Introductory address to the students of the Middlesex Hospital Medical School : delivered at the opening of the winter session, October 1st, 1879 / by Sidney Coupland.

with the author's kind regards.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

TO

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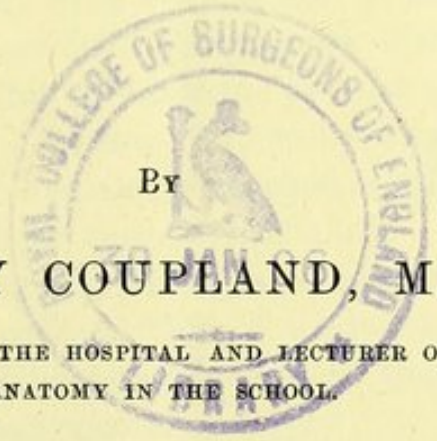
THE STUDENTS OF THE MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL MEDICAL SCHOOL,

DELIVERED AT THE

Opening of the Winter Session, October 1st, 1879.



By

SIDNEY COUPLAND, M.D.,

ASSISTANT PHYSICIAN TO THE HOSPITAL AND LECTURER ON PATHOLOGICAL ANATOMY IN THE SCHOOL.

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ADDRESS.

If I interpret rightly the meaning and purpose of our meeting here to-day, I should conceive that the duty I am now called on to perform is of a twofold nature. In the first place, I have to bid a hearty welcome to those who to-day enter on the arduous but pleasant study of medicine, and in the next place I have to put forth plainly and without exaggeration what that study involves. Most cordially then do I welcome you, Gentlemen, to the labour that lies before you, and I congratulate you upon your choice of a profession. If it be true that in the exercise of all our faculties we best fulfil the purpose of our existence, then of all callings this of medicine is most calculated to attain that end. If it be true that to be helpful to others is the highest aim of human effort, then of all callings this of medicine may claim the chiefest rank. And if it be true that the greatest happiness is to him who toils the hardest, then of all callings this of medicine is the most gratifying. It is for reasons such as these that I think you have done well in your choice.

You have come here to fit yourselves for this pursuit, and, bearing this in mind, I purpose to indicate, as best I may, what should be the principles to guide you in your studies; for I know that to many of you the career that is opening is wholly novel. No longer will you have set before you the daily task which must be definitely accomplished. Practically from this day forth you become your own masters in the pursuit of knowledge. Guidance you will have and counsel in plenty if you seek it, but the actual manner of your study must remain with yourselves. You have before you a wide range of subjects, a knowledge

of which within a certain time you are supposed to have acquired. It is your aim then so to dispose of your time as to pursue this work efficiently.

At first sight the number of subjects and the extent of knowledge demanded of you at the close of the few years' studentship may daunt the boldest amongst you. I well remember my own misgivings when, on my first entrance as a medical student, I had my ardour seriously damped by what seemed to me the appalling amount of information comprised in Ellis's "Anatomy." It contained a world of facts with the nature and meanings of which I was totally ignorant. To me, indeed, then human anatomy was a sealed book—the language was strange and the mass of detail so great that I was staggered to think that at the end of two years I ought so to have mastered it all as to be fitted to be examined in it. The feeling was a natural one. I believe that many of you will experience it too, and the consolation I had then is the same that you will have now. It was, that others had done this impossible thing, so why should not I do it also? It is no unknown land that you are entering, Gentlemen. You have with you, fortunately, as daily companions, those who have passed safely along the same road that you will tread. Do not let it be said that what was possible for them is impossible for you. Here it is that the spirit of emulation, which none of us can help possessing—it is an instinctive quality of human beings—comes so usefully to the front. We deem it shame to acknowledge that our forerunners were better than ourselves, and we strive the more if possible to keep up with or distance them. So that, if any of you should at the outset feel discouraged by reason of the novelty, and multiplicity of novelties, set before you, remember always that what has been done before can be done again, and try even to do it better.

Now, I know that it is often said: "A first year's man "can take his time; he need not work hard; he will be "obliged to work next year. Let him get used to the new "life; do not exact too much of him. In his second year

"he will have plenty of time left to prepare for his exami-"nations." Such statements as these are based on false doctrine and convey pernicious advice. Heed it not. The first year of your study is the test year, and not the last. According as you work then, will you work in the future. If you idle then, you will not readily assume the garb of industry when the time comes for you to put your shoulder to the wheel, unless you wish to be ignominiously distanced by your juniors. Let me put this in another way: you enter here to perform a definite work within a definite time. If you do not commence it forthwith, and pursue it steadily through, you will have to crowd all this labour within a few months, and perhaps fail in your object after all. I know that it is hard for any of us to commence a task when its fulfilment lies far ahead. There is something strangely fascinating about procrastination; but there is nothing which more favours the system (which, Mr. Stanley Jevons* to the contrary, I cannot call "education") of "cramming" than this. It is this which lies at the root of the whole system of cram. Steady application is the keynote of your whole course of study; it is as necessary in the first as in all the other years of studentship.

Bear this in mind then—that once you have entered upon the study of medicine no consideration should make you forget that this study is henceforth your main object in life. If you lose sight of this, and let the days pass in useless idleness or vain pursuits, you had far better leave medicine behind and seek for some vocation more congenial to you and less exacting in its demands on your attention.

I will now briefly describe what manner of work it is that lies before you. In olden days, when books, especially those of the text-book variety, were few, the chief part of systematic teaching was oral, and by lectures

* In "Mind," 1877, p. 193. In justice to this distinguished writer it should be added that he discriminates between "bad" and "good" cram. But I venture to submit that *all* "cram" is bad, and that no examination should be so framed as to compel its adoption by the candidate.

alone could the student gain an insight into the principles of his subjects. They still form—and rightly—an important part in medical education. So that be diligent in attendance upon lectures; and let your attendance be a reality, and not a sham. Do not let that fatal error seize you that lectures are unnecessary, because your text-books will afford you all the information you require. Of course they will, but I would appeal to the experience of any who have been students, to tell how much they would often have been at sea had it not been for the lecturer's explanation. You may read page after page, and be none the wiser. By reading alone you may accumulate a mass of facts in your memory; but you will be wholly unable to estimate these facts at their relative value. Now this is what the lecturer does, and his work is aided but not supplanted by the text-book. You should then carefully follow all that he places before you. If you are in doubt, do not hesitate to ask for explanations. He will solve your difficulties for you, and often a word from him will thus be of more value than the poring over many pages. Hence to reap the full advantage of this part of education, lectures should none of them be missed. Attention to them will systematise your reading; and it is important so to arrange your reading as to keep abreast with the lecturer's exposition of the subject.

Assuming then that you do thus strictly attend the classes, it will be in every way satisfactory for you to make a point of entering for their periodical examinations. You may not go to these class examinations with any view of reaping distinction in them, although that is a laudable and proper motive enough in itself. But they have a higher value than this. They enable you to find out what you have learnt; whether you have really been acquiring knowledge during your attendance; and moreover you derive from them the inestimable advantage of training yourself in the faculty of clear expression of your ideas on paper. As one outlet of your career here is by way of the examination room, there is every reason

for availing yourselves of the opportunity of practice in the art of answering questions which these class examinations afford.

Happily for us, our means of education are not exhausted by lectures and books. Indeed, the most valuable part of all is that which so many branches of our study afford us, that of personally acquiring knowledge of facts. The work with which your minds will chiefly be engaged during the first two years is largely of this kind. Anatomy can only be learnt in the dissecting room. There you enjoy great opportunities and the high gratification of seeking out for yourselves the facts of structure. Every day you will, if you work aright, be gaining fresh facts. You will enjoy all the pleasure of the discoverer, for daily you will be exploring new regions; and bit by bit you will be acquiring the soundest and truest form of knowledge, that which is derived from personal research. It is this which is so attractive in scientific work, especially in the natural sciences, and it pervades all the field upon which you are entering. The practical study of anatomy is but the foreshadowing of that ceaseless observation of phenomena that is in the future to be your pursuit. By all means then pay due attention to this great element in medical training. Avoid anything like hurry in this study; and do not indeed commence the actual labour of which I am speaking, until you have thoroughly acquainted yourselves with the facts of osteology. Then, when you are engaged in anatomical practice, do not fall into the fallacy of passing by details, because they are to be found in the text-books. Do not be satisfied until you have patiently and accurately traced this nerve, demonstrated the relations of that artery, or defined the attachments of that muscle. The marvellous details of structure may well arrest your attention; let none of them escape you; and rest not until you have fixed them in your mind. I cannot here too emphatically endorse the excellent advice given on this head two years ago by one who spoke with authority on such matters—Mr. Hensman,

who has so long and so worthily filled the Demonstrator's office amongst us. He urged upon you the value of drawing as serving to impress the facts you ascertain upon the mind. No matter how rude the sketch as long as it conveys to you the recollection of facts you have personally worked out. It is of far more value than many printed pages, for it calls up by the simple law of association numberless important details. It may be said with truth that there is no subject in the whole curriculum which has reached so high a pitch of perfection as anatomy. The value of its careful study lies not merely in its subsequent application to medicine and surgery, but also in the great advantage it has of calling forth the powers of observation, and accustoming the mind to rigid and close scrutiny of details. It is thus of the highest value as a means of education, and I should not be inclined to join in the cry that too much attention is paid to it. The same holds, but with more restricted application, to the study of minute anatomy, a study of late years so greatly extended. The time you will devote to the patient preparation and examination of histological specimens will not be lost. The familiarity it gives in the recognition of the microscopical characters of tissues and organs is of direct gain in practical medicine, but the indirect gain it has in inducing habits of careful minute observation is perhaps greater still.

But while urging you to pursue, with utmost diligence and care, the one subject of anatomy, I should be wrong indeed if I did not also impress upon you the importance, fully as great, of the study of the sister science—Physiology. This is the more incumbent upon me because it is singular to find that the cultivation of physiology is far less encouraged than it should be. I suspect that we must lay the blame of this, in great measure, upon the examining boards. Students soon come to know what "pays best" to "get up" for an examination, and loftily as we may talk about examinations being not an end but a means, still it is impossible, in these days, to lose sight

of their great influence. I shall refer more particularly to them presently; what I wish to say now is—do not let the reproach be cast upon you afterwards that you know not even the rudiments of physiology. Seeing that disease may be defined as "disordered function," surely there is no subject which should be more thoroughly grounded in an aspirant for medical practice than this of physiology. It cannot be that its study can lack in interest. In mere comparison of interest alone, the living body must surpass the dead. But it is probable that this comparative neglect is due, apart from the influence of examinations treating it as a subsidiary subject, to the circumstance that its facts are incapable of such complete demonstration and personal investigation on the part of the student. You will learn physiology chiefly from lectures and books, and the best advice I can give you upon it is, to be mindful of the elementary questions before seeking to learn its abstruser problems. If I may venture to depart from the rule I have imposed on myself in speaking to-day, I would mention one book of which you might well make yourselves masters during the first year, and that is, the "Elementary Physiology" of Professor Huxley. I hope I shall have the approbation of our lecturer in this piece of counsel; I believe I shall.

Linked with these subjects in the first year's study is Chemistry. If you have not already had some instruction in this department, miss not the opportunity given you now. Like anatomy, the study of chemistry is of much value as a mental exercise, but it is also good for its utility in the way in which it is woven into every branch of our art. Its importance to the medical jurist and to the sanitarian is too obvious to need pointing out; but it is quite as necessary for the proper study of disease by the bedside.

I do not intend to pursue further commentary upon each of the subjects which you have to work at. The curriculum is crowded with subjects, none of which can be neglected by one who is fitting himself for the profes-

sion of medicine. I have singled out those which form the first year's winter course, partly because they are matters which underlie all your future work, but chiefly because I firmly believe that, if the habit of steady attention to study is formed in the first year, it will hold throughout. There is no need, then, for me to dwell in detail upon the other branches of systematic teaching; they will come to each of you in due course, and I hope you will pay attention to each and all of them. As students, it does not do to imagine that one subject is of more importance than another; but try and study all with equal zeal. To do this is perhaps the most difficult discipline you have to undergo. Some subjects are naturally more attractive than others, and the attraction varies in degree according to the bent of the individual. A student may thus, if he be not watchful, find himself drawn more to one subject to the exclusion of others, and to his own detriment. Do not allow yourselves to be thus prematurely launched into specialism. The time will come when you may be able to follow your bent on this score. But at present it is well to remember that you have to learn as much of the whole science and art of medicine as you can; and if you suffer yourselves to be carried away in one direction only you will not have fulfilled the whole purpose of your education, which is to make you fitted to be medical and surgical practitioners.

There are still a few more hints to give concerning the manner in which your work may be facilitated. You have the advantage of being able to work in concert, and it is often of great value to share your studies with another, in some subjects, if not in all. It is astonishing how much assistance two who work together mutually derive from this plan. Facts, which may be overlooked by one, are plain to the other, and the constant practice of mutual cross-examination and correction is very useful. Not only are two heads better than one in determining on a course of action in a moment of doubt, but each of the two heads is rendered the fitter to meet emergencies by the stimulus

it receives from the other. Of course, there are some who labour best alone; these are the recluses of study—the lineal successors of the learned monks of the middle ages. They are, I believe, exceptions, and I do not think they are generally to be imitated.

Then I have hinted at the benefit derived by attendance upon class examinations. But the good they do is as nothing compared to the daily questionings of the tutorial kind which will be put to you on various subjects. Make a point of being present whenever these oral classes are held, and, taking care to think before you speak, answer freely and if possible readily. Be not ashamed if you fail to answer correctly, or if ignorance compels you to silence, or, above all, if you are made to feel that the matter is one which you ought to have known. Persevere in spite of failure, and you are sure to succeed in the end. There is no training like this. For besides sharpening the wits, it makes us learn far more by being made to feel our ignorance than if we rested secure in our own conceit. There are few things more pitiable than the assumption of self-confidence and knowledge without a right to possess them. Such confidence is often rudely shaken by a rejection at the examination board, and we repent, too late, that we have not availed ourselves of this salutary and sure way of increasing knowledge by learning our weak points. Nor be weary of repetition. The repetition of even simple facts is often necessary before the mind can thoroughly seize them, and you can never learn the extent of your powers unless they have been fully and frequently put to the test.

I pass now to speak of that which is the chiefest of all your studies, that which will engage most of your attention; for it depends upon the way in which you pursue it how you will be fitted afterwards for the profession to which you will belong. I mean your work in the hospital.

The idea—whenever and wherever it originated—of utilizing these admirable charities for the purpose of training in medical knowledge, was a worthy and great one.

By being so utilized, they render to the outside world a hundred-fold that which their charity has bestowed. In fulfilling its primary object—that of giving succour and relief to the suffering poor—a hospital fulfils a no less sacred duty in affording the means of medical instruction. Would that the full significance of this were more widely appreciated! If it were always viewed thus, in its true light, the long list of appeals for support to such institutions, which daily meet our eyes, would no longer require to be issued. For it is true even of this country, where so great a stream of private munificence flows in the bed of charity, that, as compared with the number of those who support the hospitals, there is a vast majority who almost ignore their existence. Like the Levite, they pass by on the other side—for sympathy is foreign to their nature. Self-interest, however, is, and always must be, a foremost factor in determining human action; and could it be sufficiently impressed on the world at large that, by increasing the utility of hospitals and their resources, they would really be affording means for advancing the knowledge of those whose business it is to treat disease, they, who would not be stirred by motives of charity, would open their purse-strings for self-interested benevolence.

The Middlesex Hospital,* almost from its foundation, has aimed at fulfilling this double object, and you will be called upon now to avail yourselves of the facilities it affords in gaining a knowledge of disease. The work to be done there is of the most varied kind. There is no lack of it; but it is amply sufficient to keep you every day fully employed. You learn here in many ways. In the first place, by observing others, as in the operating theatre or in the examination of patients in the wards or out-patient rooms. Then you learn how to observe for yourselves the facts of injury and disease. And you further train yourselves to think out the problems a case presents, and balance the weight of evidence for or against the views broached as to its nature; and you train the

* See *Note*, p. 26.

judgment to estimate the probable progress and issue of the case; and, finally, you learn the principles which govern treatment.

Preliminary to this is the acquirement of dexterity, to some a far easier matter than to others. For the surgeon is chief of handicraftsmen; his work is of such a nature that all depends upon its being done with exquisite skill. Therefore seize every opportunity you can to learn this foundation of his art. You cannot begin too soon. A short time devoted every day to attendance in the surgical casualty and out-patient rooms, is here of great importance. Learn, by constant practice, the numberless details of manipulation that are essential in your work. Slowly and imperceptibly you will be teaching hand and eye that which they will never lose. But be patient in your practice, and do not think that matters such as these are not to be well learnt because of their simplicity. These are the things in which the apprentice of old acquired skill: and you have to do what he did too, in a very short time, compared to the long years of drudgery which he had to devote to it. Many of the more obvious cases of disease, such as are met with in the surgical out-patient room, require little else than the educated eye and the educated hand for their diagnosis. Then, later—and I am speaking now chiefly to those who have passed through anatomical and physiological courses—you will have to enter on the examination of more complex problems. I would urge you especially to study carefully and repeatedly the physical signs of disease. Eye, hand, and ear, are all pressed into service now. Learn how to deduce the information they convey, and how they are to be related to the subjective symptoms the patient presents. You will find out now the true significance of the facts you have so laboriously gathered in the previous sessions. You will see how important it is, not only to have learnt, but to have remembered, the facts of anatomy and physiology. The niceties of diagnosis, so difficult sometimes, you will gradually come to appreciate, and you will learn

how far it is possible to restore to healthy action by means of remedies.

In the pursuit of this you must diligently dwell in the wards. Do not think that if you are about to hold, or have held, the offices of clinical clerk and dresser, that *there* your duty in attendance in the wards ends. Omit not to go round with the physician or surgeon, and in the intervals of his visit devote yourself to personally following up the cases to which he has directed your attention. One word of warning is here necessary. By no means aim at seeing *all* that is to be seen in the hospital, nor, on the other hand, limit your view only to the so-called "interesting" cases. Every case is of interest to you, and more is to be learnt that will hereafter be of value, from those which are of the more ordinary kind. So, restricting your observations to a few cases at a time, pursue them to the end. Thus learn to *observe.*

Learn also to *record.* The habit of note-taking, acquired already in your attendance on lectures, enforced on you when holding clinical appointments, you must persistently cultivate on your own account. To be sure, it involves a little trouble! It is not required by the examining boards. I would it were! But is *that* all you are here for? You are here to lay the foundations of that which will prove whether you are to be successful, nay useful members of your profession. The time may come when you would give worlds to remember even one tithe of that which you have observed in the hospital. And for this will you depend on unaided memory alone? By all means cultivate memory, but do not despise every aid that you can give to it. A few notes, the briefer the better, jotted down in short-hand (I do not necessarily mean a scientific stenography, but a short-hand of one's own) every day upon cases he has personally investigated, dealing with points he has personally verified, are simply invaluable to a man in after life. Nor is this of use solely as recording the impressions of the time, but it induces a habit of note-taking which may ultimately prove of great

service to the profession. What a mine of medical facts is daily accumulating in this country, which yields no produce, for it fails of record! Who can estimate how much we have lost from the fact that generations of men, gifted with powers of acute and shrewd observation, have passed away without leaving one record behind them? Think not that it is the hospital physician or surgeon alone who can advance the progress of medicine. There is not a practitioner in the profession who could not add to this great work. But he can only add to it with efficiency, if he has faithfully recorded his observations, and does not trust to the general and vague impressions of unassisted memory. Therefore, on all grounds, personal to yourselves and general for medical science, so engrain this habit within you that it becomes a second nature.

The hospital affords also ample opportunities for the study of those special branches of medicine and surgery which must be cultivated by you. It may not be possible for you to study them to the full, but you will be enabled so to arrange your time as to attend each of these departments in addition to the ward work. Follow them up and glean all you can from them, for they will form a very large part of your practical work in the future.

I must still mention another province of which advantage should be taken during your pupilage here. The study of the symptoms of disease must be supplemented by the study of its effects,—so never miss the opportunity of being present at the examination after death of those whom you have observed during life. Therefore frequent the dead-house as diligently as you do the wards, and learn thus to recognise the characters impressed by the workings of disease upon the body.

In speaking thus generally and necessarily imperfectly on the nature of the work afforded you in the hospital, I must leave you to systematise it for yourselves; but I would have you bear it always in mind that the opportunities before you now of acquiring a knowledge of disease are such as cannot recur to you again. So im-

pressed am I with this, that whilst enforcing you to read up your subjects every night, were it possible, I would have you not open a book from the hour you enter the hospital in the morning to the hour you leave it in the evening. Your reading is as nothing compared with the knowledge you derive from observation. The hospital should be your book; study that, and you will be full of knowledge—knowledge which will not only avail you at examinations, but will not fail you in moments of doubt in your after career.

I come now to the question of Examinations and Examining boards, to you all a most important subject. You and we are governed by them. We cannot, if we would, shake off their influence; for it is by them that our curriculum is moulded. The most complete of all the curricula is undoubtedly that laid down by the University of London. It aims at ensuring that its graduates shall have had a thorough scientific education. Of late, many hard things have been said about this University. It is charged above all with undue severity, and the comparatively large number of rejections that take place annually at its examinations is held to be witness of this. Then it is said that the examinations are unpractical, that the questions set are too theoretical and too recondite, and that those who do pass the examinations do so only at the expense of knowledge which would be more useful to them in after life. I cannot but think that those who make these charges unconsciously exaggerate the difficulties of these examinations, and at the same time fall into a great error in thinking that practical medicine is distinct from science. Can any mental training be more suitable for one who wishes to observe disease carefully and treat it rationally than that which a study of the sciences affords? What other branch of learning will develop his powers of observation, temper his judgment, and increase his faculty of correct inference than that? There should be no divorce between the practical and the scientific in medicine. Mere manipulative skill, it is true, may not be gained from

science. But this should be acquired by all, and can only be acquired by diligent exercise. Questions, however, constantly arise in the treatment and in the prevention of disease, which a scientific training can alone satisfactorily meet; and he surely is the most practical in these matters who can deal with them on the principles and laws of science. Then as to the examinations of the University of London, I believe that we are prone, too prone, to overrate their severity. Given time, and steady work, I do not think that any earnest student need be frightened at their prospect. And as to the character of the examinations, high as their standard may be, they can hardly be attacked on the score of being unpractical. I believe I am right in saying that there are no examinations in this country which are more practical in their character. In both the examinations for the Degree of Bachelor of Medicine and in that of Doctor of Medicine, as well as in those for surgical degrees, there are subjects in which the candidate has to show that he has practical knowledge. But time is all that is wanted, and entering now as many do at so early an age that to get the diploma of the College of Surgeons they have to wait upwards of four or even five years, there is time enough at their disposal. Many, I believe, would enter for the University if they knew of it early enough; for although it has been established for more than forty years, it is surprising to find how little is commonly known about its regulations. A student at the end of his first or second year becomes aware of the University's existence, and feels that he would have competed for its degrees if only he had known of it before. The Matriculation Examination should have been passed on leaving school, and then after that comes the Preliminary Scientific Examination in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology to get through before the actual medical curriculum is entered on. This last, indeed, is the great stumbling-block. There is too much impatience to enter on the study of medicine; the attractions of anatomy are too enticing, and the student is allured away to

them. I would strongly advise those of you who may contemplate taking London degrees to pause before taking up the ordinary medical curriculum. It will avail you nothing, but so hamper your course that you will run a great chance of failing in your object. Both the examinations I have mentioned must be passed before such an one becomes a medical student. It behoves those of you, then, who can afford the time to determine now whether you will enter the University of London or not. If you decide in the negative, do not afterwards reproach yourselves with lost opportunities, nor join the revilers of the University in saying that she closes her doors against the majority and admits only a favoured few within her portals.

Time, however, *is* an object with many of you, and one or more of the three remaining metropolitan licensing boards may be preferred. I limit myself to the metropolitan bodies advisedly, for it savours somewhat of want of patriotism in us Englishmen to go seeking our diplomas north of the Tweed or across St. George's Channel; and I fear also that if I attempted to say anything about the Scotch and Irish examining bodies, I should find myself talking about matters of which I am wholly ignorant. The time is, we may hope, at length coming when the scandal of competition for candidates shall be done away. I fail to see the force of arguments, such as those recently advanced by Professor McKendrick at Glasgow, and urged constantly by those who represent the Scotch and Irish bodies, that there is a wholesome thing in having separate doors for entrance into the profession. It will be a great boon to students and to teachers alike when this anomaly shall be swept away, to say nothing of its certain good in improving the status of the profession. To begin with the College of Physicians. I do not think that the diploma of this venerable institution is sufficiently valued by students. For some reason or other it is only a minority that seek its licence. Next to the University of London it is the most neglected of any of the examining boards. I have heard that one reason for this is that its diploma

carries less weight with it than that of the Society of Apothecaries—less weight, I mean, among the vestry boards and committees in whose gift lies the dispensation of parochial and dispensary offices. If this were enquired into I doubt if it would prove to be the case, and if it be the case, then, the sooner it is remedied the better. Another reason may be that it holds its examinations less frequently than the other body. Then, perhaps, a third reason is that its examinations are a trifle more difficult. But in all seriousness I would ask is this last a reason which should weigh for one moment in your minds, even if it have a basis in fact. If you work as you should work with diligence, its examinations need not be feared by you. The chief drawback I conceive, and it is common to the Hall too, is the too late deferring of examination in the primary professional subjects? It would be a great advantage if both the Apothecaries' Hall and the College of Physicians would so frame their regulations as to admit a student for examination in chemistry, botany, and materia medica at the close of his first year, on the understanding that he would not enter for the Pass Examination until he had passed an examination in anatomy and physiology, as he would have to do at the College of Surgeons six months later. It would be dealing more fairly with the student, for what happens now is this:—By the time the second summer session is reached, and the "First College" is passed, he is compelled to devote hours to refreshing his memory in subjects, lectures upon which he attended in his first year. This is the real reason why such subjects as chemistry, botany, and materia medica are so often but lightly regarded by the first year's student. Until the time comes when the strictly medical curriculum shall, as Professor Huxley and others suggest, be lightened of these matters by their relegation to a compulsory preliminary study, I fear that in too many cases there will be less attention paid to them than there should be. The worst of it is that the time spent in subsequently reading or cramming them up is robbed from the already brief

enough period devoted to gaining useful practical knowledge in the wards. Whatever the conjoint scheme may do, let us hope that it will rectify such matters as this. Of the College of Surgeons I need only say this. It is the diploma which you all will seek. Its examinations are justly considered to be of good quality. Its authorities show a laudable desire to increase their efficiency as tests of sound practical knowledge. Time was when to favour the crotchets of an examiner, and to be well posted in his pet doctrines, was the surest road to success. But time has changed all this for the better, and a curious and instructive history might be written upon the changes at the College of Surgeons, not only in this respect but in the actual conduct of the examinations even within living memory. We need not a Smollett to tell us of the foibles and temper of the examiners at the College of Surgeons upwards of a century back. There are practitioners living *now* whose account of their reception in the examination room differs very little from that of Roderick Random. If you work well at the practical parts of your study, if you eschew the practice of "cram," and keep clear of "grinders," the examinations of the College of Surgeons need afford no cause for anxiety. This year a new experiment is to be tried in this body in the primary examination —I mean the separation of physiology from anatomy. Judiciously worked this should prove a gain to you. For whilst serving to remind you that physiology is not to be neglected, it should give you all a better opportunity of showing what knowledge you have of the subject than on the system that has hitherto prevailed.

As to preparation for examinations I would have you, so far as you can, to get rid of the idea that any special training is requisite for them other than the diligent pursuit of your studies throughout your whole course. Still there are one or two things which it is well to bear in mind as being of great assistance to you in revising your labours shortly before going up. Most useful to this end is the practice of drawing up for yourselves on a concise

plan tables of some of the more important facts, which otherwise are so hard to remember. Facts as to classification, as to figures and the like—which are scattered through books—may thus be usefully culled into a small and convenient compass ready for frequent reference. I would far rather that you should do this for yourselves than trust to the ready made compendia which abound, and are looked upon as safe guides to any subject upon which you are examined. Still this is a matter of taste, and I will only say that my chief objection to such ingenious essences of medical science is the risk lest you should rely on them and *on them alone* for your knowledge. Upon the importance of practice in writing answers to questions I have already spoken. As the day of examination draws near, do not fail to avail yourselves of the additional opportunities afforded you in this practice by the tutor. I believe if the secrets of the examination room could be revealed, we should find an explanation of the failure of some of the supposed best-prepared candidates to lie in the fact that they were ignorant of the rules of composition, and totally unable to put on paper in a sufficiently lucid manner the knowledge that they really possess. Lastly, make a point of being ready for the examinations as soon as these come round. It is on many grounds most desirable to pass them early, for it must be confessed that the constant thought of the impending test is apt to unhinge the mind for following out its work steadily.

Then, when these trials are over, and you are freed from the trammels they impose, do not, unless you be urged by necessity, too soon seek to throw off the student-life. If it be possible, continue for a year or more in diligent work, either in your own hospital or in others at home or abroad; and now, if you like, devote yourself solely to attendance upon special branches of practice, such as diseases of the eye, ear, and throat, or gynæcology, mental diseases, or sanitary science,—subjects which the limitation of the ordinary curriculum has allowed you

but little time to deeply study. Now, too, is the time when a resident office at a hospital is of the most value (and there is no more important work in the whole of your education), for you can now devote to it all your energy, hampered no longer by the exacting demands of a prospective examination. Then, having in some such way completed your education, you will be, in the strictest sense, qualified for the cares and responsibilities that await you in practice.

To close this brief review of the nature of your work, I should, I suppose, be required to say something about recreation. On this matter a very few words from me will suffice. I would urge, in the first place, the importance of recreation to those engaged, as you will be, in sheer hard work; but it must be of the right and healthy sort; and it is one of the disadvantages of town-life that such is here but scantily afforded. However, you have your cricket and foot-ball clubs, and no one would gainsay you the pleasure of occasionally taking such legitimate and healthy exercise as they afford. Then, the facilities of modern travel place you within easy reach of some of the pleasantest country spots in England, where you may have fresh air and healthful exercise. Indeed, if you have steadily worked the week through in the dissecting-room or the wards, it is absolutely necessary that you should have some such change as this. Only you must regulate your recreation as you would your work, and pursue it as a duty you owe to yourself. It is also wise counsel that which, for the same object, would urge you to divert your mind every day, for a short time, from the too engrossing subjects you deal with here. In this matter follow your bent in taking up some pursuit in harmony with your life, which, in later years, may be recurred to by you when professional obligations are temporarily or finally laid aside. Medicine is an exacting mistress, but she does not demand all our thoughts and all our time. We shall serve her better indeed, if now and again we leave her for a while and engage ourselves in other pursuits. All this has

in view the preservation of health—health of mind as well as of body—and in aiming at this you must each of you choose for yourself what best accords with your taste—I presume an enlightened taste—and it would be impertinent of me to venture to dictate to you any special lines.

There are two errors into which, as students, we are prone to fall, which, on account of their extreme prevalence, it is incumbent upon me to warn you against, simple as they seem to be. They are common to students in all subjects, and, strange to say, to the student in medicine quite as much as in any other department. First of these is diet. Truly the way some men work would make one think that study was incompatible with good digestion, or that mental labour is best done when the body is half starved. Do not think that due attention to this is a matter of no moment, that the time, quality, and quantity of food do not require as much regulation as your daily labour. It is a matter of prime importance. A hastily-swallowed meal, followed by a hurried walk or run for a mile or two, is decidedly bad training for listening to the early morning lecture, say on the physiology of digestion or, perhaps, the causes of dyspepsia. A little resolution in rising half an hour earlier would have aided the first process with yourself and would have prevented the other. So also, at midday, take a sufficiency of food to supply fuel to the brain during its afternoon's work, and to complete the day's dietary, do not commence reading until a full hour or even more has elapsed after your dinner. I repeat that these matters, which sound so trivial, are really of chief importance; they are often the turning-point in success in study, and I should not have ventured to have spoken of them did I not know how commonly "common sense" fails to assert herself when we are students. The other error, against which I must enter a protest, is that of late working at night. It is unnecessary as a rule, save perhaps just before an examination, and then, I fancy, we are too apt to think too much of its supposed value. Two hours, or at the outside three, should suffice you in the evening

to go thoroughly over your day's notes, to complete them, and to read your books. It is a good practice also, at the close of a week, to review what you have done during that time. But more time than this—the traditional "midnight oil"—is a delusion. You lose by it far more than you gain, for, although habit may accustom you to less sleep, you thereby strain the brain more than should rationally be done.

The ideal plan of study is steady persistence as opposed to spasmodic and vigorous efforts. It is the old story, that small, constantly repeated labour effects more in the long run than one great exhausting feat. Therefore cultivate this habit of steadiness, thoroughness, and persistence in all your work, and so apportion your time every day, that this end may be attained. Some there are who are able by giant strides to complete the amount of work necessary within a comparatively short time, and such may seem to lead with little effort and trouble. But do not think that such are to be envied. He who travels thus up the steep hill of knowledge may indeed reach the summit long before the steady plodders whom he has left far behind. But he has lost what they are gaining; he has passed by without a glance those details which, like flowers by the hill-side, lend a charm to the weary progress of the others, and his knowledge is at the end far less sound, far less deep and enduring than theirs.

When you leave the scene of your student days, and pass out to perform the duties of the life you have chosen, bear with you everywhere that earnest devotion to your work which is its own reward. With whatever success your studentship may have been crowned, do not let the evil thought possess you that you have accomplished all that is possible. The few brief years that studentship has comprised are but the entrance to a lifetime of labour, and having chosen your path in life, follow it to the end with unswerving devotion. We have, fortunately, before us constantly examples to follow in men who have thus nobly laboured all their life through. One, whose memory

will ever be cherished by us of the Middlesex Hospital, has ended his life a few months ago, working to the last. It is fitting that I should mention here the name of Charles Murchison; for although the last seven years of his life were spent in the service of another institution, we cannot, and we ought not, to forget that for twelve years he laboured within these walls, and that during that time he produced some of his most enduring works. Many a past student of the Middlesex Hospital will remember him for the knowledge he freely imparted to him; and hard by where we are assembled to-day are gathered some lasting mementoes of his labours amongst us.

In conclusion, it may be asked to what end is all this labour to which I have to-day invited you? It may not lead to much material prosperity. Ours is not the calling that mostly brings wealth with it. If such be your sole object there are other fields to work in, of larger promise. But, for the satisfaction which comes of personal devotion to duty, hard and exacting as that may be, for the knowledge that our aims are based upon the desire to mitigate suffering and to benefit the community, then this profession in which we are engaged has much in it that may be worth the pains expended on it. In spite of its drawbacks and difficulties—and they are neither few nor slight—I count it good fortune to be enabled to belong to this profession of medicine. I would have you cherish this thought all your lives, for be assured that life passed in this pursuit is well spent. Anxieties, doubts, disappointments you will have, but think not that they come to you in greater share than to other men; for if medicine brings with it great responsibilities and all that they entail, it brings also much that compensates for them to those who follow it with their whole heart.

Note.

The Middlesex Hospital was founded in the year 1745, by a small band of philanthropists, and a few years later its building was erected in the then marshy fields of "Marybone" suburb. I do not know the precise date of its being utilised for educational purposes; but there is the fact of the formation of a Students' Medical Society (which still exists and celebrated its centenary in 1874), at least 30 years after the foundation; showing that at that time students must have been attached to the hospital. The chief sources from which students came were the famous Windmill Street, and Blenheim Street Anatomical Schools, the former celebrated from its connection with the Hunters, Matthew Baillie, and subsequently Charles Bell, the last named being at the time of his connection with the School, on the staff of the Middlesex Hospital. In 1828, a new school of medicine came to supplant the Windmill Street institution. The old order was changing, and private anatomical schools became in time a thing of the past. The energy of Brougham, Hume, and Campbell founded the "University of London" (now University College), and two members of the Middlesex Hospital staff, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Charles Bell, and Dr. (now Sir) Thomas Watson, were appointed Professors in the University, the former opening its first medical session with an inaugural address. The immediate consequence was a large influx of students seeking clinical instruction in the wards of the hospital, but attempts to annex this to the University fell through, owing to the definite refusal of the hospital board, who deemed that such an union would injure the interests of the hospital. After a brief tenure of office, Bell resigned his Professorship of the University (1830), thoroughly dissatisfied with the management of its then council. In 1834, the North London or University College Hospital was established to provide clinical instruction for the students attending the medical faculty of the college, and as a consequence the numbers attending the wards of the Middlesex Hospital fell off considerably, and by a vigorous effort, warmly supported by the governors of the charity, the medical staff founded the present "Middlesex Hospital Medical School." Of those who signed the memorial to the weekly board urging the advisability of

of this step two survive,—Sir Thomas Watson and Mr. J. M. Arnott. The movement was mainly instigated by Sir Charles Bell, who writes June 29th, 1835:—"We have founded a school "in the garden of the Middlesex Hospital. The building will "be a complete little thing—theatre, museum, clinical class-"room, and dissecting room. . . . I promise to the extent "of sixty lectures. To the work I have no objection, but there "will be a great outlay also, although from the way in which it "is taken up by our governors, I believe subscriptions will cover "all expenses. The building will cost 2,400*l*." On the 22nd July, he writes:—"Would you believe that our school is already "roofed? It seems like magic." And again on the 7th October, in the same year, after having delivered the address at the opening of its first session he writes to his brother:—"I don't "think I have written to you since I began the lectures, esta-"blishing a school in the old Middlesex. At least, my spirit "and devotion to the art and to the institution to which I "am attached, will not be denied . . . . ." Only a few months after, and not without some misgivings at leaving the school he had just founded, and the hospital where he had spent twenty-three years of his life, Bell accepted the Professorship of Surgery at the University of Edinburgh, which he held until his death seven years afterwards. Although thus early deprived of the great and invaluable support of this master-mind, the school he founded has, thanks to the unwearying energy of its leading supporters, maintained and even enhanced its position. Such in brief is the history of the origin of our school and its connection with the hospital. (See Wilson's "Middlesex Hospital," 1845; "Letters of Sir Charles Bell," 1870; and "The Lancet," 1828 to 1836.)

S. C.

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