A great day for the doctors / [Charles Dickens].

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—not when there is a rough sea, but when all is solemn and calm.

After a time, I left the church; and not being inclined to return home, and finding that all the music from the public-houses, and all the eating, and the dancing, were very inharmonious to my then state of mind, I wandered on towards the plain, and feasted my eyes on a view of the Alps, which to-day seemed fairly to have stalked towards Munich, so near did they seem,—of a tender, quiet, blue-grey, but their forms gigantic, stern, Alpine!

A "CELESTIAL" COFFEE-HOUSE.

Another evening, after a day of real hard work, when we were in a particularly cheerful mood, I suggested to my companion that, as all was so sunny and delicious, we would drink our coffee in a picturesque old orchard, which I had discovered in one of my exploratory expeditions through the suburb of St. Anna. It is a pretty walk this, through the suburb to the coffee-house orchard, which joins the English garden. You cross first the corner of a very large field, acres and acres of which are covered with huge heaps of timber—enormous pines, which have been floated down from the Alps. The tall trees of the English garden form a back-ground to the field; and then passing orchards, and cottages, and country houses, you arrive at the coffee-house, a bright white house, with a deal of pale sea-green paint about it, standing high, approached by a flight of steps, and having a kind of a Russian look. The orchard in which it stands, is a grand old orchard, full of old apple-trees, under which are some hundreds of seats. On the former occasions when I passed it, there must have been many hundred people drinking coffee there. On this evening, however, all was deserted,—so much so, in fact, that there was no coffee to be had. After resting, therefore, a few minutes under an apple-tree, we proceeded on our way, when, turning into the English Garden, behold! another coffee-house, a very small one peeping out from under the trees. "Coffee and Wine-house of the Kingdom of Heaven" (*Zum Hifnmel-nich*) was painted on an arched sign over the gate. So extraordinary an appellation could not be disregarded, however contrary to our English notions.

"Let us try how coffee tastes in the Kingdom of Heaven," said I; and in we went.

The Kingdom of Heaven, however, was also apparently deserted, except by a pair of lovers, —a young girl in a white dress, and a student in a scarlet cap and black velvet coat, and by a picturesque group of old peasants, men and women, who sat on a bench before the door, and drank beer; the student also drank beer, —the girl took nothing; she sat with her back turned towards him, and evidently looked very unhappy. I think they had just had a quarrel; what a shame to quarrel in the Kingdom of Heaven! I went into the house, and ordered coffee from a woman whom I met with a huge coffee mill in her hand. She said it should be ready in a minute, capital fresh coffee! So we seated ourselves at the end of a long verandah, which was covered with vines, at the end opposite to where the lovers were, and noticed all around us, to occupy the time till the coffee appeared. Coffee at length made its appearance,—vile coffee and peppery bread; and leaving the lovers still unreconciled, we bade adieu to the "Kingdom of Heaven," and betook ourselves home in the delicious twilight.

A GREAT DAY FOR THE DOCTORS.

The first of October is a great day for the doctors. The sportsman may look out for the same time, because then pheasant shooting begins; the farmer, because it suggests certain arrangements between malt and hops preliminary to Christmas and the comforts of long winter nights; the lawyer may take October the first as a hint of the gradual death of the long vacation, and the near advent of Term time and November the second—its writs and summonses, judgments and executions; the draper may regard it shrewdly, as affording a good time for a "frightful sacrifice," and an "extensive sale of autumn goods, preparatory to the commencement of the winter season." Each and all of these, and many more may have an interest in the first of October; but their claims are as nothing to that of the doctors. To the medical folks of these three kingdoms —but to those of London more pre-eminently —does the day especially belong. To them, it is the opening of a new year—the commencement of a new activity. On that day the great majority of them commenced their career as students: from that they date the years of preliminary reading, and lecturing, and hospital "walking," to be gone through before the terrible day of examination. Scattered over the globe they may be—and they are so scattered, much more than the men of other professions, the Navy alone excepted—yet the first of October always remains a sort of red-letter day in the mind of the Medicos.

It is a time suggestive of old thoughts and companions, old pranks, and old stories. Such feelings bring most of those who are within reach to the old scenes on the first of October; and hence, on that day, there is at the London medical schools an assemblage of doctors in all stages of growth—from the raw country student in green coat and highlows, to the staid hospital professor in black scholastic gown, through all the intermediate niceties of fast students and slow students, reading students with specs and note-books, and smoking-students with cigar-cases and imperials; the matter-of-fact workeys of the Borough, and the gentlemanly idlers of St. George's; the country doctor up for the day by rail; the suburban practitioner, who with

many misgivings has left his surgery at Islington or Hackney, in charge of the new apprentice; the West End ditto who drives up to the lecture-room in his trim gig, secure in the certainty that nobody will want him, because "nobody's in town yet;" and the easy dignified possessor of the prizes of medical life, a handsome equipage, and four or five thousands a year, the proceeds of aristocratic practice. All these varieties of the medical genus are drawn together by the subtle influence of this medical day. Not all into one party or one building, because the medical schools of the Metropolis are about a dozen in number; and each school has its set. But still they do congregate, as those who are curious about the matter may prove on any first of October, on any year hereafter.

The introductory lectures are the great signal for assembling; and of these there were delivered on the first of October just past, no less than a dozen. The discourses vary in character, of course; partly under the influence of the locality where delivered; partly in obedience to the calibre of the lecturer; and partly by the circumstances of the institution in which they are given in. Each large London hospital has its medical school; but the hospitals are very differently circumstanced in other respects. Two of them, Guy's and Bartholomew's, are enormously rich, having revenues told in tens of thousands a year arising from landed and other property, and they are therefore entirely independent of public subscriptions. Not many years ago, Guy's Hospital, very wealthy before, received, in one legacy left by a Mr. Hunt, two hundred thousand pounds! Bartholomew's enjoys the rents of houses in important City streets yearly rising in value. St. Thomas's Hospital has likewise extensive property; Middlesex Hospital enjoys endowments, particularly one of considerable extent, for the support of a ward for the reception and maintenance of unfortunate people afflicted with cancer. University College has recently been blessed by many handsome legacies; and St. George's, and Westminster, and the London, have incomes arising from independent property. The rents of the last three, however, are not to be compared with those of the huge institutions of the Borough and Smithfield; and they are compelled, therefore, to rely partly upon the means of support which their still less fortunate compeers at Charing Cross, the Gray's Inn Road, and King's College, have almost wholly to rely upon—the voluntary subscriptions of the charitable section of the public. The first of October in some respects varies in its aspects at these different places. At Bartholomew's, for instance, the audience numbers five or six hundred, or even more; because, after the lecture, the noble hall of that establishment is thrown open for a *soirée*, in which brilliant lights, abundant refreshments, servants, and a full assembly of medical dons, add many of the attractions of an evening party to those of a friendly scientific conclave, whilst poorer institutions can only offer the less sensual attractions of a discourse on science, and a friendly greeting.

The mental calibre of the various lecturers differs amazingly. Some of them have no higher notion for an "introductory" than a history of medicine, dug up bodily from an ancient edition of "Rees's Cyclopædia." When a teacher of this sort begins his harangue, the older hands among his audience look suspicious and uneasy. They know what is coming—the old threadbare story they have often slept over before about "Hippocrates, the father of Medicine,"—"the errors of the early writers,"—"the immortal labours of Vesalius,"—with a grand climax about the equally immortal John Hunter, and the blessing the students experience in being allowed to follow in the footsteps of that physiological genius. Another almost equally set form for an opening discourse, is when the lecturer thinks it "best to open the dawning session with a rapid glance over what has been done for science since we last met,"—appending a variety of incidental remarks upon men and hospitals at home and abroad; said remarks being invariably laudatory both of doctors in general and of medical institutions in particular. This style is deservedly more popular than the chapter from the Cyclopædia. A third species of discourse takes the sermonising form, and lectures "the young gentlemen we see assembled around us" upon the conduct most proper to be pursued during their career as students—prescribes a close attention to books and lectures, and undeviating attention "at the bedside" in the hospital.

The class of lecturers who adopt this mode are always favourably received if the good advice is supported by the career of the man who gives it, and if he speaks with sincerity and cleverness; but is pooh-poohed, very sincerely, if the speaker is a dummy, or his practice is known not to be in accordance with his precept. The most popular medical speechification of all, however, is that—not very often to be heard—of the eminently successful man who comes from the intensely busy life of full practice, fairly and honourably won, to speak of the opening career of the students whom the first of October calls together. Allowing the occasion to carry his thoughts back to the day when he himself was a young seeker for medical knowledge, such a teacher, feeling young again, lets his feelings out; and, in the confession of his own old thoughts, struggles and final successes, foreshadows what may be the life of any one of the hundreds who listen. The first sanguine anticipations; the growing difficulties; the disappointments; the crushing influence of the day when he is first driven to believe that finesse and quackery are constantly reaping the rewards that his sense of right suggests should be the prize of worth, honesty, and science. The struggle with igno-

rance—often with poverty and hope deferred—and then the final gradual triumph of patient desert, and its reward, in distinction, wealth, and the daily opportunities of lessening human pain and saving valuable lives. This happy climax charms all hearers. Each young listener makes the case his own, and, as his high-lows trample down the staircase when the lecture is over, he is thinking of the day when he is to step out of the hall of a sick duchess into a yellow chariot, to be driven round to a host of equally distinguished patients.

At times, but not so often as they might be, these opening medical addresses are enlivened by anecdotic morsels of human experience. One London lecturer who so enlivened his instructions, used to gain the hearts of his young hearers wholesale, especially when he encouraged them by telling how he, now the great hospital light, made blunders to begin with. One day he was describing his first attendance on a grand operation, at which a senior surgeon seeing him stand by, said, "Mr. —— see if you can feel the artery." "I put my digit into the wound," confessed the future great operator, "and so probed it, but the examination gave me about as much information as if I had put my finger into the Atlantic to discover America."

But this great day for the doctors in all places at the present time presents a great contrast to things as they were, even in the memory of those who are now active and busy at such meetings; and as the change illustrates the age we live in, it may well be noticed.

Every living being—every man, woman, and child—endures a certain ascertained amount of sickness during life, for the alleviation of which, medical knowledge and skill is required. But medical efficiency in the treatment of disease cannot be gained unless the young doctor bases all his subsequent studies upon a thorough knowledge of the structure of the human body. This information can only be had by the use of the scalpel upon the dead. The very notion is apt to send a thrill through every nerve of those unaccustomed to regard the subject in a philosophical light. But the terms are absolute: no dissection—no knowledge. For generations, such means of information were forbidden to the student; and being denied by law, and abhorrent to popular feeling, the unlucky doctors had to run all sorts of risks, and to resort to all kinds of improper and disagreeable expedients to procure the means of teaching the art of the anatomist. Hence sprung up a race of "resurrection men," as they were called,—men who stole the bodies of the dead, to sell them to anatomical schools for dissection. Their robberies of the grave were carried on at great risks. The public detestation of the crime was so great, that when a clumsy or unlucky follower of it was detected, he had to fight for his life, or submit to be kicked and beaten, and trampled to death.

But the first of October is no longer preceded by the forays of the "resurrectionist;" no longer clouded by the lack of means for pursuing the branch of study on which the superstructure of medical knowledge must be raised. A population of two millions has ever some members dropping from the ranks solitary and unknown—the waifs and strays of society—without friends to know or to mourn their fate. Almost always paupers, often criminals, though their lives may have been useless, or worse, they seem to make, when the fitful struggle is over, some atonement after death. The wreck of their former selves is offered at the shrine of science for a while, and when thereafter they are gathered to the kindred dust of the graveyard, they may sleep none the less calmly for having contributed no mean help to the advancement of that branch of human knowledge which has its annual ovation on the first of October—the great day for the doctors.

THE GHOST THAT APPEARED TO MRS. WHARTON.

When my mother was a girl, some rumours began to steal through the town where she lived, about something having gone amiss with old Mrs. Wharton: for, if Mrs. Wharton was not known by all the townspeople, she was known and respected by so many, that it was really no trifle when she was seen to have the contracted brow, and the pinched look about the nose that people have when they are in alarm, or living a life of deep anxiety. Nobody could make out what was the matter. If asked, she said she was well. Her sons were understood to be perfectly respectable, and sufficiently prosperous; and there could be no doubt about the health, and the dutifulness, and the cheerfulness, of the unmarried daughter who lived with her. The old lady lived in a house which was her own property; and her income, though not large, was enough for comfort. What could it be that made her suddenly so silent and grave? Her daughter was just the same as ever, except that she was anxious about the change in her mother. It was observed by one or two that the clergyman had nothing to say, when the subject was spoken of in his hearing. He rolled and nodded his head, and he glanced at the ceiling, and then stuck his chin deep into his shirt-frill: but those were things that he was always doing, and they might mean nothing. When inquired of about his opinion of Mrs. Wharton's looks and spirits, he shifted his weight from one foot to the other, as he stood before the fire with his hands behind him, and said, with the sweet voice and winning manner that charmed young and old, that, as far as he knew, Mrs. Wharton's external affairs were all right; and, as for peace of mind, he knew of no one who more deserved

it. If the course of her life, and the temper of her mind did not entitle her to peace within, he did not know who could hope for it. Somebody whispered that it would be dreadful if a shocking mortal disease should be seizing upon her: whereupon he, Mr. Gurney, observed that he thought he should have known if any such thing was to be apprehended. As far as a fit of indigestion went, he believed she suffered occasionally; but she did not herself admit even that. Dr. Robinson, who was present, said that Mrs. Wharton's friends might be quite easy about her health. She was not troubled with indigestion, nor with any other complaint. People could only go on to ask one another what could be the matter. One or two agreed that Mr. Gurney had made very skilful answers, in which he was much assisted by his curious customary gestures; but that he had never said that he did not know of any trouble being on Mrs. Wharton's mind.

Soon after this, a like mysterious change appeared to come over the daughter; but no disasters could be discovered to have happened. No disease, no money losses, no family anxieties were heard of; and, by degrees, both the ladies recovered nearly their former cheerfulness and ease of manner,—nearly, but not altogether. They appeared somewhat subdued, in countenance and bearing; and they kept a solemn silence when some subjects were talked of, which often turn up by the Christmas fireside. It was years before the matter was explained. My mother was married by that time, and removed from her smoky native town, to a much brighter city in the south. She used to tell us, as we grew up, the story of Mrs. Wharton, and what she endured; and we could, if we had not been ashamed, have gone on to say, as if we had still been little children, "tell us again." When we were going into the north to visit our grandparents, it was all very well to tell us of coal-waggons that we should see running without horses, or iron rails laid down in the roads; and of the keelmen rowing their keel-boats in the river, and all at once kicking up their right legs behind them, when they gave the long pull; and of the glass-houses in the town, with fire coming out of the top of the high chimneys; and of the ever-burning mounds near the mouths of the coal-pits, where blue and yellow flames leaped about, all night, through the whole year round. It was all very well to think of seeing these things; but we thought much more of walking past old Mrs. Wharton house, and perhaps inducing Mr. Gurney to tell us, in his way, the story we had so often heard my mother tell in hers.

The story was this.

One Midsummer morning Mrs. Wharton was so absent at breakfast, that her daughter found all attempts at conversation to be in vain. So she quietly filled the coffee-pot, which her mother had forgotten to do, and in the middle of the forenoon ordered dinner, which she found her mother had also forgotten. They had just such a breakfasting three times more during the next fortnight. Then, on Miss Wharton crossing the hall, she met her mother in bonnet and shawl, about to go out, so early as half-past nine. The circumstance would not have been remarked, but for the mother's confused and abashed way of accounting for going out. She should not be gone long. She had only a little call to make, and so on. The call was on Mr. Gurney. He had hardly done breakfast, when he was told that Mrs. Wharton wished to speak with him alone.

When he entered the study, Mrs. Wharton seemed to be as unready with her words as himself; and when he shook hands with her, he observed that her hand was cold. She said she was well, however. Then came a pause during which the good pastor was shifting from one foot to the other, on the hearth-rug, with his hands behind him, though there was nothing in the grate but shavings. Mrs. Wharton, meantime, was putting her veil up and down, and her gloves on and off. At last, with a constrained and painful smile, she said that she was really ashamed to say what she came to say, but she must say it; and she believed and hoped that Mr. Gurney had known her long enough to be aware that she was not subject to foolish fancies and absurd fears.

"No one further from it," he dropped, and now he fixed his eyes on her face. Her eyes fell under his, when she went on.

"For some time past, I have suffered from a most frightful visitation in the night."

"Visitation! What sort of visitation?"

She turned visibly cold while she answered "It was last Wednesday fortnight that I awoke in the middle of the night—that is between two and three in the morning, when it was getting quite light, and I saw—"

She choked a little, and stopped.

"Well!" said Mr. Gurney, "What did you see?"

"I saw at the bottom of the bed, a most hideous—a most detestable face—gibbering, and making mouths at me."

"A face!"

"Yes; I could see only the face (except, indeed, a hand upon the bedpost), because it peeped round the bedpost from behind the curtain. The curtains are drawn down to the foot of the bed."

She stole a look at Mr. Gurney. He was rolling his head; and there was a working about his mouth before he asked—

"What time did you sup that night?"

"Now," she replied, "you are not going to say, I hope, that it was nightmare. Most people would; but I hoped that you knew me better than to suppose that I eat such suppers as would occasion nightmare, or that I should not know nightmare from reality."