Introductory address delivered at University College, London, October 1st, 1874 / by Frederick T. Roberts.

Prof. Marshall with the Author's Kind regards

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

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DELIVERED AT

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON,

OCTOBER 1st, 1874,

BY

FREDERICK T. ROBERTS, M.D., B.Sc., M.R.C.P.

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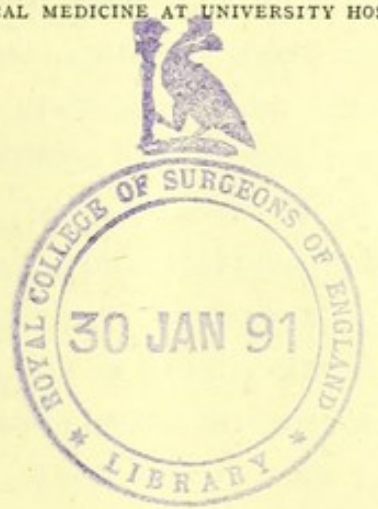

LONDON:
H. K. LEWIS, 136 GOWER STREET, W.C.
1874.

GENTLEMEN,

Having been honoured by my Colleagues with a request to deliver the Introductory Address on the present occasion, I could not well do otherwise than comply, though the duty is one by no means congenial to my tastes or suited to my capacities, and I would gladly have remained in retirement, instead of being brought forward into this prominent position. However, having ventured so far as to undertake the task, I cannot shirk it now, but must go through it to the best of my ability, and try, if possible, to turn the opportunity to some practical account. My impression is that this mode of inaugurating our chief session has its advantages, but whether the remarks offered exert any definite and real influence for good upon those who listen is another matter. Many a noble address has been delivered from this platform in the past, but I fear we should not be encouraged could we estimate the amount of practical benefit which had resulted from their collective teaching. Unfortunately, anything in the form of advice or direction is usually either not noticed at all, or if it does gain an entrance through one ear, it finds a ready exit through the other, and is soon forgotten, or, perhaps, dismissed with a sneer.

Now my earnest desire is to say something that shall be of real assistance and use to those of you for whom my observations are intended, viz., the Students who have come to this

College for the purpose of preparing for the Medical profession, something which shall take hold of you, and have a permanent and lasting effect for good. When, however, I bear in mind the questionable success, to say the least, in this direction of those who have preceded me, in comparison with whose words mine must sink into insignificance, I cannot feel at all sanguine of achieving my object.

An occasion like this gives the speaker an opportunity which in one aspect is advantageous, in another very dangerous. It enables him to ventilate his views and opinions on current subjects of interest, to give utterance to grievances, as well as to say things to a collective body of men which he cannot exactly tell a single individual to his face, much as he would sometimes like to. The dangers are lest he should go too far, or, even when he keeps strictly within bounds, lest he should offend those who do not agree with him, or to whom some of his remarks might seem to apply, and thus bring more or less obloquy upon himself. My strong feeling is, that when any one is placed in the position which I now occupy, he has not only the right and the privilege, but is bound to speak out boldly and without fear, if he conscientiously believes that there is anything going on, in which those whom he is addressing are interested, which is seriously wrong in principle or practice; nor should he shrink from saying what experience has taught him is urgently needed. Gentlemen, I believe there never was, and never will be a time when plain speaking is more imperatively demanded than at the present day; and acting upon this belief, it is possible that I may give utterance to remarks not altogether pleasing to some of you, or to others who are not present. While, however, endeavouring to keep clear of everything approaching to undue licence in speech, I cannot and dare not indulge in vague compliments, and represent everything as smooth and straight, when there is much which is very rough and very

crooked, in which our profession and you as intending members of it have a vital interest; but I can conscientiously affirm, that, whatever I may say, I am actuated solely by a deep and earnest desire for the elevation of our calling to its proper position, and for your advancement and well-being as students and future practitioners. I call to mind that the position and progress of our profession depends entirely upon, and is bound up in the history of those who year after year enter our places of instruction; their principles and motives, their conduct and actions, will either elevate or degrade it, will either extend or mar its usefulness. I realize that each one of you, individually, must have some influence in this direction, and some of you may have a very great influence. There are many ways in which you may go wrong, and it is my duty, as one of those to whom you commit your training, to try to set you right, so far as it is in my power to do so.

Gentlemen, the medical profession has been of late and is still making remarkable progress as a Science and an Art. Many grave errors have been swept away; knowledge has advanced with gigantic strides, and has become far more real and accurate than in the past; while things are done now every day, the very idea of which would, not many years ago, have been treated with ridicule. In short, we may truly say, that a well-informed Physician or Surgeon is to-day infinitely better equipped for doing battle with the various maladies of the human body, than has ever been the case before; and if, as a profession, we could unite and were permitted to have a fair field, we could achieve results which would be beyond all expectation or conception.

It is very desirable that you, especially those of you who are more advanced, should realize what progress has been made, but important and interesting as the subject is, I cannot for several reasons enter upon it to-day, but must refer you to the many admirable addresses bearing upon it which

have been delivered on various occasions during the last few years, and to the excellent discussions on certain great questions which have been carried on by the members of our learned Societies. I recommend you to read and study these carefully, when you will find that the time thus employed will have been by no means spent in vain.

In pondering over what I should speak about to-day, it struck me that it would be of most service to you in many points of view, were I to discuss certain questions bearing upon the position of our profession, its internal organization and external relations; and upon medical education and the examinations through which you hope, I presume, to be admitted as its recognised members. Perhaps it does not matter very much whether you are up in the latest theories about tubercle, or inflammation, or fever; or whether you are acquainted with the most recent researches as to the functions of every spot in the brain: but it makes all the difference in the world whether you are turned out at the end of your career as students, at all fit and competent to practise your profession, to recognise and treat a case of consumption, or typhoid fever, or apoplexy, or a broken arm; and whether you have correct notions as to the proper position of your vocation, its relation to great questions with which it is concerned, and your responsibilities and duties in connection therewith.

The grandeur, and nobility, and other lofty attributes of the medical profession, is a theme about which many a pent-up flood of eloquence has been let off, and it is not improbable that some of you, having heard or read these glowing descriptions, have formed a conception of the existing state of things in connection with it, which facts will not warrant. Possibly you are under the impression that outsiders recognise, on every hand, the greatness of our calling, and are prepared to pay corresponding homage; while you suppose that everyone who follows it is actuated by the highest motives, and

acts accordingly, and you look forward with eager anticipation to the time when you shall join the noble band. Now my conviction is, that it does a great deal of mischief to allow those who intend entering the profession to go away with a mere sentimental notion of this kind, and that it is far better to let them understand what is the real state of the case. This will not only prevent a very unpleasant disappointment at finding things not exactly what fancy pictured—a disappointment which might lead to very disastrous results—but it will also enable them to perceive what is wrong, and thus they may know in what directions they may assist in reforming, and perhaps be roused to a sense of their responsibility in this respect.

Essentially and in the abstract, of course the "Doctor's" calling is everything that ever has been, or can be said in its praise. Its principles, its aims, and its possibilities, are beyond what can be expressed in words, and its achievements, too, are far above what it is often credited with; but at the same time, when you come to realize it, as represented in daily life, marred as it is by human failings, you may come to think that there is nothing in it to raise it much, if at all, above the common level. You will probably find in connection with the profession and in your own experience, that you will have to contend with many difficulties, disappointments, and annoyances; that the daily routine of a doctor's life is dull, trying, and worrying; what is still worse, the conviction may be forced upon you that our calling is not quite so honourable as you were led to believe; you may see much which dims its lustre, which is decidedly degrading, and which jars against one's better feelings; while you cannot fail to notice that our external relations are extremely unsatisfactory in many points of view.

Certainly things are considerably better than they were formerly, and there are hopeful signs of still greater im-

provement, but there is a vast deal which needs to be done yet in the way of reform. The general social status of the medical profession is not nearly what it might be, and even its most illustrious members can only rise to a comparatively inferior position of eminence, and must be content with moderate honours. The state of the various public services is anything but satisfactory. In connection with the Army and Navy Medical Departments, there are real grievances of a most serious character, of which we hear constantly, but there is no sign of any intention to redress them. During the last year this country has been engaged in a war, which has been emphatically called a "Doctor's War," and, while honours were showered down upon others, and very deservedly too, the doctors were pretty well left out in the cold. The Poor-law Service also is in many parts in a decidedly degraded condition, and is scarcely anywhere fairly recognised. Politically we are simply nowhere; we are mere outsiders, and are outstripped in the race by almost every class of individuals in this land, headed by the publican and the so-called "working-man." Our interests as a profession are not considered deserving of much notice; nor is it thought worth while to protect us efficiently against quacks and such-like, or to attend to any grievances we may have; and, what is still worse, even on the very questions, such as those bearing on sanitary matters, with which our profession is most concerned, and about which we are supposed to know something more than other people, the opinions of those of our body who, from their official position, are expected to advise on these subjects, have been quietly ignored or sometimes insolently repudiated. We do not want to meddle in political or other questions with which we have no concern, and the less we have to do with such the better; but putting out of sight our own interests, it seems to me that we ought to have a much greater political

influence than we at present possess. It would do no harm to the constitution of the Houses of Parliament,—yes! the House of Lords as well as the House of Commons,—if they had a considerable addition of the medical element infused into their midst. There are great questions now before the country, and there are many more which ought to receive immediate attention, and which must sooner or later come to the front,—questions which affect the health and well-being of vast communities—and to these the members of our profession, collectively and individually, must devote their most earnest attention, if they would fulfil their functions properly. We are bound to take our part in dealing with such questions as bear upon the gigantic evils resulting from intoxicating drinks; the prevention of contagious diseases; the employment of labour; the adulteration of food; the habitations and surrounding conditions of the working classes; and even the disposal of the dead. We must endeavour intelligently and without prejudice to cope with these important subjects; to fight strenuously against everything that is wrong; and to protect this nation from the evils which civilization necessarily brings with it. In short, we are called upon to declare our opinions, and to make them felt too, in connection with all subjects which bear upon the prevention of disease, the maintenance of sound health and bodily vigour, and the physical development of the people of this country; and we must do this in the face of all opposition, however powerful it may be. We are certain to meet with opposition, for there are parents who are more concerned about the well-being of their dogs than that of their children; there are employers of labour who would sap the life out of thousands, and crowd our hospitals with emaciated consumptives, in order that they might live in luxury; there are ratepayers and vestries who, to save a few shillings a year would allow pestilence to run rife; there are well-meaning people enough, who for a mere senti-

ment, would permit no measures to be taken to check the extension and ravages of the most fearful diseases; and there are powerful combinations of individuals who would ruin a world to serve their own interests. But if we are to succeed in overcoming these bars to progress and to exert our proper influence, our opinions must be acknowledged, we must have greater political weight than we have at present, and those who are our authoritative representatives must be treated with respect and consideration.

Granting that the representation just given of the present position of our profession is a correct one, and I do not think it can be charged with being at all exaggerated, it becomes exceedingly important for us to try to determine why it is not more satisfactory, and to see whether something at all events cannot be done towards improving it. One reason doubtless is, that as a profession we are not so numerous or so powerful as to make it worth the while of people generally, or of various public organizations, to cultivate our good-will, and it does not affect them much whether they please us or not. For instance, we cannot probably influence half a dozen votes in the House of Commons, and Governments therefore make no attempt to conciliate us. Even our great Association only numbers some five or six thousand members, and at the present day this does not represent an overwhelming organization. Then I have no hesitation in affirming that the public generally do not treat us fairly and kindly, or with a due regard to the just demands of our calling, or to the difficulties and trials which those who practise it have to encounter. We are abused by all sorts of people, and numerous jokes are cracked at our expense, reflecting upon our want of skill, which a good many individuals do not look upon as jokes at all, but as representing actual facts. They will take every advantage of us, and get as much as they can out of us, and then turn round and tell us our services are not worth having,

in order that they may excuse themselves from paying anything for them, or that they may bring down the remuneration to the lowest possible figure. Unquestionably, numbers and numbers of people take advantage of the gratuitous advice to be obtained at our Hospitals, who can well afford to pay; while on the other hand, strange to relate, they will readily give large sums to some pretentious quack. It is really no exaggeration to say, that very many people, and educated and apparently sensible people too, prefer the opinion of some ignorant and abominable creature of this class, be he bone-setter, professed curer of consumption or cancer, or what not, to that of a qualified medical practitioner, however intelligent and well-informed he may be. During late years there has been undoubtedly a great increase in charitable contributions towards our hospitals and dispensaries, though there are many and many yet who ought to give largely, but who either give nothing at all, or appease their consciences by dropping their "mite" as it certainly is, into the collecting bag or box on "Hospital Sunday," while there are some who are extremely generous, giving great sums anonymously and so on, but who sadly want to be directed as to what hospitals they had best contribute to; but what I wish to observe is, that with all this increase in contributions, there is no corresponding development of charity and consideration towards the medical staffs of these institutions. I do not mean that they are not paid, a matter, however, which is not altogether unworthy of notice, but that they are not by any means always properly treated in other respects. A very wide impression seems to be, that the members of these staffs ought to consider themselves as blessed above all other men, and instead of needing encouragement and sympathy, that they are only subjects for congratulation, on account of the enviable position they have gained, which involves extremely delightful, easy, and pleasant work, which in turn kindles the overwhelming esteem

and affection of grateful patients, and in the end, if they only keep calmly on, must lead to affluence and eminence. What is worse, not a few people believe that most of them are only influenced by selfish motives, doing just as much as they need to further their own interests and no more, their patients being often sadly neglected or improperly treated in the meantime. I am only repeating what I have gathered from casual conversation again and again. And these ideas are encouraged by some gentlemen in our own profession, to whom I would here venture to give a friendly hint. I allude to some of those who are taking an active interest in out-patient reform. I quite appreciate their objects, and feel with them that many people do abuse the various charities, though I may add that so far as our hospital is concerned, we have every reason to believe that this does not occur to any appreciable extent. But the way to remedy this state of things is certainly not by trying to injure the hospitals and their medical staffs, by hunting up and sending accounts to the medical papers of cases of supposed neglect or improper diagnosis or mal-treatment. We have quite enough to do to stand attacks from the outside, and at least our own brethren ought to support us, remembering the difficulties under which we labour. During the last year or two cases have occurred also, where even the committees of certain hospitals in this metropolis, consisting of gentlemen who ought to know better, have acted in a most unbecoming manner towards their staffs, causing the majority of them to resign in a body. And, Gentlemen, if there is one more hopeful sign than another in connection with our profession, it is that these hospitals cannot get the vacancies on their staffs filled up; candidates either will not or dare not come forward, and this shows either that there is a higher tone of professional feeling and etiquette, or that the profession as a body is becoming a real power, and is beginning to exert a wholesome check upon

any who might not be inclined to observe the necessary rules of etiquette. The fact is that every physician or surgeon to a public charitable institution deserves very generous consideration at the present day. It is a position which is very difficult and trying to fill; the work is exceedingly hard, fatiguing, and exhausting; patients are anything but easy to please, and instead of being so very thankful as some suppose, real gratitude is decidedly the exception among them rather than the rule; while, after all the toiling, it is but a comparative few who achieve anything very notable in the end; success generally only comes late in life, if at all; there are many who struggle on and on to the last, battling perhaps manfully against heavy odds, but never succeeding, while some retire dispirited from the unequal strife, or are forced to give it up by failing health, or are brought to a premature grave. And here our thoughts naturally turn to the sad events of the past year. Again and again have we been startled out of our quiet routine, by hearing of one comrade after another who, in the full vigour and energy of manhood, has been struck down in the midst of his labours, crushed by their accumulated weight, or smitten by the pestilence he was endeavouring to check. Some of them had toiled manfully for many years, and were now about reaping the rewards of their perseverance. The names of Murray, Phillips, Dickson, Fuller, Allen, Webb, Harris, Anstie, and many others, not forgetting students, such as Dobson and Schlesinger, call up mournful recollections, and I feel sure you will all join with me in paying a just tribute of respect, admiration, and esteem, to the memory of those who thus nobly fell, victims to their devotion to the cause of humanity. And if these events do not excite proper sentiments towards those who work in connection with our public charities, I know not what will. They speak in tones which ought to reach far and wide, and which appeal to the tenderest feelings of every human heart.

The remarks just made apply in their measure to most medical men who hold public appointments, not forgetting the hard-worked "Parish doctor," and indeed to the members of the profession generally. Would that all classes of society could realize what the actual conditions of the great majority of medical practitioners are! They would then certainly treat us with far more consideration than they do at present, and one great step would be taken in bringing our profession into satisfactory relations to those with whom it is concerned.

But now, Gentlemen, I feel that I am about to tread on difficult ground, and must be careful what I say. It is dangerous to speak disparagingly of one's own profession, but yet, if we really desire to remove existing obstacles to much-needed reforms, both internal and external, we are bound honestly to come face to face with the fact, that for many of them we are responsible either collectively or individually, and until these are removed, it will be impossible to make satisfactory progress.

One of the greatest obstacles to progress in the past has certainly been a want of union and organization among our members, andnot uncommonly, the existence of positive opposition. Everybody was working on his own account, and for his own ends, and the consequence was that the interests of the profession as a body were utterly neglected; it had no influence on great questions, nor indeed, did it seem to be at all concerned about them. For many years solitary individuals have been here and there fighting against abuses and for reforms, often under much discouragement, but it is only comparatively recently that any sign has been given that we are at all working in concert. And let it be clearly understood, that if we are to make way, we must all really act together. As I have already remarked, we do not at the best constitute a very powerful body, and we need the concentration of all our available

strength in order to advance. We have now our Councils and our Associations, and their representatives tell us that, through their agency, we are becoming a power in the state, and I hope and believe that such is the case; but if we are to attain to our true position, they must also combine, and so must all the sections of our medical press, which has now great influence. The same principle must in its degree be carried into the smaller spheres into which we, as practitioners, are severally thrown. We are bound to work together if the profession is to advance. Well, Gentlemen, what is the present condition of things in this respect? Perhaps it would be as well, not to enter into particulars, but you know as well as I do, that you can hardly go into a city, or town, or village, where petty jealousies do not prevent anything like unanimity of feeling and action among medical practitioners. You have only to take up a medical paper almost any week, and find some quarrel going on. Mr. A. attends a patient, and somehow or other Mr. B. gets to see him, and declares that Mr. A. is killing him, and that if he is not placed immediately under his, Mr. B's care, he cannot live many days. There are some who are always trying to undermine the position of their fellow-practitioners, and are ready to leap into a vacant post under any circumstances and at any price. Hence it is that ignorant poor-law guardians can even yet snub and bully their doctors with impunity, and that a club-doctor has to be very civil to its members, and especially to the secretary. I heard the other day of a practitioner in a certain large town, who is in the habit of saying: "there are 250 medical men in this town, and 249 of them are confounded fools." You may guess which he considered the exception. Now, Gentlemen, all this, although amusing, is also very serious. We can hardly expect the public to believe in us, or to treat us with respect, if we act in this manner towards each other.

Of course if a man is notoriously incompetent or unprofessional, we are justified in separating from him, and indeed we are bound to do so, but for the great majority of our disagreements there is no adequate foundation. Then, again, the totally contrary opinions which are being so frequently expressed about cases by our leading physicians and surgeons, especially in courts of law, are undoubtedly doing our profession a great deal of harm, and even give room for a penny daily paper to allude in one of its articles, to the "proverbial disagreement of doctors." No doubt every one has a right to arrive at his own opinion on any case, and to express it too, but surely something might be done to put a stop to the contradiction which appears to the public so very absurd, but which we know is not quite so ridiculous as it is represented to be.

These illustrations will show that we are not by any means so banded together as we ought to be, and I affirm, that if we want to get on as a profession, we must be cordially and firmly united, in all our associations, from the most extensive to the most limited.

We have to go deeper than this, however, and must acknowledge that the very large majority of us are individually to blame, in some way or other, for the backward state of our profession in many respects. It is delightful and encouraging to contemplate some men who are living now, as well as to think of others who are gone, and to realize how thoroughly and conscientiously they have done their duty in every relationship that we can judge of in which they have been concerned, but these are the exception and not the rule. Most of us fall short, and not a few very far short, of what we ought to be. In the first place we have not taken the personal interest which we ought to have done in important matters with which we have to deal, especially those bearing on sanitary medicine; we have not tried to teach the people with whom we were

brought into contact, even as to the most common measures for the maintainance of health and the prevention of disease, far less to take any part in the public discussion of these subjects, and indeed, not unfrequently, we have utterly neglected them ourselves. Some people too, when they become doctors, really seem to take leave of their common-sense, and I think we are all liable sometimes to neglect this very important faculty when we investigate or treat disease. We are not uncommonly careless, and give rash opinions for which we feel we have no adequate foundation; we attempt to do things, which a little consideration would tell us are impossible; while there are some, I fear, who deliberately pretend and promise to effect cures by certain methods of their own, when they know perfectly well, or ought to know, that their promise can never be fulfilled. In these and other ways our profession is brought frequently into disrepute. And it must be admitted too, that the standard of knowledge among practitioners generally has not been remarkably high in times past. Many went into practice with a very limited stock of information, and took no further trouble to increase it, except that some would try and learn from their own experience.

The individual failings which I have just alluded to may, and I believe will to a great extent be done away with, as the result of the extension of knowledge and the improvements in education and in the examinations. But there are greater evils than these, which in this age of struggling and competition, not only is it impossible to eradicate, but there is extreme danger of their extending. Men must live, or they want to get on in the world, to acquire wealth and be somebody; and so long as they attain their object, they do not care much how they manage it. We see this daily around us in every calling, and our profession is by no means exempt. Speaking with all charity, there are many things going on in our midst, which are very degrading and disheartening, and

that not only among the lower ranks of our profession, but among some who occupy high and prominent positions. It is not necessary to enter into details as to what these are, for they are patent and familiar to everybody. What we have to consider is in what ways the evils can be remedied and put down. The united opinions of those who in our profession, are actuated by lofty motives—and of these let us be thankful there are very many—might do a great deal, if more frequently and emphatically declared; while the combined power of its members as a body might accomplish still more. This combined power can crush any man if it is only put forth, as has happened in our own time, and if one of our number goes utterly wrong, and does notoriously unprofessional acts, not only are we justified in uniting to bring him down, but it is our duty to do so, for we cannot allow our profession to be dragged in the mire to serve any individual's personal ends. There are, however, many lesser degrees of the evil which cannot be touched in this way, and for these the only remedy that I know of is to try to instil into the minds of those who intend to join our ranks, the very highest possible conception of the nature, the aims, and the demands of the profession which they desire to enter. I do not want to talk mere cant, nor do I wish to represent ourselves as much better than other people; but I do affirm that the principles by which we ought to be actuated must be higher than those which belong to almost every other vocation. Our first consideration dare not be for our own self-interest, no matter at what cost or by what means this is contributed to. Mingled with this self-seeking, there must be a deep sense of the noble attributes of our profession, as well as a willingness and determination to put up with self-sacrifice if need be, and the probability is in some way or other each one of us will be pretty well tested. If there are any present who have been engaged in practice, they will appreciate what I have said, and they will under-

stand me when I further add, that even with the highest motives and intentions, it is not always easy to keep quite straight at the present day. But, if a man starts at the onset with low views and motives, for him there is no hope, and you can generally gather from the manner in which anyone enters upon his career what his principles are. If he looks upon his profession in a mere commercial point of view, he will use it as a trade, and often a very low trade too. If he values his advice, medicine included, at eighteen pence or a shilling or even less, he will sell it at that price, and must not be surprised if people take him at his own valuation. If he considers the social position of his profession of no importance, he will probably do his best, or rather his worst, to lower it in the estimation of others. If in a more respectable manner, he uses it merely for his own interests, he will be in constant danger of doing things which are not correct or straightforward, and thus of bringing discredit upon it. While, on the other hand,—a man who has a high notion of his calling will, by his actions, make it attractive and beautiful, and will compel even scoffers to acknowledge that there really is something in it which raises it above the ordinary level. Therefore I say to each one of you, Gentlemen, get as lofty an idea of the medical profession as your minds are capable of; see in it all that is honourable, and noble, and attractive; learn to love it, and to realize that it not only affords you opportunities of doing good in your day and generation, but that it contains within itself boundless stores of pleasure and satisfaction, which anyone who seeks for them may find. But all this must be no mere superficial sentiment, such as a breath of temptation or trial, which you are sure to experience, will sweep away; but a deep, real, and earnest feeling, which shall reveal itself in the conduct and actions of your daily life, no matter whether you stand out prominently among the foremost ranks, or toil unknown in some remote

village. Have this, and it will constrain you to devote yourselves with energy and enthusiasm to your work as Students, while it will at the same time develope the qualities which are most essential for a medical man; it will help you in the future to go more cheerfully through the oft-times dreary monotony of professional life, and to bear up against its difficulties and disappointments; it will urge you to do your part towards advancing your profession as a science and an art; while it will kindle within you a determination to do all in your power to stamp out everything that now dims its honour and dignity, to keep these attributes constantly before your view, making everything else subsidiary to them, and never to be guilty of a dishonourable or discreditable act, even under the most trying temptations.

I pass on now to consider certain matters bearing upon Medical Education and Examinations; and though I should like to say something about preliminary training, time forbids me to do so, and compels me at once to proceed to the more strictly professional part of the subject.

Various attempts are at present being made to improve medical teaching, as well as the examinations by which the competency of those who desire to practise is tested, and these ought to receive the most cordial support from all who feel a true interest in the advancement of our profession.

The character and quality of the examinations have unquestionably exercised a marked and positive influence upon education, and therefore they must, to a great extent, be considered together. It is quite evident that students consider that teaching ought to aim chiefly, if not entirely, at fitting them to prepare for their examinations. It is all very well for us to tell you that you must look to the future, and that examinations are nothing and so on, but it requires no very deep observation to perceive, that a very large majority of you consider examinations pretty nearly everything, and that you

will be very well satisfied if the tuition is such as to enable you to pass them successfully. This is exceedingly natural, and there is no great harm in it, for the whole matter will right itself, provided the examinations are made satisfactory, which means, that they are fairly and impartially conducted by competent men; and that they are sufficiently varied, extensive and searching, to afford good evidence that the candidate possesses an adequate knowledge of all the subjects which form part of the medical curriculum, as well as the requisite practical skill, and that he is therefore at least capable of undertaking the ordinary duties of his profession, in so far as he can be thus tested. There are some indeed who think that there should be no compulsory curriculum for the student at all, but that he should be allowed to obtain the necessary information in his own way, and that all we should be concerned about is to keep the examinations up to a proper standard. I certainly do not agree with this opinion, for I feel sure that a large proportion of students would go utterly in the wrong way to work if left to their own devices. Besides, we must bear in mind that they need to be put through training and discipline of another kind, and it does them good to come into contact with teachers and fellow-students, and to take part in competitive efforts, which must greatly assist in fitting them for their future career.

Taking a survey of the state of things in the past, it must be granted at once that both the methods and quality of teaching were, on the whole, very unsatisfactory, and exhibited many defects; but I fear there is a great deal of absurd conceit at the present day, which leads many to imagine that there never was any proper instruction until now. The fact is, there have been lecturers and teachers, clinical and other, in the past, as we know from our experience in this institution, who certainly can never be surpassed, and perhaps will never be equalled; and the course of events, painful though they be,

gives me occasion to bring before you to-day, the names of some who are striking illustrations of what I have been saying, and to ask you to join with me in according them the homage which is so justly their due. We have to lament the recent removal from our midst of Professor Grant, who held the Chair of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy in this College, from its foundation in 1828 until his death a few weeks ago, and he was the last of the Professors who were elected when this institution was first started. Perhaps his name may not be familiar to some of you; but in his day he was a power, and he advanced and strenuously maintained views which now are becoming fashionable, but which then it required strong courage to hold. As a teacher I have a grateful recollection of his constant kindness, and of his extreme anxiety to impart to his pupils the most complete knowledge of his subject, to accomplish which end he would spare no pains. It is a remarkable fact that during the whole period of his Professorship he scarcely ever missed a lecture. He has passed away quietly, having spent a long life in conscientious devotion to his work, and has left behind him a name which is respected and esteemed by all who have ever known him.

Then, Gentlemen, surely we cannot fail to call to remembrance to-day, one whom you will delight to honour—the tried and valued friend of students, Dr. Sharpey. After filling the Chair of Physiology since 1836, he has at last, from causes which we deeply deplore, been obliged to resign; and though he is not leaving us entirely, and we are justly proud of his successor, we cannot but feel deeply this event. It would be the most impertinent presumption on my part, were I to attempt any eulogium of one, whose fame has spread through every civilized country, and who has been universally recognized as one of the first physiologists and most attractive and accomplished lecturers of the age. Still less should I do so in this place, where successive generations of students have list-

ened with delight to his lectures, and received the inestimable benefit of his instructions. But I cannot forget also—and I speak now as a student—that we looked to Dr. Sharpey as one who was ever ready to stand up for our interests, and to lend us a helping hand. And when at the close of the session he, with trembling voice and tearful eye, bid us god-speed, we knew that these were but outward and irrepressible signs of the real and sincere feelings of his heart. Gentlemen, I feel sure you will heartily join with me in expressing the profound esteem and affection, as well as admiration, which we entertain for Dr. Sharpey; and in wishing that he may be spared for many years, to give us the benefit of his advice and personal influence, and that the remainder of his life may be crowned with happiness.

With regard to the examinations, I can only say that until quite within a recent period, while a few of them aimed at a tolerably high standard, the majority were so absurdly inadequate, that they were little better than farces as tests of a man's real knowledge and skill; and even where an examination was a fair one of its kind, it was often of little value for this reason, that it only sought to ascertain what the candidate knew about a very few subjects, leaving some which were by far the most important almost or altogether untouched. With a diploma thus obtained, which perhaps only proved that its possessor had some acquaintance with anatomy and surgery, and possibly just a tinge of physiology, he might go out as a presumedly qualified practitioner and exercise his supposed skill in the practice of medicine, midwifery or anything else he pleased. I do not mean in saying this to disparage in the least those gentlemen who entered the profession in days gone by. Most of them obtained two diplomas or more, and passed such examinations as were then in vogue, in the majority of subjects; but the fact remains, that it was possible for a man to be legally qualified

to act as a general medical practitioner, when he had given no evidence of his fitness for the position. I feel sure that there were quite as good practitioners in the past generation as there are now; but they became so, not because of their examinations, but in spite of them. They rose above these, and not content with obtaining the scant information which they required, strove to make themselves really competent for their responsible duties, by acquainting themselves thoroughly with everything that, in their day, was known. On that account they are deserving of all the more credit, and are an example to not a few at the present day, whose object seems to be, to find out what is the least possible minimum stock of knowledge with which they can get along, and who, instead of manfully trying to pass the ordinary recognized examinations, which certainly are not overwhelmingly difficult, seek to smuggle themselves into the profession through the most contemptible so-called examination which they can possibly discover.

Regarding the present aspect of things, notwithstanding all improvements it must be acknowledged that we are far, yes, very far, from arriving at anything like perfection in teaching or examinations, and that there is plenty of room for further reform. As to examinations, most of them as now conducted are anything but complete and efficient tests of a man's real fitness to enter upon the responsible duties of a medical practitioner. Nor need we go out of this very city to find such. We are ready enough to disparage and think lightly of diplomas and licences granted in other parts of the United Kingdom, when we might with advantage look at home. Still, we are not the worst. There are qualifications to practise even now recognized, accompanied with high-sounding titles too, which are a disgrace to the profession, which, from their preliminary to their final examinations, are a sham and a farce, and what is worse, the public do not

know them from any other. Such a state of things ought not to be allowed to continue for a single day. We want no refuges for the destitute, and if our profession is to gain its true position, we must not have them either. They bring men into our midst, who not only are ignorant, but who have not a spark of right feeling, and who would bring us down to the lowest depths of degradation, to serve their own purposes. In the face of all this, the opinion has been publicly expressed that no further change is called for with regard to examinations. My own strong conviction is, that one of the things which is most urgently needed just now is to make these as efficient as possible in fulfilling the objects for which they are intended. During the last couple of years, gentlemen appointed by the General Medical Council have been visiting different examinations, in order to ascertain whether they are satisfactorily conducted. Surely no one who reads their report recently published can affirm that reform is not required. And let me remark, in passing, that if these gentlemen are to perform their most important and useful duties thoroughly, they must have every facility for determining the character of the examinations in every particular. At the College of Surgeons in Ireland the visitors were not permitted to read the answers of the candidates to the written questions, and, in reply to their just complaint, the Council of this College have published some remarks, in which they claim that these answers are "privileged communications." If that is the case there is no use whatever in visiting examinations. It is all very well to show the questions, but these are no criterion as to what an examination really is; many a paper is issued which looks remarkably grand and imposing, but if it were only compared with the answers which are accepted as satisfactory, probably it would not be thought quite so much of. And, at the recent meeting of the Medical Council one member stated openly, that at certain examinations

questions are put which are never expected to be answered, merely in order to add to the respectability and value of the diplomas.

Gentlemen, it would be a most excellent and desirable thing for all concerned, but especially for you, if everything connected with examinations and teaching were now settled once for all, at least for a long time to come. It seems to me that there is very little difficulty about the matter. The principles upon which they should be conducted are clear enough, and we know tolerably well what is needed. The only thing required now is, that the various authoritative bodies, and especially those which grant degrees and diplomas, should come to a mutual understanding and agreement, in an unselfish spirit. But so long as one Council fights against another, and this or that corporation sticks up for its own dignity and emoluments, instead of having the general welfare of the profession at heart, and being ready therefore to make some sacrifice, any final arrangement seems almost hopeless. For a long while attempts have been made to arrange a Conjoint Scheme of education and examination for each division of the United Kingdom, and at last one was drawn up and published by the Medical Council, which seemed to settle matters, so far as England was concerned. I cannot now enter into the details of this Scheme, and can only say, that though not satisfactory in every respect, it is a fair one on the whole, and was agreed to by all the bodies which grant degrees, diplomas, or licenses, in this division of the kingdom. Everyone thought that at last the "Conjoint Scheme" had reached its consummation, and was an accomplish fact, when, lo and behold, the authorities of the College of Surgeons suddenly reveal, what they had known all along, that a legal obstacle exists which prevents them from joining the scheme, but which, for reasons best known to themselves, they had not,

like the other examining bodies taken any trouble to remove; so the whole affair comes to nothing for the present at least. It is really high time that all this trifling should be put a stop to, and that some higher authority should step in, and compel all concerned to submit, whether they will or not. We urgently want a satisfactory curriculum of study and satisfactory examinations for every part of this kingdom, and it is quite ridiculous to allow the numerous places granting supposed qualifications to practise to go on just as they please.

I think it might be of some service to you, were I now to try to give you some notion of the more recent changes which have been made, affecting medical education and examinations, as well as of those which are still in progress or which seem probable, so that you may in some measure realize what is at present, or what may be required of you. I have gathered what I am about to say from the perusal of the published regulations of the various examining boards, as well as of those laid down in the "Conjoint Scheme"; from the recommendations adopted at the late meeting of the General Medical Council; and from my own observation of, and to some extent participation in, the actual working of existing educational institutions. My remarks may be briefly summed up under the following headings:—

1. *Alterations affecting time.* The period required for the medical curriculum, which was formerly much too short, seems now to be definitely settled at four years. A very high authority in educational matters has lately expressed his opinion that this period is still inadequate. No doubt, if it were practicable, it would be an excellent thing to extend it, and if any of you are so circumstanced as to be able to devote a longer time to your preparation for the profession, do so by all means, provided you really are studying and not frittering your time away; but taking everything into consideration, I do not think it is desirable to make a longer period compulsory; and I

will say further, that if every student were to make really good use of his four years from first to last, he would have a very fair foundation upon which to build, and would have acquired by no means a poor stock of knowledge with which to start upon his active professional career. But remember, that the time is not a day too long, and you cannot afford to waste even the smallest portion of it. There has also been an endeavour to arrange the time better. This is seen in the regulations as to the periods required to be devoted to the study of different subjects, and as to when they should be attended; and also in the division of the examinations into two or more parts, so that the student may get rid of some of the mere scientific and elementary subjects after a certain time, and then devote himself to those which are of more practical importance. By the regulations of the Conjoint Scheme, a student would be allowed to pass the written portions of Botany and Chemistry at his preliminary examination, and to finish altogether with these subjects, as well as with Materia Medica and Pharmacy, within twelve months after registration; and he is even encouraged to do so, for if he succeeded in passing, he would be exempted from attendance on lectures in these subjects, which to many students is a delightful let-off.

2. *Alterations affecting Subjects.* One of these has been indicated in the preceding remarks, viz. that the more elementary and fundamental subjects are delegated to the earlier period of education, and if the student chooses to follow the regulations, he ought to get rid of all anxiety as to examinations in them at the latest by the end of his second year. The Medical Council have carried a resolution that "the area of examination in certain subjects should be limited and defined," and they specify Botany, Zoology, Chemistry, and Materia Medica. No doubt this will fall in admirably with your views, but it remains to be seen how far it will be adopted by the

examining bodies. A very useful and important recent regulation is this, that the more practical portions of certain subjects are now examined upon at the final examination, whereas they were formerly finished with at the primary. I allude more particularly to Anatomy. The fact is that a good many students used to know about as much Anatomy at the end of their career as they did at the beginning, because they forgot all they had ever learnt between the first and second examinations. Now, however, such portions of it as really ought to be remembered, in their application to Surgery and Medicine, are again examined upon at the final. So too, with regard to Therapeutics. Formerly students were examined on this subject when they really understood nothing about diseases or their remedies, but the tendency now is, and a very proper one too, to ascertain what they know respecting the action of medicines at the close of their career, when they are going forth to experiment upon patients. Certain most important subjects are much better attended to now, particularly in the examinations, than they were formerly, and Physiology deserves special mention. Really in most examinations, although an acquaintance with this most important subject was nominally required, it was practically ignored altogether; and students, knowing this pretty well, paid corresponding attention to it, that is, the great majority of them neglected it almost entirely, and knew little or nothing of the structure and functions of the various parts of the human body. Then some subjects, which most unaccountably have been entirely neglected in past times, are at last coming into prominence, both in tuition and examinations. This applies particularly to hygiene and sanitary medicine, and also to various special departments of medicine and surgery, though a good many of these might with advantage receive still more attention than they do at present. I see that the Medical Council state that "excellence in one or more subjects should not be

allowed to compensate for failure in others; and that, if a candidate be rejected for failure in any one subject, he should be re-examined in all." In the main, this is certainly quite right, but at the same time it seems to me that there should be a distinction as to the respective importance of different subjects, and a certain allowance should be made with regard to those which are of least consequence practically.

3. *Alterations in the methods of examination and instruction.* Taking the examinations first, we must allow that most important and admirable improvements have been carried out in the modes of conducting them during late years. It is not so long ago that an hour's chat on a certain eventful evening, which was pleasant or otherwise according to circumstances, settled the matter as to whether a candidate was a "fit and proper" person to give suffering humanity the benefit of his knowledge and skill. Gradually it has come to be recognized that this was not quite satisfactory, and in theory at least, and in some places in practice too, it is considered essential that an examination should consist of four parts, viz., written, oral, practical, and clinical. In this way a candidate is tested on every side, and if such an examination were properly conducted, it really does seem as if no one could gain an entrance into the profession, unless he knew his work fairly and were tolerably well-qualified. Now, Gentlemen, you had better realize what is meant by the "practical" and "clinical" portions of examinations, though of course you will bear in mind that the thoroughness and severity with which they are carried out varies considerably in different places. First, you will be required to recognize objects when you see them, and to know something about them, such as bones, structures exposed in dissection, so-called anatomical "pickles," microscopic specimens, pathological preparations, drugs, plants, &c. Secondly, you may have to do certain things, more or less of a scientific character, but most of them also of practical use, such as

dissect parts, put up microscopic preparations, and perform ordinary chemical analyses, especially those which have a direct bearing upon certain departments of our profession, as the examination of secretions, testing for poisons, &c. Thirdly, you will have to show that you know how to examine patients; that you can use the different instruments employed in the investigation of disease; and that you are really able to find out what is the matter with a person, and have some idea as to the necessary treatment. In some of the higher examinations you will be required to give written reports of cases, with your own commentaries thereon; and in others you are permitted to exhibit your powers of original observation and thought, by writing a thesis on any subject you please. Lastly, you will have to give evidence that you can use the different kinds of apparatus employed in treatment; that you can do ordinary things, which you will probably have to do frequently in practice, such as vaccinate, put up a broken limb, or perform the minor operations; and in some examinations you will be called upon to perform the more important operations.

Now let us see how the methods of teaching have been affected by these alterations in examinations. In the first place the student is required to attend far fewer lectures than formerly. We are about coming out of a period which might justly be called that of "excessive lecturing." This was the recognized mode of instruction, and in several subjects it was necessary to be signed for two or more courses, so that the student had to listen to a repetition of what he had already heard, and many a one had before him actual notes of what the lecturer was saying. For some examinations this regulation still holds good, but for my own part I think it is high time that it should be done away with. As for students, I am afraid they did not, as a rule, in times past appreciate lectures as much as they ought to have done, and this was main-

ly due to the fact that they were overdone with them. Many either evaded them altogether if they could, or were present only at so many as would secure the required signature, not, however, with the intention of listening, for they beguiled the, to them, weary hour, with a novel or in carving their name for future generations to admire, or improved their artistic skill by drawing caricatures of the lecturer or their fellow-students, or amused themselves in various other ways suited to their tastes, sometimes refreshing their exhausted frames with an hour's calm sleep. The tendency as regards lectures is now decidedly to go in the opposite direction, and I do not think that students can complain that they are, as a rule, called upon to attend too many courses. Along with this change, I think it will be acknowledged that, taken as a whole, lectures are more useful and interesting than they used to be. The proper object of a course of lectures is to present to the students as simple, clear, intelligible, and concise, but at the same time as complete an exposition as is practicable, of the subject under consideration, and lecturers seem to be realizing this more than formerly; while the competition in this, as in everything else, is helping to develope the necessary qualifications. Still further, there has been a remarkable development of what is termed the "tutorial" system of education, *i.e.* teaching by means of regular demonstrations and informal conversations, as well as by frequent examinations, both oral and written. This is certainly a great advance, and it is even yet capable of further development. With students this mode of teaching is decidedly popular, and they plainly recognize that it helps them materially. Besides it brings teachers and students more into contact with each other; the latter can ask questions if they are in any difficulty; while at the same time the unnecessarily wide gulf which used to exist between teachers and students is considerably narrowed, and they come into closer sympathy with each other. Of course it has

been the custom for a long time, here and in other places, for professors and lecturers to conduct examinations at stated intervals in their respective subjects. But somehow students as a rule certainly did not seem to care very much about these. They either thought them too formal, or looked upon them with dread and aversion, probably because they did not like to make a public exhibition of their utter want of familiarity with the subjects which had been discussed upon. I observe that the Medical Council recognize the value of examinations, by recommending that "evidence should be required that every student has attended the examinations held by his teachers in each course, as well as the lectures." Attempts have been made also to institute "test-examinations," which students must pass at their respective schools before going in for the public examinations. But somehow this does not seem to meet with their approval. They imagine, I suppose, that it interferes with the liberty of the subject, and that, being "Britons," they are not destined to be "slaves," and therefore if they please to go up and be plucked, no one has any right to prevent them.

Another most important advance in teaching is, that it has become a great deal more practical. Even in those branches which were formerly thus taught, this mode of instruction has become much more prominent; while in many departments, and especially Physiology and Histology, it has only been instituted within the last few years. The Medical Council have now laid down definite requirements as to practical courses in these and other subjects, such as Surgery, Medicine, and Pathology. With regard to clinical instruction, it does not matter much where it was first started, or where it was carried on, but the fact is, that with a few remarkable exceptions, it was either neglected entirely until within a comparatively recent period, or was so unsatisfactorily conducted, that the great majority of students shirked it alto-

gether. Now it is becoming one of the most important methods of teaching everywhere, while classes are instituted for systematic training in the more elementary parts of practical Surgery and Medicine, both as regards diagnosis and treatment, which until now have never been formally recognised. In connection with this practical teaching, a most important matter is that students are obliged to take their part in the work, and actually to do things for themselves. Time was when they listened or not, just as they felt inclined, to what the teacher had to say; or they saw him do something, use an instrument, perform an operation or what not, and with that a good many were perfectly satisfied, making no attempt whatever to do anything for themselves.

These are the only changes which time permits me to notice at any length. I may just add, however, a few words with regard to certain matters bearing on examinations. There seems to be a tendency to raise considerably the standard of certain of the higher examinations, and also to encourage students to go in for them by offering numerous "honours." The examinations for the army and navy are becoming very efficient, especially the former. For the public appointments of "Medical Officers of Health," it is probable that before long there will be a special diploma granted in "State Medicine." In order to make some students a little more concerned as to whether they are rejected or not, most places now limit the number of times they may present themselves for the same fee, and I think this idea might with advantage be still further extended, by altogether preventing a man from going up more than a certain number of times. Some examining boards will not admit candidates for their qualifications, if they have been rejected elsewhere, until after a certain interval has elapsed. The Medical Council have, however, and I think rightly too, declined to recommend this as a general thing. Lastly, there are changes both as regards examiners and

candidates. I believe we may safely say that many useful and much-needed reforms with respect to the former have been or are being carried out; while, with reference to the latter, our profession has already been invaded by a few of the opposite sex, and it will not be their fault if many more of them do not join our ranks. They have received rather a check recently, but, as you know, the ladies are not to be easily put down, and one of them has lately publicly expressed her views as to what reforms are necessary in connection with the medical profession. It is also rumoured that a separate institution is about being started, for the express purpose of educating "Lady doctors." So, Gentlemen, you had better be prepared for the competition which threatens you from this quarter.

Before quitting this subject I feel constrained to offer a few observations about a matter, which certainly calls for some explanation, and about which it is highly important that we should try to come to some definite understanding. We are confronted by the serious fact, that in almost every examination the proportion of candidates who are "plucked," or, to put it in more euphonious language, "remitted to their studies" is remarkably great, while in the higher examinations only a comparative few reach above a medium standard of excellence. At the first glance this certainly looks very extraordinary, and we want to find out what it all means, and whether this unsatisfactory state of things cannot be altered. I have a strong impression that if students generally were canvassed on the subject, they would soon settle the question, by saying that it was all the fault of examiners and teachers, while they themselves would be as innocent as lambs. It is not quite so easily settled, however, and I would invite you now honestly and conscientiously to consider the matter with me a little more closely. I think that I may truly say that my sympathies go very strongly with students, but it is of no use

flattering you, and letting you go away with wrong ideas on this subject, if you need being told a few homely truths, which some of you do very much.

I quite believe, and am not afraid to say it either, that examiners are wholly responsible for a certain proportion of rejections. This is the only explanation that can be given of the failure of certain students of the highest attainments, and I have again and again received accounts from men upon whom I could place the most implicit reliance, as to the manner in which they were examined, which could leave no doubt on any candid mind that they had been most unfairly, and sometimes most insolently treated. Nor have I yet forgotten my own experience at examinations, and it is not likely that I ever shall. Not being possessed of the strongest nerves, it seems quite a marvel to me when I look back now, and try to realize how I ever managed to struggle through the combination of crotchets and downright bullying which it has sometimes been my unhappy lot to encounter. On the other hand, it is a great pleasure to remember other examinations, which were conducted in a manly, straightforward manner, and where one was treated with kindness and consideration.

All examiners who are responsible for the undeserved rejections of candidates are, however, by no means equally to blame. There are those who simply do not know how to examine, who have no aptitude for the work; and it would be well to remember that such are not *only* met with at the London University. In the discussion at the Medical Council this was plainly acknowledged. One member said, "examination required to be studied as an art, and practised as a profession. Many could teach and lecture, but there were few men who could examine properly. He believed that many men were rejected owing to the faults of the examiners." Another remarked, "the best examiners were found among successful and experienced teachers. Examina-

tion was a great art and a great gift." Therefore if a man tries his best, but fails in what is acknowledged to be so difficult to accomplish properly, one can always make allowances, though it does seem very absurd, as is sometimes the case, to appoint examiners who have no particular knowledge of the subject upon which they will have to examine, and who must read up for the occasion, or such as have had no experience in teaching students. But there is another class of examiners who deserve no consideration, and against whom I feel we should strongly protest. They are those who seem to look upon students as their natural enemies, and who act as if their function was, by any method which suits them best, to prevent those unfortunate individuals from gaining an entrance into the profession. Some take a great deal of trouble to put their questions in the most unintelligible form possible, or hunt up some dreadful obsolete words, which the student has never heard of, but upon his knowledge of the meaning of which depends entirely his ability to answer their questions. There are others who deliberately try to mislead and puzzle students in various ways, in their *viva voce* and practical examinations, making them perfectly ridiculous and useless as real tests, but who are extremely pleased with any one of them who is able to give the right answer to some pet crotchet of theirs, which the said student has probably obtained from a certain undesirable source. Then there are examiners who, I am glad say, chiefly belong to a bygone age, and whom perhaps, it it might be as well not to notice, were it not that they do not seem yet to be quite extinct, and we want to impress upon those who still exist, that they are really altogether out of place at the present day, as we are now supposed to be living in a period of advanced civilization. I allude to those who do not appear to have what we call "feelings" themselves, or to think that any one else has. They meet the trembling candidate, who generally does tremble very much, knowing

whom he has to encounter, with frowning looks and a terrible expression of countenance; address him in a voice of thunder, and sometimes in language not suggestive of the highest school of culture; and altogether exhibit a style of behaviour which is quite incompatible with being examiners of gentlemen. It would be well for such to remember, that the good-will even of students is worth something; that, however eminent their position in the profession may be, they have no right in dealing with them to set aside the ordinary rules of courtesy; and that by so doing they gain an unenviable reputation, and may in the end even cause their very names to be universally despised and hated.

But now let us look at the other side of the question. And I must express my emphatic opinion that, with all their faults, examiners are not responsible for a considerable majority of failures. There is a certain course of examination laid down; a certain standard must be reached; candidates fall short, and sometimes very far short of this; and hence examiners cannot avoid rejecting them. Then comes the question, why do not candidates attain to the necessary standard? No doubt the changes in the examinations constitute one most important cause. These are considerably more difficult than they used to be; the knowledge required is much more extensive, and itmust be far more complete and accurate, particularly for the higher examinations. But certainly, looking at those for the ordinary diplomas and licences, one cannot imagine that their difficulty ought to account for many failures, especially as the proportion of marks which it is necessary to obtain is generally not by any means high. The addition of the written and practical portions to the examinations has undoubtedly increased the proportion of rejections considerably, for many a man who could get through *viva voce* questioning easily enough, can not stand these tests. Then there are not a few errors of detail in conducting examinations, which I cannot

enter upon here, but which unquestionably demand attention.

Teachers have come in for a pretty good share of abuse during the past year, and in numerous articles and letters have been made chiefly accountable for the unpreparedness of students. I am quite ready to admit, as one of them, that we are to some extent to blame, and that we might improve considerably in many respects; but that we are to be shouldered with the failure of all sorts of students, whether wanting in ability or neglectful of their work, is ridiculous; and a good deal that is said on the subject has no better foundation than in the case which was alluded to at the Medical Council, in which, at a certain examination, a candidate did not know where either the spleen or cæcum was situated, and his only excuse was that he had been badly instructed and that he had forgotten the little he had known! The fact is that many teachers work exceedingly hard and try to the best of their ability, often under many discouragements, to perform the very onerous duties which devolve upon them. Besides, it is difficult to come to a positive conclusion as to how far one is justified in going in the direction of instruction, and those whose position and experience give them authority to speak on this subject hold very different views. We are bound to remember, whether students like it or not, that they are being trained for the future as well as being prepared for their examinations. We must, therefore, on the one hand steer clear of doing too little for them, thus letting them waste their time and energies in misdirected labour; or on the other hand of doing too much, so that they lose all self-reliance, become indisposed or unable to help themselves, have no knowledge but what has been driven into them, and thus go out into the world with their faculties untrained, and in every way unfitted for the work which lies before them. This is the great evil of the system of "grinding," which necessarily tends to turn a lot of idle, worthless beings into the profession who are in no re-

spect qualified for its duties and responsibilities. And there is a danger even at the present day lest a good deal of the instruction at our Medical Schools should degenerate into this type. Still there is "teaching" which is not "grinding," and, so far as my own views are concerned, derived from no small experience of students, I believe that not only are we justified but we are actually called upon to do a great deal for them, if we wish them to make a proper use of their time and opportunities, and not only to pass their examinations, but also to become fairly competent to practice their profession. We must adapt ourselves to circumstances, as is constantly done in legislation, and what may not be absolutely correct in theory, becomes under certain conditions, not only allowable but imperative. Now, it is of no use expecting students to be perfect; at any rate, they are not, and the fact is that the large majority of them have not the gift, or will not take the trouble, unless assisted, to work in such a way as to turn their advantages to the best account, and they are liable to go hopelessly wrong. Therefore they must have more or less aid, and direction, and training, according to their several requirements; and my belief is that teachers may give them all this, without doing them the least harm, provided they are careful that their instructions are really useful, that they do not interfere with but rather tend to encourage the development of the mental faculties of the students, and that they only help those who are deserving. For a student who never tries to work, and who makes no effort on his own account, absolutely nothing should be done, for it is anything but a pleasant contemplation to think that one has had any hand in bringing a man into the profession who has no right to be there; but if this standard be adopted—to help men who help themselves—I think that teachers ought gladly to do all in their power to remove their difficulties, and to encourage and aid them in their progress. And, I believe, gentlemen, you will find that here at least this is the principle which is carried out.

In reading a very admirable "Address to students" in one of our leading journals, I was rather startled to find them alluded to as "young men, with every variety of character, but all animated with one desire, that of fitting themselves for the practice of the medical profession." In the face of this, it was only after some considerable hesitation that I ventured to write what I am now about to say. I don't know what you yourselves think about the description, but I must say that it does appear to me just a little exaggerated. The "animation" is by-no-means always so evident as it might be, and I feel bound to tell you plainly and without any apology, that as a rule students are themselves responsible for their want of success at examinations. However, let me add, this does not in the least imply that medical students, as a class, are at all worse than other people. I do not know whether we are to believe the reports handed down to us by tradition; if we are, all I can say is that medical students are very different now from what they were in days gone by. They are certainly quite up to the average standard of human beings, and, taking all circumstances into consideration, I think they are a little above it. At any rate, you who attend this college are well-behaved, and we have very seldom to find fault on this score, while most of you are fairly devoted to work, and a good many are models of what students should be. Further, I believe that the mutual influence which students exert upon each other here is, on the whole, very beneficial, and that they stimulate each other to work and to competition. It is scarcely to be hoped, however, that among such a number there are not some who have an influence in the opposite direction, and who are a power for evil as regards their fellow-students. Recognising the great dangers to be feared from such characters, I pause to address any who may now be present, and I charge you to keep to yourselves and to desist from trying to drag others down

to your own degraded level. We feel deep regret to see you foolishly pursuing a course which must end in ruinous failure, and would urge you to reform; but at any rate we must do all in our power to prevent you from injuring those who come within your influence. And I would earnestly press upon you all, and especially those who are to-day begining their career as students, to be very careful what associations you make. I have a painful recollection of not a few who have been ruined—yes, absolutely ruined—from a neglect of this precaution. I would further add, keep out of everything that is really wrong from the very first, and you know quite as well as I can tell you what is right and what is wrong. You need amusement and recreation, but let them be of the proper kind, such as will improve and elevate and refine you. And remember that these should hold their due relative position. For the time being your great object in life ought to be to prepare for your profession, and to this everything else should be subservient. You have not come to London merely to enjoy yourselves, or even to create for yourselves a reputation in connection with athletic sports and such things. There is no reason whatever why a man should not be a good runner, a good cricketer, a good athlete, or even a good boxer, as well as a good doctor, but the last-mentioned should come first. I have gentlemen in my mind's eye at this moment, from whom, if they devoted half the time to their work which they do to athletics, &c., I should expect very great things. And let me say, if at any time any pursuit, however harmless in itself, takes such a hold upon you as to interfere with your progress, if you have not the strength of will to follow it in moderation, you had better give it up altogether.

After this digression, let me point out some of the more evident faults on the part of students, which appear to me to account for many of their defeats, in order that you may learn to avoid them. And you will at once perceive a dis-

tinction between those which are deserving of more or less censure, and those which rather claim our sympathy. There are students, though it gives me real pleasure to think that they now constitute a small minority, who have not the slightest reason or right to expect to pass their examinations. They fritter their time away in idleness and indolence; or devote themselves body and soul to some pursuit totally irrelevant to the work they have in hand; or, still worse, are most familiarly known in vicious haunts; and then, when the time for examination approaches, they bestir themselves sufficiently to call in extraneous help, in order to try to get sufficient information of the right kind crammed into them, to enable them to pull through, and if they do not succeed at the first attempt, they are not in the least discomfited, but make repeated attacks, until finally they take the profession by storm. Others, without being positively idle, do not give themselves steadily and systematically to work from first to last, but put forth a little effort now and then, with a grand final spurt at the finish, which does not always land them winners. Not a few neglect particular subjects, or portions of them, and sometimes very important ones too, hoping that by some chance or other the examiners will not find out their "weak points;" or they devote themselves to certain subjects, when they ought to be paying attention to others, and thus are really wasting their time. Some again fail because they pay little or no attention to practical work, especially if it gives them much trouble. They never dissect, or only very superficially, and to them anatomical preparations, organs, or bones are unfamiliar objects; they have scarcely ever looked into a microscope; rarely go into a ward, and when set to examine a patient or use an instrument are quite at sea; in short, they ignore their practical duties almost entirely, trusting to such knowledge as they can gather from books, and lectures, and demonstrations, and so on. On the

other hand we meet with our "practical men," who scorn everything which appears to them at all theoretical, and who will not condescend to be indebted for their knowledge to books, or anything of that kind. Occasionally one comes across students who are always troubling themselves about some out-of-the-way thing, or who are most eager about getting a precise knowledge as to unimportant minutiæ, or to be primed in every possible theory and hypothesis, while they neglect the broad truths and facts which are staring them in the face, and which they will need to remember every day of their lives, but especially for their examinations. I am afraid a good many students do not avail themselves of such opportunities as are within their reach to the extent which they might do, and do not take full advantage of such aids to their progress as their teachers think they need. This results partly from conceit, for some students believe they can do everything for themselves and want no assistance; partly from carelessness and an indisposition to take any more trouble than they can possibly help; and partly from a sort of notion that the opportunities are not exactly what they want, and therefore it is of no use trying to get any good out of them. For instance, it is not an easy matter to make some students understand that it will be of the greatest service to them to practise writing answers to questions, under the supervision of their teachers; to be present at *viva voce* examinations; to "take cases" in the wards of the hospital; or to attend certain practical classes. Then it is not an uncommon idea, that in order to learn medicine or surgery a hospital containing some hundreds of beds is absolutely essential, and it is useless to attempt it in a small hospital. If there are any present who think thus, let me just quote what one of the greatest physicians and clinical teachers now living said from this platform. His words are, "all I know of medicine I owe to University College; for its hospital, small though it is said

to be, has supplied me with means of acquiring all the knowledge of medicine I possess."

Now let me say a word or two about wrong methods of study. Some students unquestionally work a great deal too hard. They forget altogether that they need recreation of body and mind, and thus they not only injure their health, but confuse and wear out their mental faculties, so that when an examination comes on, they are quite unfit to undergo the hard work which it often involves, and do not succeed nearly so well as they ought, because they have thoroughly muddled themselves beforehand. It is not an unfrequent mistake to read a great number of books on every subject, and thus to load the memory with a confused notion of an enormous amount of information, which is really of little use, either for examinations or anything else. It is certainly far better to concentrate the reading as much as possible, though not to the extent which some gentlemen do, who would like to have the whole of the medical sciences crammed into a book which they could carry in their waistcoat pocket. Then there is a good deal of want of system in studying, and no attempt is made to try to pick out what is essential, and to arrange it in the memory in anything like order, so as to be ready for use. I know much of this is due to natural defects, but still many students might improve greatly in these respects, especially with a little practice.

We must also not forget that there are other more serious defects, many students not being possessed of a retentive memory, or being in other respects wanting in ability, and having therefore, to work under great disadvantages. With such I sympathise very sincerely, and would give them this advice: —Not to be above recognizing their deficiencies; never to hesitate about asking for the assistance and direction which they need; and not to be disheartened, but to exercise themselves in trying to overcome their failings. They will pro-

bably be astonished to find how much their faculties may be improved and quickened by cultivation, and what they themselves are capable of achieving, if they only give themselves heart and soul to the task.

From the discussion which I have just concluded as to the causes of failures at examinations, it would appear as if there were still not such a complete understanding and harmony between examiners, teachers, and students, as ought to exist, and I think it must be acknowledged that such is the fact. Why should this be? Why, instead of finding fault with each other, cannot we all combine for one great purpose, and that is to make our profession in reality the high and noble calling which it is in essence? For this end we want examiners fully competent for their duties, and determined to perform them conscientiously and impartially, at the same time exhibiting all due courtesy and kindness. We want teachers, not only possessing the ability, but also willing and eager, so far as they can and ought, to devote their best energies to the training of those who are committed to their charge. And we want students, fully alive to their obligations and responsibilities, and ever ready to respond by their actions to all efforts put forth on their behalf. In the beautiful address delivered by Sir James Paget the other day at the meeting of the British Medical Association, occur the words, "contagion of earnestness," and they seem to me admirably to express the influence which teachers and students ought always to exert upon each other. Do not imagine, Gentlemen, that teachers are indifferent to your progress, but let me remind you that a good deal rests with you as to the manner in which we perform our work. You do not always respond to our efforts, and we might do better if these were more fully appreciated. Want of attention and indifference cause one to lose heart and energy, while earnestness and enthusiasm on your part will kindle a corresponding feeling in us, and will

cheer and help us in endeavouring to perform, what is under the most favourable circumstances anything but an easy task.

It is probable that I am addressing students of every stage, from those who are about making their start in life, to whom we offer a very cordial and kindly welcome, to those who are close upon their departure from amongst us in order to enter upon a more serious struggle. There is much yet that I should like to say to you in the way of encouragement and direction, suited to your different circumstances, but time forbids me to add more than a few closing hints. Recognize the great advantages under which you are starting at the present day, and the responsibilities connected therewith. Your preliminary training, more complete education, and more searching examinations, mean that you are expected and ought to be more accomplished practitioners than your predecessors. Then do not, for you need not, forget, that while preparing for your examinations you are at the same time laying the foundation for the future, and that when you quit this place, each of you will have had such effects produced on your mind, your habits, and your character, as will be indelible. Therefore work hard, earnestly, steadfastly, so that you may prepare for the keen contest which lies before you. Train all those faculties for which you will hereafter have such constant need. Learn to observe, to reason and think for yourselves, to concentrate your mental powers upon what immediately claims your attention, to be prompt in decision and action, at the same time avoiding rashness, and to keep under control your imagination and such other faculties as are apt to run wild. Cultivate those qualities which are so essential for every member of our profession, viz., modesty and profound humility, combined with self-reliance; kindness and gentleness, and yet firmness of character; warm-heartedness and the power to sympathise, as well as clear-headedness; charity and forbearance towards your fellows, but at the same

time boldness to protest and to fight against everything that is wrong and degrading.

I hope that any of you who are about going forth into the world are well and fully equipped. But whatever your success as students may have been, be not content with this and think that you may now lie down in ignoble ease. Whatever sphere of labour you may select, there is enough within it to call forth your best powers. Be courageous; face your difficulties like men; have strong faith and hope in your profession; do not aim low, or be satisfied with any lot into which circumstances seem to cast you, but study your forte and choose for yourselves, making circumstances bend to your will. But wherever you may be, always make intelligent use of the knowledge you have acquired; strive to keep up with the times, and to make yourselves masters of every advance which is taking place in our profession; do what you can, and everyone of you can do something, towards contributing to its true progress, and towards the removal of abuses; and on every occasion, as well as in all relationships, act the part of kind, honest, upright, straightforward gentlemen.

With all my heart, Gentlemen, do I wish everyone of you success in the truest sense of the word. But in order to win success you ought to deserve it. We sometimes see a man who has spent his time in idleness and frivolity, in after-life, aided by favouring circumstances, get ahead of those who have been diligent and hard-working, and I confess that to me the sight is not an agreeable one. My sincere desire and hope is that those who have earned success here may achieve it hereafter, though there is no reason whatever why you should not everyone deserve it. And remember that a successful life need not be a brilliant or a long one. There are many obscure village practitioners, who in reality are far more successful than some who seem to float on the highest wave of

worldly prosperity; and there are tablets in this College, erected to the memory of those, who, having scarcely emerged from their student-life, accomplished more in their brief career, and were more truly successful, than most men who reach their three score years and ten. To such men would I point you as examples. Follow in their footsteps. Make your mark for good in the sphere in which your lot is cast, whether it be large or small. Let your life be, not a dark blot or a hideous caricature, but a finished picture, grand and beautiful and attractive to look upon, which will be the admiration of future ages. You may even now, if you choose, be sketching the outline of that picture; and hereafter, if your lives are spared, you can fill it in and make it perfect and complete, by devoting yourselves earnestly and faithfully to your duties, whatever they may be; and by taking your part in the conflict with disease and death, in the alleviation of pain, distress, and misery, and in the endeavour to sweep away many of the direst ills which now afflict humanity.

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