone; it is of consequence, not only to canvass them with becoming modesty in debate, but to illustrate and confirm them by experiment. Chemistry af-

fords

fords an ample field for exercise of this kind; and, while one apartment is thus occupied, another is intended as a repository of anatomical preparations, and specimens of natural history. Thus, by infusing a spirit of inquiry, our laudable attempts to follow the steps of our teachers in the investigation of nature, will inspire that attention and alacrity in study, which alone can give effect to *their* labours, and will co-operate with their endeavours in supporting the extensive and unrivalled fame of this University. Moreover, as there must necessarily be, at all times, a number of the members of the Society dispersed over the world, who have an opportunity of selecting the curiosities of nature and art, we can here afford a place to deposit such objects. While these tend to the useful information and amusement of the Society, they will incite other members to the like labours, and will, at the same time, serve as memorials of the gratitude and attachment of her sons.

And now, Gentlemen, need I say that it is not for the purpose of ostentation and vanity, or to bestow

upon ourselves an adventitious importance, that this undertaking is going to be carried into execution? Let us consider it but as a secondary means of increasing our consequence in the eyes of the world; and let us reflect, that as we are now more the objects of public notice, so a strict attention to the proper end of the Institution is the more indispensable. It is only by inspiring a taste for inquiry and study, by awakening a zeal for our own improvement, and the reputation of the Society, that this undertaking can fulfil its intention. It would be presumptuous in me to pretend to point out to you the considerations that ought to animate us in the pursuit of these ends; since I know, from the character of many of those who now compose the Society, that, as they are capable of performing the duties of it with ability, so they are willing to devote their utmost exertions to the advancement of its interest and honour. I need not mention to you our improvement in medicine as a lucrative profession, nor the more noble and disinterested regard to our own reputation, and the credit and dignity of the Society. I hope, also, that our inquiries are influenced by the
love

love of truth, and that the more sublime considerations of humanity and duty, awaken the benevolence of our hearts, and animate us in our improvement in the healing art.—But it does not become me to insist upon these topics; and I will not detain you longer from the enjoyment of that pleasure, which is the purpose of this meeting. Allow me only to express a wish, that, as virtue and the generous thirst of knowledge have prompted to this undertaking, may science, candour, and liberality of sentiment, for ever reign within its walls, and distinguish it to the latest ages.

FINIS.

The above address was delivered at a pro re nata meeting of the Society, which was attended not only by the Ordinary, but also by almost all the Honorary members in Edinburgh, particularly the Professors of Medicine in the University. The meeting was held in the Hall of the Royal College of Surgeons, and immediately after the Discourse, the Foundation Stone of the intended building was laid by the venerable Dr William Cullen, in an area nearly adjoining to the Surgeons Hall, and obtained from the College of Surgeons on very favourable terms.

AN
ADDRESS
DELIVERED TO THE
MEDICAL SOCIETY
OF
EDINBURGH,

ON FRIDAY, MAY 1. 1778,

AFTER THEY HAD BEEN FOR A WINTER-SESSION
IN COMPLETE USE OF THEIR HALL,
AND WERE INCORPORATED BY A ROYAL CHARTER.

BY
CALEB PARRY,
ANNUAL PRESIDENT,

NOW PHYSICIAN IN BATH.

FIRST PRINTED AT EDINBURGH IN 1778.

REPRINTED 1819.

AN

ADDRESS, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN I look around me, and see myself encircled by so many respectable names, whose approbation I esteem, whose abilities and extensive erudition I admire, and whose established reputation I reverence, I feel myself covered with confusion, and shrink back, as conscious of my inequality to the task which has been assigned me. On the other hand, when I reflect, that censure is the peculiar attribute of little minds, I reproach myself for my former timidity, and draw confidence from the very source which before filled me with confusion. It will be yours, then, to exert that attribute, which is the honour of human nature, and which tends to exalt it even to DIVINITY itself. You will
feel

feel a high pleasure from the exercise of this generous affection ; and, in this respect, at least, you will thank me for having addressed you.

The pleasures and advantages resulting from the mutual intercourse of mankind, few are disposed to deny. They seem to be, as it were, congenial to our native inclinations ; and there is not a savage, in the most uncultivated wilds of America, who is unconnected with some others of his own species. It is the same throughout the whole of animated nature ; and beasts, birds, fishes, and even insects themselves, give very general evidence of the same mutual attraction.

Whence springs this magnetism in the animal world ? Is it, that Nature has implanted in their breasts an instinct, an irresistible propensity to such connections ? We need no better proof to convince us of their utility. If they arise from the dictates of reason, from the remembrance of some experienced good, the conclusion is equally favourable.

Yet,

Yet, to these orders of beings, the advantages resulting from Society must be, comparatively, small, and, probably, extend no farther than to the secure enjoyment of the means by which they can gratify their hunger, and propagate their several species.

In Man, these are combined with pleasures of a more exalted nature ; and the exercise of the social affections, of gratitude, of benevolence, of compassion, of friendship, of love, is pregnant with delights, which he, alone, of the whole animal creation, is comparatively, at least, permitted to enjoy.

While these impel us to labour all we can to promote the happiness of others, we feel in ourselves a strong desire to pursue those objects which more immediately lead to our own. We are sensible of a native inquisitiveness, a desire of experiencing and enjoying what is not in our possession : And this extends not merely to the immediate indulgence of the senses, but to the gratification of our mental powers. The
Mind,

Mind, impatient of restraint, springs upwards, and strives to soar above every cloud which can preclude her from the enjoyment of perfect day. Nor does she disdain to borrow wings from the labours, the improvements, and even the errors of those around her.

The only source of knowledge is experience ; and the whole of science seems to consist in an examination of the relations of objects to each other, and their arrangement in consequence of those relations. But the experience of any single person must of necessity be confined within very narrow limits. Numberless objects must be to him unknown ; and many of those, with the existence of which he is acquainted, must have been viewed partially and superficially, if not erroneously. Farther, it is with the mental as with the corporeal eye. The latter, disease may delude, or even darken. The former may be deceived by fancy, or blinded by prejudice, the most obstinate of all maladies. Well chosen society and conversation must be the mind's physicians. Hence new objects will be pointed

pointed out; those known held up in different lights; new relations and arrangements suggested; and thus, our prejudices will be removed, and our knowledge extended and enlarged.

With these views, Societies have been instituted throughout Europe, by men eager in the pursuit of knowledge. These have generally had reference to some single branch of science, and have been conducted by regulations, which have been presumed best adapted to answer the purposes for which they were intended. The improvements which have been derived from them to the various sciences and arts, are sufficiently known.

Animated with similar prospects, at the latter end of the year 1737, a few gentlemen in this University instituted, for the purpose of improvement in medical knowledge, that Society of which we now make a part. On the merits of these fathers of our Institution, it were unnecessary to enlarge. But, if there be among our number any, who has seen a parent, whose tenderness

derness has watched over his growing years, and who has, without respite, laboured for his good ; or a beloved mistress, for whose safety he would have esteemed the last drop of his blood an insufficient ransom, groaning under disease, or struggling in the last agonies of death—*his* feelings will rise up in gratitude to the memory of our benevolent founders. No material monument, though of brass or adamant, can withstand the attacks of undermining and all-subverting Time ; but a monument of praise will never be wanting to the founders of *this* Institution, while disease ranges at large with such fell cruelty, while there is one mortal to agonize, and one heart to bleed at his distress.

Ever since the first Institution of the MEDICAL SOCIETY, it has continued to grow and flourish. Its debates have been conducted with a liberal spirit of inquiry. Truth has been allured from her deepest recesses, and exhibited in all her native charms ; and Error, wherever sheltered, and however disguised, has been boldly arrested, stripped of every adventitious ornament,

ment, and exposed in all his genuine deformity. The knowing have freely communicated their knowledge ; the uninformed have profited ; and all have reaped their share of the general harvest of science. When we peruse the list of our members, and see, among that number, names which stand among the highest in the scale of medical Philosophy, we cannot help imagining that they were indebted for a considerable share of their reputation to the MEDICAL SOCIETY. Indeed, did no other advantage result from our meetings, they evidently lead us to pay attention to particular subjects, to inquire into them with diligence, and to view them in all their various lights. Farther, it is natural, especially for youthful minds, to be zealously attached to their own opinions, the children of their own industry or fancy. Like other parents, they view their offspring with the most partial fondness ; see in them a thousand perfections which escape the observation of others ; are blind to their failings ; and even convert their very defects into beauties. Opinions which militate against their favourite prejudices

ces are heresies which deserve to be extirpated with fire and sword. In this SOCIETY, however, it has been seen, that no sentiments are approved of but such as are most conformable to reason ; and that, as in the natural world, Truth seldom flies to the embraces of her most extravagant admirers. And thus, from our debates, we not only derive present improvement in knowledge, but form habits of attentive inquiry, sound reasoning, and philosophical coolness, which will be subservient to us in each future scene, and at every succeeding period of our lives. That these advantages have in fact been derived, can scarcely be doubted ; and the reputation of the MEDICAL SOCIETY has extended over every quarter of the world.

During a long residence in this University, I have been myself a witness of its growing worth ; and can with truth declare, that I have never seen that period when it has been adorned with so many able speakers, or enriched with so many excellent dissertations, as during the past session. We have been favoured with numerous
essays,

essays, which would have done honour to the most active experimenter, the profoundest reasoner, the most experienced practitioner, or even the ablest rhetorician.

During the same space of time, our possessions have been amply increased. We enjoy a Library, consisting of about fifteen hundred volumes, judiciously selected from the vast chaos of medical literature; and to these we have free and almost unrestrained access. What gratitude is also due to those who, with generosity so disinterested, have contributed to the extension of our utility, by assisting us to rear an edifice, in which we might hold our debates secure from interruption, either from the caprice or the malevolence of others! Thanks to their liberal donations, the building in which we are assembled, the first stone of which many of ourselves saw deposited, has now made a considerable progress towards completion. And thus have we given to the MEDICAL SOCIETY, that "airy nothing, a local habitation."

Would

Would to God I could add, that we had also given it “a name *!” Enriched with our present possessions, and with the prospect of acquiring others, we were naturally led to wish that some method might be thought of, by which these might be permanently secured to us. With the different proposals which have been made for this purpose, you are already well acquainted. I would only observe, that, at a very full meeting, held about the latter end of the last session, it was unanimously determined to apply to the Magistrates and Town-Council of Edinburgh for a charter of Incorporation, as being that step which tended to place our property upon the most secure, convenient, and honourable foundation. Having nothing in view but the extension of our literary usefulness, soliciting no exclusive privileges, requesting only that we might be enabled to hold our property, as a body, with the same powers which each of us, who is not a minor, enjoys over his own as an individual, we thought, we flattered ourselves, that our request would have been instantly complied

* A *nomen juris* entitling the Society to hold property, &c.

plied with: We were therefore astonished, when we learned that our superiors had taken another view of the matter, and were sufficiently mortified that a set of cadies were granted privileges of which we were judged unworthy. It is true, we aimed at a much superior mark; and a desire of preserving the lives of our fellow-creatures, was a foundation on which we could presume to build strong hopes. In these hopes, however, for the present, we have been disappointed.

Far be it from us to arraign the views of those who see into our projects with so piercing an eye, and whose penetration so greatly exceeds our own.

“ Brutus says we are ambitious :

“ And Brutus is an honourable man.”

Yet, though we have hitherto failed, every member here present can congratulate himself upon his having taken the most active part in promoting the true interests of the Society.

Let us still not altogether despair of a favourable result at a future period. Though disappointed,

pointed, let us not faint in our laudable pursuit. No ! Let our repulse be rather an incitement to new and more vigorous exertion ! The present funds of the Society will not admit of application to higher powers. But let this, my fellow members, be the object which you have constantly in view ; and doubt not, that a zealous perseverance will insure the desired success. How advantageous, how creditable this pursuit to yourselves ! How honourable to that University of which you make a part ! What just encomiums will be heaped on those, to whom you owe your earliest medical instruction, for having inspired you with such unbounded thirst after useful science, as to induce you to seek and to obtain so remarkable a distinction * ?

In the mean while, endeavour to make yourselves worthy of this pre-eminence. Redouble your efforts ; persevere in your search after knowledge ; and rest not, till you come near, or even arrive at perfection. Then, whether you
succeed

* *Soon after this, in consequence of a petition to the King, the Medical Society of Edinburgh was incorporated by a Royal Charter.*

succeed or fail, you will force those to blush who have opposed you.

Many of us are now going to take our final leave of this Society: But, shall we forget this Friend who has served us, who has so amply promoted our welfare? Forbid it gratitude! We cannot be ignorant, that, of its building, much still remains to be done; and, that its funds of knowledge can never overflow. Wherever we are, we can communicate such useful information as may have been afforded us by others, or our own experience suggested. Wherever we are, we may still, according to our respective powers, contribute and promote those contributions, which may tend to forward the completion of this building; and, for the ability to perform which, in our own persons, we may all one day acknowledge ourselves greatly indebted to the Institution of this very Society! May it still grow in fame and usefulness! May it rise superior to every attempt which can be made either to disturb or to destroy it! May it survive the solid walls of this building, and flourish, when its present possessions are crumbled into dust!

Allow me to add a few words more to those who are still to remain. You have often in your memory, and have now constantly before your eyes *, him, whose character you have long and justly revered. May his presence fire you with a noble zeal to imitate so bright a pattern ! Imagine that he inspects your conduct, and hears your debates ; and act up to that example which he, and his joint teachers, have manifested in their own persons, and which they cannot fail to approve. Both in this SOCIETY, and in that world, in the busy scenes of which many of you will soon be called to mix, emulate their application, their active industry, their unwearyed assiduity in promoting the happiness of their fellow-creatures. Possessed, as you are, of the richest means of acquiring excellence, if you exert your own best endeavours, you cannot fail of insuring that success which they have obtained, and may become, like them, the DICTATORS of the MEDICAL WORLD.

* In allusion to an excellent half length picture of Dr CULLEN, painted at the expence of the Society, and lately hung up in their Hall.

ACCOUNT
OF THE
PRESENT STATE OF THE BUILDINGS
BELONGING TO THE
ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY
OF EDINBURGH,
1819.

SINCE the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh have been in full possession of the Buildings for which they are indebted to former members, their funds have been principally appropriated in making additions to their valuable Library. Some, therefore, of those objects, which Dr Cullen, the founder of the Hall, had in contemplation, have never been properly accomplished. Besides this, from the number of members,

in the ordinary course of attendance at the end of last winter-session, the Hall itself was found not to be sufficiently large to afford convenient accommodation for their weekly meetings.

The Committee appointed to take measures for remedying these inconveniences, have obtained from an ingenious architect, a plan for an additional wing to the Hall, by which many important advantages will be obtained. By throwing the whole of the upper floor of the present building into one room, the present Hall will be increased about one-third in size. And three additional rooms will be obtained in the adjoining building, as Museums for Chemistry, Anatomy, and Natural History.

But the present Funds of the Society, although comparatively in a flourishing state, are not sufficient for the accomplishment of this design. A subscription has therefore been begun among the Members resident in Edinburgh, to aid the Society in the accomplishment of these important objects; and considerable assistance has already been obtained.

The Committee confidently trust, that additional aid may be obtained from many members of the Royal Medical Society, who are now eminent practitioners in every quarter of the world. They, therefore, by means of this publication, take an opportunity of promulgating the present design.

Those who incline to promote this undertaking, may transmit their subscriptions, either to any of the Members of the Committee, who are resident medical practitioners in Edinburgh, viz. Drs ANDREW DUNCAN *senior*, JAMES GREGORY, JOHN THOMSON, Messrs JAMES RUSSELL and ALEXANDER GILLESPIE, or to Sir WILLIAM FORBES, JAMES HUNTER and Co., Bankers, Edinburgh.

The Committee confidently trust, that additional aid may be obtained from many members of the Royal Medical Society, who are now eminent practitioners in every quarter of the world. They, therefore, by means of this publication, take an opportunity of promulgating the present design.

Those who incline to promote this undertaking, may transmit their subscriptions, either to any of the Members of the Committee, who are resident medical practitioners in Edinburgh, viz. Dr Andrew Duncan senior, James Gregory, John Thomson, Messrs James Hunter and Alexander Gillespie, or to St. Williams and James Hunter and Co., Bankers, Edinburgh.