

The emoluments of the medical profession and the means of attaining them : an introductory address delivered at Sydenham College, Birmingham, October 1st, 1856, on occasion of the opening of the winter session / by George Elkington.

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THE EMOLUMENTS OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION, AND THE MEANS OF
ATTAINING THEM.

AN
INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT

Sydenham College, Birmingham,

OCTOBER 1st, 1856,

ON OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE WINTER SESSION,

BY

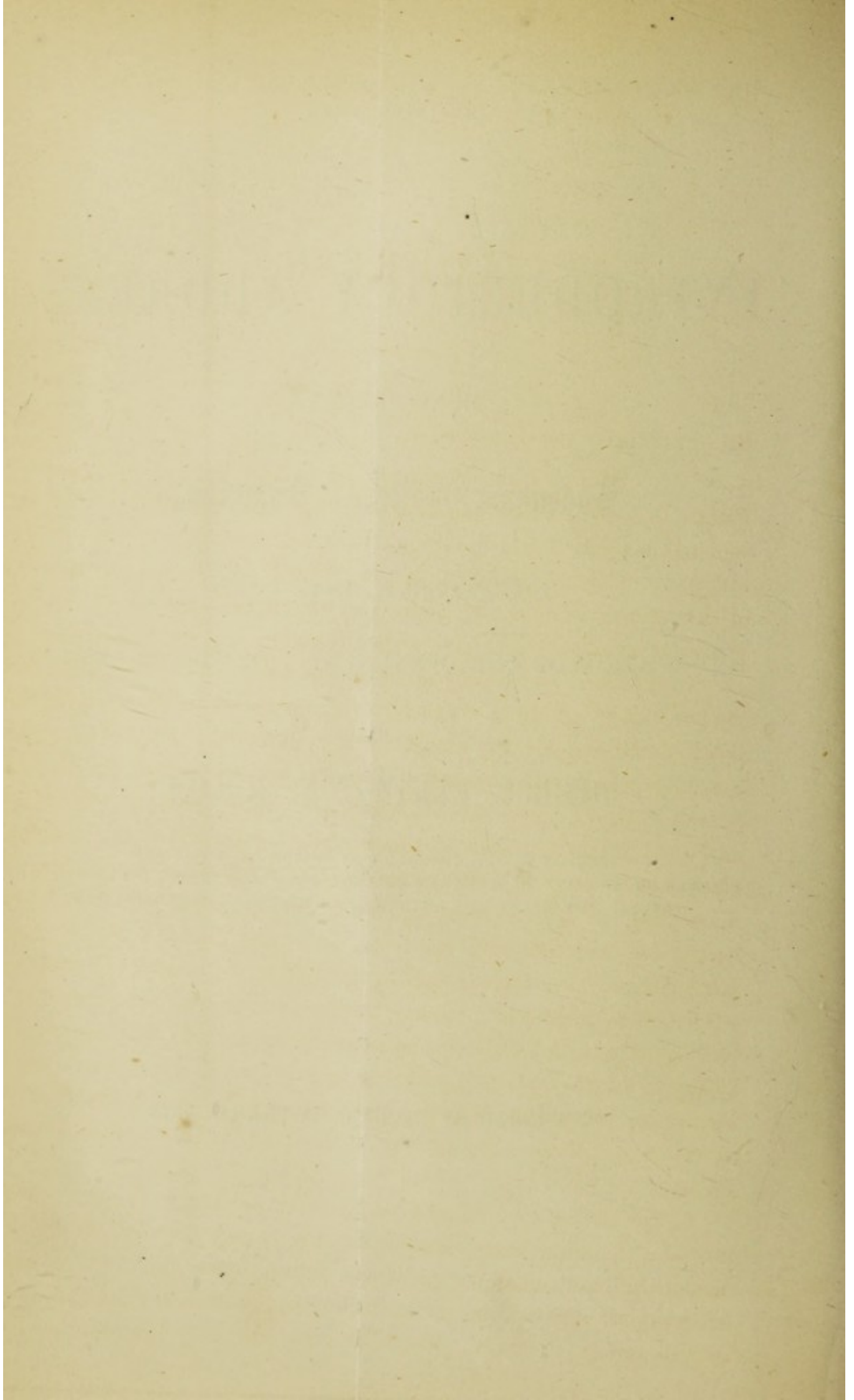
GEORGE ELKINGTON, M.R.C.S.,

SURGEON TO THE GENERAL INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND,
LECTURER ON ANATOMY TO SYDENHAM COLLEGE, FORMERLY SENIOR SURGEON TO THE
GENERAL DISPENSARY, AND AUTHOR OF A "PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION"
OF THE HUMAN SKELETON.

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1856.



ADDRESS.

MR. PRINCIPAL AND GENTLEMEN,

After the able discourses which have been delivered in this Theatre by my esteemed Colleagues, who have preceded me in the honourable position which through their kindness I now occupy, it is with great diffidence, and much distrust, that I stand before you this day to deliver the introductory address at the commencement of another Winter Session. I could have wished that they had selected some other individual to have addressed you on this occasion, as I am confident that any one of my Colleagues would have discharged the duties better than myself, and I am painfully sensitive lest the interest of this College, which now holds a high and I believe well-merited position among the Medical Schools of the Country, should sustain any injury from inefficiency on my part. Whilst I tremble therefore under a sense of the responsibility which I have accepted, I duly appreciate the kindness of my Colleagues in selecting me as their representative on this occasion, and feel that an honour has been conferred upon me, far beyond what the nature of my connection with the College entitled me to have anticipated. I esteem it a privilege to be associated in any humble manner with the Founders of this Institution, and shall ever be happy to promote its future prosperity by any means in my power, believing as I do that it originated in, and is carried on with a sincere desire and earnest endeavour, to improve the education and advance the position of the future members of the Medical Profession.

In the choice of a suitable subject for discussion at these annual reunions, the mind seems naturally to turn to some topic of general professional interest, more particularly as bearing upon the future prospects of those just entering our ranks, rather than to the consideration of any special branch of study. My Colleagues who have preceded me have

discoursed on the "*Requirements for Medical Practice,*" on the "*Character and Claims*" of the Medical Profession, on its "*Present State as compared with that previous to the passing of the Apothecaries Act,*" and on its "*Present Position and mode of Cultivation*"—and I now solicit your forbearance and sympathy while I endeavour briefly to offer a few remarks on the *Emoluments of the Medical Profession, and the means of attaining them.* Before entering upon the business of life, or commencing the preliminary studies necessary for the practice of any art or profession, or for engaging in any branch of commerce or manufacture, it becomes the duty of the youthful aspirant, no less than of those who have the guardianship and direction of his future pursuits, well to consider the nature and desirability of the profession or trade he may have selected—to examine his fitness and capabilities, his circumstances and inclinations, before deciding on the special course of his future occupations; and in order to arrive at a favourable decision, the several points to which I have alluded should form the elements of calculation on which their opinion is based. In estimating his fitness and capabilities, his physical powers should be examined and his mental acquirements tested; it should be ascertained if his health and constitutional vigour are equal to the duties to be imposed, and if his education has been such as to fit him to enter upon the special studies connected with the profession or business he is about to follow, as his future studies will require all his time and talent, and if his mind has not been well trained by his preliminary education, he will enter upon his duties under many disadvantages, and will often find them difficult and irksome. His circumstances too should not be overlooked, for it is a questionable procedure to introduce a youth into the Medical Profession, who has no private resources, and whose friends are unable to maintain him respectably until he can provide for himself, unless he manifests *great* talent, peculiar fitness, and an urgent desire to embrace it—circumstances which of themselves will enable him to surmount many difficulties. Inclination, therefore, should not be disregarded, as it is doubtful if he ever succeed so well in any pursuit which is ungenial to his feelings and mental constitution. It is true that some gifted individuals will break through the trammels which have been imposed upon them, and under the pressure of adverse circumstances, will steer their course into the path which nature had intended for them, and attain to eminence and wealth; but it is equally true of many, that if the natural course of

their inclination and mental bias be opposed or misdirected, they will for ever be crippled in their progress.

As I am now addressing some who have recently decided upon entering the Medical Profession, and are about to enter upon the special courses of study necessary to fit them for the efficient discharge of its arduous duties, let me endeavour to ascertain if they have made a wise and prudent choice, by considering in what the Emoluments or Advantages of the Medical Profession consist, and if they bear a comparison with those of other professions, of commerce or manufacture. Man is immortal, a moral and responsible being, a compound, possessing a body, capable of sustaining many important relations and of discharging high moral duties, fitted also for much enjoyment, but which *dies* and is merely the tenement of the eternal principle within, of the "Soul, which, immortal as its Sire, shall never die"; and in order therefore rightly to estimate the value of any earthly occupation in which he may engage, it is necessary to consider it not merely in reference to the temporal advantages it may yield, but also as to its bearing upon his future happiness and eternal welfare. We hear much of the difficulties, the trials, and discouragements of medicine and the healing art, of the easier path of other professions, and the more lucrative results to those who embark in commerce, or are engaged in conducting the large manufacturing establishments which are the pride of our land; but I hope I shall be able to prove to you that the science of medicine is worthy of your choice, not only on account of the honourable position it has ever held among the learned professions, and the affectionate regard manifested towards its faithful promoters, but also from the Advantages or Emoluments connected both with its *study* and *practice*.

In speaking of the emoluments of the Medical Profession, I shall take rather a wide range, and refer not merely to its pecuniary rewards, but to other advantages which it offers, not less worthy of consideration. First, then, there are many advantages connected with the *study* of medicine and the collateral sciences. Every school-boy knows something of the pleasure experienced in having accomplished a new task or solved a difficult problem, but he is unable to appreciate the higher gratification, the pure and holy joy, which will be gradually unfolded to the student of Anatomy, Chemistry, or Botany, as he proceeds in his interesting investigations. In examining the structure of the human body, he is beset at

every step with new wonders displayed in every part, and with the harmony and completeness of the whole ; even in the study of Osteology, which is generally considered to be dry and uninteresting, he sees much that is calculated to fill him with admiration and delight. Who can gaze unmoved upon that assemblage of dry bones which constitute the Human Skeleton, and examine the beautiful adaptation of each separate piece to the special office it has to fulfil, without exclaiming, on the very threshold of his studies, "Truly here is seen the hand of God"? It is impossible, I think, to regard the study of Osteology as devoid of interest, for whether we examine the elementary composition of the bones, and trace the combination of their earthy and organic particles, so wonderfully blended together, that although they consist of nearly two thirds of inorganic materials, their vital actions are not encumbered, but carried on with all the precision and perfection of more vital structures—or observe their outward conformation as destined to form the passive organs of locomotion or constitute the walls of cavities for the protection of important viscera, without acknowledging the clearest evidence of design. We need no better illustration than the Spinal Column, in which the combination of the opposing properties of solidity and elasticity or flexibility are so admirably exemplified. Here is an assemblage of twenty-four bones, constituting at the same time a *solid column*, which supports the head and gives stability to the whole frame, and a *flexible tube* for the protection of the great nervous centre by which it is traversed ; each separate portion composed of the same elementary parts, which present certain general characters as they are examined in the several regions of the neck, back, or loins, and individual modifications in each of those regions, all harmonizing with the general or special motions with which they are associated. If we examine the muscles and observe their varied form, the arrangement of their fibres, or the mode of their attachment—if we trace the infinite windings and anastomoses of the living tubes which convey the stream of life to the remotest part of the body—or unravel the intricate network of the nervous system, and follow the fibres of the sentient and motor nerves to the respective sections of their common centre ; whether we examine the form and structure of the several viscera, or inquire into their physiology, or the laws which regulate their functions, we are gratified at every step, and filled with wonder and admiration at the accumulative evidences we behold of an infinitely wise and gracious Creator.

If our attention be directed to Chemistry, the same field of unbounded treasures is opened to our view, and the mind finds delight in grappling with continually new developed mysteries, as we advance from the consideration of the simple elements and the sublime laws which regulate their combination and define their ultimate form and properties, to the contemplation of the mysterious manner in which these chemical operations are blended with vital actions, when occurring in the living laboratory of the human frame.

In the study of Botany, too, there is much that is delightful as well as useful, and a knowledge of this captivating science gives additional interest to every rural walk, when every blade of grass and every simple flower affords matter for contemplation, and furnishes the clearest proof not only of the *Infinite Wisdom*, but of the *unbounded goodness* of God. If we examine into the structure of plants, study their physiology, and familiarize ourselves with the principles of their general classification, we observe much that is instructive and calculated to expand the mind and refine the feelings, at the same time that it supplies us with a general knowledge of their properties, and enables us to avail ourselves of their agency in the treatment of disease.

If I thought there was any reason or truth in the assertion which has been often made, that the study of anatomy has a tendency to favour materialism and infidelity, and that the professors of medicine, as a body, are prone to disregard religion, I should hesitate ere I ventured to speak of the peculiar pleasures and advantages resulting from it. But, gentlemen, I would utterly repudiate the foul aspersion, and say that none but the most wilfully obdurate mind could embrace such a dogma, and none but the most hardened heart could sink into such a delusion.

It is true that the medical philosopher is accustomed to regard the various functions of the body as dependent upon organization, and to regard them in the relation of cause and effect. He sees that the secretions of the stomach are necessary to digestion; that one gland eliminates saliva, and another bile; but can he understand the power which directs the whole, and appropriates to each organ its sphere of action? Can he understand how it is that organs, which have for years lain dormant, at a certain epoch are called into operation, without feeling constrained to acknowledge that an Omnipotent power has designed the whole, and that the vital action of each organ of the complicated machine is as dependent

on His fiat as was their original creation? We may, and ought to search into the works of nature, and exercise, to the utmost, the powers which have been given us; but we must not measure the power of the Almighty by the limited conceptions of our mental constitution:—there are subjects too subtle for the grasp of *finite* minds, and which are known only to the *Infinite*. We cannot, by all our searching, find out God unto perfection; there must be a point beyond which we cannot advance, and truths which we cannot understand, except through the medium of divine revelation. Seeing, then, that there is a boundary which circumscribes all human understanding, let us beware how we fall into the error of those who, through pride of intellect, refuse to believe whatever they cannot comprehend, and who would do well to consider the words of the poet—

“ Know thou thyself: presume not God to scan—

The proper study of mankind is man.”

In order to realise the advantages derivable from the *study* of medicine and the collateral sciences, the student must be diligent and persevering; he must be zealous in his work, not influenced by any mean calculation as to the amount of knowledge required of him, but must cultivate a love of truth, and search after it for its own sake; he must be actuated by higher motives than those which influence many in the present day; he must not enter upon his labours with the limited desire to acquire just so much information only as will enable him to pass a creditable examination and obtain his diploma, but with the determination to learn all that is known upon the several subjects of investigation, and, if possible, to dive deeper into them than his predecessors, and to unravel some of the yet hidden mysteries of nature and of science; he must work for himself, and observe for himself, and not be content with knowing what others have seen and observed; he may avail himself of the labours of those who have preceded him, and will thereby be spared much toil and useless research; but if he would attain a thorough acquaintance with his subject, and realise all the pleasure and satisfaction resulting from it, he must see with his own eyes, and trace with his own hands, the wonderful works presented to his view. Let me illustrate this by a reference to the study of anatomy:—some are content to gain their knowledge alone from books, and, parrot-like, to commit to memory written descriptions of things they have never seen, and cannot understand; others, afraid of soiling their fingers, will gladly avail themselves of a view of parts displayed by another,

and thus obtain some clearer idea of organs thus exposed ; but both will fail to acquire that practical knowledge which is the pleasing reward of the more diligent inquirer, who, with feelings of grateful admiration, ponders hour after hour over the subject, and not satisfied with tracing the object of his research to the utmost limit of his natural powers, calls in to his help the artificial aid of the microscope. Such a student not only reaps all the future benefits which his intimate and accurate knowledge ensures to him, but he educates his hand and his eye as well as his understanding, and realises a pleasure in his daily work unknown to the less diligent labourer,—a pleasure which, to be appreciated, must be felt, and which language fails adequately to express. The same necessity for diligent pursuit and personal observation might be equally insisted upon in reference to the study of Chemistry, and every other branch of knowledge, or in following the clinical instructions of the physician. It will not suffice for the student to listen to the description of the physical signs of disease—he must examine them for himself. It will avail him little to be told that there are certain physical signs revealed to the organ of hearing by means of the stethoscope, which will materially aid him in his diagnosis of disease, unless he familiarises his own ear with them, and compares them with those observed in health. The discrimination of many diseases, especially of the skin, is through the medium of the sense of vision, and the most accurate and faithful description of them will fail to impart the necessary knowledge, unless the eye is practised by frequent observation. I would therefore impress upon the minds of my young hearers the importance of observing for themselves—there is no royal road to knowledge,—they must travel the intricate and often obscure path ; but they will find many guides to direct them on their way, and among the most willing and able of them, I may mention my esteemed colleagues. An acquaintance with the general principles of medicine, with accurate descriptions and faithful delineations of disease, are most important ; but the modifications and peculiarities of individual cases are so universal, that the student should lose no opportunity of inspecting them. It is thus that, by years of observation, he acquires that *experience* which the public are wont to appreciate as the possession of the senior members of our profession. As an additional stimulus to diligence, I would urge the fact, that no one feels so much interest in any occupation as he who is fully engaged in it ; and as the medical practitioner is

necessarily a student through life, and will find ample subjects demanding his attention, he must strive against procrastination, and endeavour, during the period of his pupilage, to accomplish the duties peculiar to it. He will find that the future demands upon his time and talents will afford little opportunity for completing what has been previously neglected or imperfectly performed. I may appeal here to the experience of many who hear me, and ask if they do not derive most pleasure and satisfaction from their daily round of professional duties, when they are so numerous and urgent as to demand all their attention—and not admit of interruption from the passing events of the day, and that irrespective of any future emolument which may accrue from them? Negligence and inattention are most inexcusable on the part of the medical student; for the objects of study are so numerous, and all so interesting, that if the mind becomes wearied of one he has only to leave it for a time and recreate his powers by directing them into another channel. I would also utter a word of caution to those who are ever seeking after the attainment of anatomical knowledge, by abridged and short or concise descriptions. I believe that the more minutely any subject is described, providing it be done methodically and systematically, the more easily will it be comprehended and retained in the memory; one object helps to point out the relation of another—and, collectively considered, they present a harmonious whole, instead of an assemblage of isolated ideas, more difficult to be borne in mind. Having made himself acquainted with the structure and relations of the different organs of the body, with their mutual connections and sympathies, and ascertained their functions during health, the student is taught to observe in the wards of the hospital, or at the bedside of the sick, the consequences which result from interruption to those functions in disease, made familiar with the diagnostic signs which point to the seat of disordered action, with the causes on which those derangements depend, and the means of promoting the return of healthy action. He will find, therefore, that not only in the *study*, but also in the *practice* of medicine, there is ample scope for the exercise of all his mental powers, and the application of all his accumulated knowledge; and that in the daily duties of the medical practitioner there is much that is calculated to interest and delight him, whilst his sympathies are aroused, and the benevolent emotions of his nature are continually called forth. The duties of the physician are not of that monotonous character which

pertains to many other callings in life; for, although he is continually watching the progress of similar diseases, they are so modified by circumstances as ever to be presenting new features of interest, and calling for continued watchfulness and study. No two cases of the same disease are ever precisely alike; they are either modified by age, sex, or constitution—influenced by atmospherical conditions, by prevailing epidemics, and local emanations—or obscured by mental anxieties of a personal or relative character, that each individual case is a study in itself, and is capable, when rightly understood, of yielding new sources of satisfaction and delight. In addition to his strictly professional duties, the medical practitioner, who enjoys the full confidence of his patient, is often consulted in reference to his private affairs, and is made the confidant of his domestic cares and anxieties, so that a new series of duties devolves upon him, and he is often enabled, by his advice and sympathy, to administer consolation; and thus, while comforting others, refreshes his own spirit.

On the Christian professor, moreover, devolve duties of a still higher order; and, while exerting his efforts to alleviate the bodily sufferings of his patient, he is called upon to direct him to a better Physician, One who alone has the power to heal his spiritual diseases. It will occasionally happen that the medical attendant has to watch over the closing hours of an *Infidel* or a *Scoffer*—of one who, though living in the blaze of Gospel light, is surrounded with Heathen darkness, and who, in the agonies of approaching dissolution, calls upon *Him*, in the absence of any other help, to point to some source of consolation and of hope. How great, therefore, is the responsibility thus imposed on the medical man—and how rich his reward if he is enabled faithfully and successfully to direct his dying patient to the fountain of light and love!

In his daily routine of duties, therefore, notwithstanding the many trials and anxieties with which they are blended, there are joys of a pure and ennobling character, second only to those which result from ministering to a “soul diseased.” It has been aptly said that medicine is the handmaid of religion, and, certainly, the duties of their professors are more nearly allied, and are capable of yielding joys of a purer and more exalted character than can be derived from any other profession, or from the exercise of any calling in life, however high in fame, or rich in pecuniary rewards. The pleasures derived from the honourable and conscientious practice of the medical profession, appear to me to afford a good illustra-

tion of the truth declared by our Saviour, "that it is more blessed to give than to receive," inasmuch as he is habitually giving, or is the honoured instrument of bestowing, greater boons than can be adequately acknowledged by pecuniary gifts, but which are capable of yielding that inward satisfaction and delight which money cannot purchase.

It must, however, be borne in mind that there are many sources of trial and anxiety peculiar to the medical practitioner; he has often much to contend with in the temper and caprices of his patient—many prejudices to overcome, and many obstacles to the conscientious discharge of his duties to remove. He has many seasons of painful thought and anxious solicitude, his head does not always rest upon a pillow of down; his slumbers are often disturbed, and the quiet of his home is broken; but he is spared other sources of anxiety and of care which beset the path of the commercial speculator and the pushing tradesman. He has not his bill-book haunting his repose by night, or the changeable state of the market to harass and perplex his thoughts by day. There are also many advantages connected with the medical profession, in the beneficial influence it exerts over the mind and character of its members. The extent and variety of the various sciences, a knowledge of which is so essential to the efficient discharge of its daily duties, and the general acquaintance with the dead and modern languages, with literature, and the ordinary subjects of an enlightened education, in every way so useful, and now demanded by the Examining Boards, all tend to enlarge the mind and increase its vigour, and are, in themselves, sources of present enjoyment and of future benefit. The mental culture of the *student* tends to withdraw him from the vain and trifling amusements of the barren and uneducated mind, and the engagements of the *practical* man are admirably fitted to call forth the best feelings of his nature—to strengthen his human sympathies—to wean him from self, and to induce him to walk, in some humble measure, in the steps of our Redeemer, who went about doing good.

It is no small privilege—no mean advantage—to be kept from worldly-mindedness, and to have our thoughts and feelings directed in the path of honour and of virtue; and I cannot help thinking that in these respects we have much to be thankful for. Whilst in the study of medicine there is much to raise the moral feelings and promote the love of truth, there is in the practice of it less temptation to prevarication and deceit, too prevalent in the commercial transactions of the present day, and so calcu-

lated to familiarise the mind with small transgressions of the Divine Law, as to render easy the transition to crimes of a darker hue. In illustration of this position, I would refer to the demoralising influence of what are called the "tricks in trade,"—selling articles under fictitious names for the sake of making them appear to be more valuable than they really are, and quieting the conscience, when not too much seared to refuse its office, under the pretence that it is allowable, because it is general. It is a lamentable fact, that so common has this practice become, that it is difficult for a man of honest and conscientious principles to compete with his neighbour in the race for public patronage and support. In connection with this subject, we have heard much of late of the effects resulting from the pernicious practice of adulteration, not only in articles of food and luxury, but in the remedial agents we daily use in combating with disease. I am of opinion, then, on these grounds, that our profession possesses advantages of no mean character, and which, if poised in the balance against worldly riches, will not be found wanting. In speaking of the *moral* advantages connected with the medical profession, I may be pardoned if I allude to a case of recent and painful notoriety, in which their realisation so lamentably failed, and express my conviction that, if the wretched man had not diverged from the course of honourable and legitimate practice, and lost himself in the intricate path of dishonest speculations, his end might have been peaceful and happy.

In order to attain the advantages resulting from the benevolent character of the engagements of the medical profession, and enjoy the benign influences produced on the mind and character, by the honourable and conscientious discharge of its onerous duties, we must be unselfish in our motives, seeking to promote our patients' welfare rather than our own, and regarding pecuniary emoluments as secondary. We must cultivate a love of truth, and endeavour to trace the mind and will of God, not only in the varied objects of study which engage our attention, but in the practical application of the knowledge we acquire. We must bear in mind that we are merely the conservators of the public health; we cannot bestow it by any act of our own, or restore it when interrupted, but by the use of means which Providence has placed at our disposal, and which we are the feeble, but honoured, instruments of applying. We should seek to be guided to the selection of suitable remedies, and use them in humble reliance on the Divine blessing. We are often reduced

to extremities, and are in a strait as to what course of action it is best to pursue, as if to remind us that the *power* is of God, and we should, therefore, recollect that “man’s *extremity* is God’s *opportunity*”; and when human knowledge fails us, seek the “wisdom that cometh from above.” We should, moreover, be truthful in our general deportment towards our patients, and not stoop to mean attempts to raise our reputation by taking advantage of the general ignorance of the public on medical subjects, and practising on their credulity; we must be faithful and honest, remembering that we have an account to render to One who searches the hearts of men, and knows the hidden springs of action, and the motives by which they are influenced. Remembering the religious feeling which has pervaded the addresses of my predecessors, I should feel self-condemned if I did not allude to one source of danger to the full realisation of the advantages accruing to the medical profession — “Sabbath desecration,”—for, whilst I hold that it is the imperative duty of every practitioner to render his aid in all cases of urgency and necessity on the Sabbath, as well as on every other day, I am also of opinion that much of the inconvenience and deprivation, so loudly complained of by the profession, might be avoided; and am fully assured that if medical men placed a higher value on their Sabbath privileges, the public would be less disposed to deprive them of them. In general the cases which *demand* a daily visit form a small proportion of the whole; and by a little method and economy much of the Sabbath labour of the medical practitioner may be avoided, and he may thus obtain time for devotion to his family and his God. It has ever been a source of satisfaction to myself that the conductors of this college have discouraged their students in the pursuit of their studies on the Sabbath; and, from my own knowledge in days that are past, I can bear testimony to the fact, that those who felt it needful thus to infringe upon their Sabbath duties, were the very individuals who most neglected their daily opportunities.

Medicine has ever been considered a noble science, and its cultivators have held an honourable position in society; they are usually regarded with affectionate esteem, and with the members of the other learned professions enjoy many privileges and exemptions not attainable by the public generally. In *rank* they take precedence of the man whose station in society is dependent merely on accumulated wealth; and without wishing for one moment to depreciate the value of property, or to detract in the

smallest degree from the influence it merits, provided always it has been honestly obtained, I do think that in the status and influence of the Medical Profession, there are advantages which we may fairly regard as some of its emoluments, and which compensate in some measure for the toil and anxiety inseparably connected with it. There may not be the same incentives to ambition, the same prospects of honourable promotion and of wealth, to the cultivator of medicine as to the members of the other learned professions—the high seats of honour in the councils of the nation may not be reserved for him, and he may have no prospect of emolument equivalent to the dignitaries of the Church—but there are distinctions to be obtained and laurels to be won, which shed a halo round the life of the honourable practitioner of the “healing art,” and which gild his future history with a grateful and lasting remembrance. These honourable distinctions are open to every diligent and persevering student, who is inspired by a laudable desire to advance himself in his profession, and have been already won by some who commenced their studies in our own town, as the honoured names of *Bowman* and of *Miller* fully testify; while others who have emanated from this College have attained honourable promotions in Her Majesty’s service. It may not be the lot of many of our body to be invested with the titles of honour which shall hand down their fame on the pages of history to future generations, or so to provide for their posterity as to leave them qualified to take their position among the aristocracy of the land, but there are many who are honourably regarded by all who surround them, and shed an influence over the society in which they reside, who by their unobtrusive virtues and self-denying labours, have earned for themselves an honourable name, who live in the affectionate esteem of all who know them, and die to be lamented, and carried to their graves with sorrow and regret. These are possessions for which many a life of toil and self-denial has been spent in vain, advantages which do not always form the attendants of wealth and high birth—which have an *intrinsic* value, and which when once acquired cannot be so easily wrested from their possessor as worldly riches. Every one esteems the value of a fair reputation, and is desirous of possessing the good opinions of his fellow men, and Solomon says, “a *good name* is better than *great riches*”; so that these advantages, which are within the grasp of every medical practitioner, are of no mean character, and justify me in considering them as some of the emoluments of the medical profession.

If he would realize these rich rewards, the Physician or Surgeon must not only have such a knowledge of his profession as will enable him to practise it successfully, and thus obtain the confidence of his patient, but he must be influenced by pure and honourable motives, and so demean himself towards his professional brethren as to merit their esteem and secure their good will. The wise man says, "if a man would have friends, he must show himself friendly," and so if he would attain to an honourable position in society, he must conduct himself honourably. The Physician then must not only be faithful to his patient, but must be honourable in his intercourse with his professional brethren; he must not endeavour to advance his own interest by detracting from the merit of a brother practitioner, nor seek to raise his reputation by imposing on the ignorance of his patient. The proverb says, "Honesty is the best policy," and I am persuaded that a fame which has been acquired by fraud and deceit will not stand the test of years, but is in perpetual danger of sudden and complete annihilation. Every upright and honest practitioner will, then, recognise duties which he owes to his fellow labourer, as well as to his patient, and will ever be careful so to act as to merit their esteem, and do no violence to that honourable conduct which should form the bond of their union and brotherhood. Every Physician and Surgeon is occasionally placed in circumstances where he has the power of advancing his own reputation, by traducing his brother, and this is sometimes done very unintentionally: a *look* or a *word* may convey to the mind of the patient or his friends, some impression which suggests to them, that the case had been previously mistaken, or that the golden opportunity of relief had been neglected—he wishes he had been called in *earlier* or that certain remedies had been *omitted*, or he believes that, desperate as the case appears, the means he suggests will overcome the evils resulting from delay, or counteract the mischief which had been effected. All this may be *true* or it may be mere vain assumption—if true, it should remain concealed in his own bosom, or if necessarily referred to, should be stated with the utmost caution, and with the most scrupulous regard for the honour of the practitioner who has preceded him—if false, it is utterly unwarrantable, and though it may yield some temporary advantage, will be followed by permanent disgrace.

It is to be lamented that Medical Ethics is a subject much neglected in our own day, and the degradation to which some members of the profes-

sion have consequently fallen, is much to be deplored. We should do well to imitate the high moral tone of *Hippocrates*, who, we are told, admitted no one to his instructions without the solemnity of an *oath*, binding them to the most rigid observance of their duties both to the *sick* and to their professional brethren, and who inculcated the necessity for the cultivation of *piety* and *virtue*. Of late years many individuals have entered the profession for the sake of obtaining a respectable maintenance, who have been imperfectly educated and whose sense of honour has not been very acute—competition has been increased, and necessity has impelled many to the observance of practices derogatory to science. The time allotted for this address will not permit me to enter fully into the subject of Medical Ethics, but I would wish to express my conviction that the conduct and bearing of professional men towards each other, and their sense of the dignity of medical science, have more to do with their success and status in the profession, than is generally imagined. Perhaps there never was a time when greater watchfulness was required on the part of the practitioner of medicine, lest he should be tempted to depart from the straight path of honour and rectitude, and lose himself in the labyrinth of public prejudice and expediency, than at the present. New and ignorantly assumed notions of disease and its treatment are continually springing forth, and in some instances have gained such an ascendancy over the public mind as to jeopardize the interests of legitimate medicine, and bias the understanding of the orthodox practitioner. There is reason to fear that it is not an exceptional case to find a well-educated and respectable practitioner leaning to the prejudices of his patient, and while condemning generally the practice of rude empirics and the more polished deceit of the educated perverter of truth, so modifying his treatment as to gratify his patient's pride and feed his vanity. While therefore it is the duty of every Physician to examine and test the efficacy of any new remedy introduced by respectable members of the profession, he should be cautious how he sanctions, in the most indirect manner, the absurd nostrums of the ignorant pretender, and the knavish corrupter of true medical science. It will doubtless be perceived that I allude to the practice of Homœopathy, and the general family of the *opathies*, and while I can pity the delusion of the public, who are ignorant on medical subjects, and know little or nothing of the structure and functions of the human body, or of the nature of their derangement in disease, it

is with difficulty I can restrain my indignation when I think of those who, armed with the sanction of a Medical Diploma, and possessed of some knowledge of the sound principles of medicine, so prostitute the science and outrage the dictates of common sense, as publicly to avow their belief in a *lie*, and to practise upon the credulity of the simple for the sake of ill-gotten gains. I believe the practice of Homœopathy is on the decline, and that, although it may never cease to exist, it will ere long retire to the level of the Morisons, the Holloways, and all the host of empirics, and if I were addressing any other than a Medical audience I should have hesitated before I ventured to allude to the subject, believing that the less notice is taken of it, the better. I cannot however refrain from alluding to a strange inconsistency which has taken possession of the minds of some of the dupes of Homœopathy, that *its* professors are actuated by such *generous* and *disinterested* motives, and that the opposition to, or non-reception of their dogmas by the profession at large, is the result of a selfish and persecuting spirit. It is in vain to argue with such people, or it would seem, *a priori*, that there is much more reason to question the sincerity and the purity of motive in an *individual*, who *suddenly* changes his views and adopts others diametrically opposed to them, especially when it is shown to bring him additional gain, than to impugn the honour and integrity of the *many*, who, without any personal advantage, whose honour and consistency have not previously been doubted, act in accordance with principles they have always maintained.

One lesson may be learnt from these circumstances, the importance of a more rigid observance of the laws which should regulate the conduct of medical practitioners towards each other, of the cultivation of a higher sense of our moral, social, and religious duties, that by a life of honour and integrity, we may raise ourselves above the power of suspicion and calumny. There is one other view of this subject to which I allude with surprise and regret, the frequent sanction given to Homœopathy, Mesmerism, and Quackery in all its forms, by many of the clergy and ministers of religion. It is strange to see persons of enlightened education, of enlarged views of the dealings of Providence, and conversant with the depravity of the human heart, so easily led away by the specious pretences of ignorant and unprincipled men. It is but a few years since a clergyman, who is now called to his account, was permitted in the ardour of his morbid zeal for the cause of this would-be science, when advocating in

the pulpit the claims of an Homœopathic establishment, to dishonour God by uttering the blasphemous statement, that our Saviour's mission to fallen man could not have been fully accomplished, had not Hahnemann appeared upon our earth.

There are many occasions on which the probity and faithfulness of the medical practitioner are severely tried, and all the strength of his moral sentiments and religious convictions are needed to preserve him from doing violence to his conscience, or transgressing the laws of his country and his God. He may be called upon to certify to a patient's inability to attend some public duty he is anxious to evade, or he may be required to examine an individual and give an opinion as to his eligibility for assurance, and however conscientiously he may wish to act, he may be so circumstanced as to be compelled either to violate his conscience or displease his patient and forfeit the patronage of the Assurance Agent. This is a subject on which at the present day extreme caution is needed—new companies are continually springing into existence, competition is great, and in some instances men of lax principles and needy circumstances are intrusted with agencies—men whose interest it is to promote the acceptance of as many proposals as possible, and thus swell the amount of their commission and per-centage, and whose sense of honour and integrity is not sufficiently strong to act as a check to their desire of gain. Under these circumstances the medical man should beware that he is not tempted to swerve from the path of honour and rectitude, for his “sin is sure to find him out,” and in addition to the reproaches of conscience he may be subjected to the annoyance of searching cross-examinations in a court of justice, he may be held up to public scorn and ridicule, and his fair fame may be tarnished. I believe that some of these institutions are so loosely conducted, and that there is such an absence of principle in their agents, that it becomes a matter of serious consideration, not only in what office we should insure ourselves, but with which we should become professionally associated.

The public teachers of our schools are occasionally placed in painful circumstances by being called upon to bear testimony to the diligence of students, and to the regularity of their attendance upon lectures, from which they have habitually and needlessly absented themselves, and who are disposed to think it unjust on the part of their professors if they conscientiously withhold their signatures. I would therefore impress upon

the minds of my young friends, the importance of cultivating a love of truth and of cherishing a high sense of honour and fidelity, and would express my fervent hope that they will respect these virtues in their teachers, who are desirous by every means in their power, to advance the interest of their pupils, and to uphold the honour and dignity of the Profession.

There are other circumstances in which the truthfulness of the Physician is sometimes put to the test, which have proved a stumbling-block to many, and to which I would briefly refer. He is for instance sometimes called upon to give a decided opinion in cases of emergency, when it is feared, from its unfavourable nature, that it is calculated to alarm the patient and possibly to lessen the prospect of his recovery. What then is his duty? Is he justified in practising deceit and falsehood under the apprehension that a more conscientious course might be fraught with danger to the patient and distress to his friends, or is he morally bound strictly to adhere to the truth? It is held by many, that under such circumstances a deviation from the truth is *allowable*, and that we are not only sanctioned in giving evasive answers, in clothing our opinion in the language of caution and of doubt, but that we are *justified* in telling a deliberate *lie*, when we have reason to fear that the statement of the simple truth might be attended with danger or inconvenience. I do not lay claim to any higher sense of morality than my neighbours, but I am disposed to doubt if we are, under any circumstances, justified in thus violating the laws of God, and to question the necessity for such a procedure. It is so difficult to form an accurate judgment of the mental emotions and the natural feelings of individuals when suffering under severe or painful maladies, to ascertain how far they may be modified, and how they may be influenced by surrounding circumstances, that we are apt to form a wrong estimate of their powers of endurance. I have known instances in which individuals of an anxious and nervous temperament, have in a state of great feverish excitement and physical depression, received the announcement of heavy domestic calamities with greater composure than others in the enjoyment of health and strength; and in other instances I have witnessed the most favourable results upon the minds of patients from the candid and decided statement of the inevitably fatal termination of their malady; where a state of restless anxiety and deep concern, has been exchanged for one of calm composure and peaceful

resignation. I doubt therefore the expediency of such a course, and cannot see any necessity for it. If an opinion is requested, and it is feared its announcement might be injurious, would it not be better to decline giving it altogether, rather than violate the dictates of conscience by advancing a false one?

In speaking of the pecuniary emoluments of the medical profession, I have but little to say. It offers small encouragement to those who are bent upon the attainment of wealth, but it does nevertheless yield a fair prospect of competence, and its members occasionally attain to affluence. Wealth is a relative term—every man is rich who has sufficient for his wants and a little to spare for benevolent and charitable purposes, and the best way for a person of restricted means to attain to wealth, is to limit his desires and circumscribe his necessities. There are many individuals in the medical profession who have realized a large income by the exercise of their calling, and if they bear a small proportion to their less fortunate brethren, as compared with the members of other professions and with commercial men, it must be borne in mind that they are less fluctuating and hazardous, and except from death or infirmity are less likely to be suddenly withdrawn. It is true there are many amongst us who have to toil hard and long without being able by their unaided efforts to sustain the expenses of an establishment consistent with their station in society, and to provide for the necessities of a rising family; but these calamities are not peculiar to the professional man—there are many in other walks of life in no better position, but rather worse—men who by some lucky hit or some fortunate speculation have suddenly risen from poverty to wealth, but who hold their riches on a very uncertain tenure, and may be as suddenly deprived of them and reduced to beggary and want. If the medical practitioner, then, is more limited in his pecuniary resources, he is less subject to vicissitudes of fortune, he is not in such a position that he may be a lord to-day and to-morrow a beggar, he is not necessarily engaged in transactions of a speculative character, and he is thereby spared many sources of anxiety, of mental agony and distress; and if he does not possess all the benefits conferred by wealth, he is not subject to its many cares and responsibilities. I have often been led with gratitude to admire the general equality of God's providential dealings towards his creatures, and am disposed to think that the gifts of His providence are much more evenly dispensed than is generally supposed. Where some

benefits are withheld, others are bestowed which compensate their loss ; and the more we look into our circumstances and compare them with others, the more reason shall we find for contentment with our lot.

How appropriately may I here refer to the words of Tupper in his "Proverbial Philosophy" :—

"Equal is the government of heaven in allotting pleasures among men,
And just the everlasting law, that hath wedded happiness to virtue :
For verily on all things else broodeth disappointment with care,
That childish man may be taught the shallowness of earthly enjoyment.
Wherefore, ye that have enough, envy ye the rich man his abundance ?
Wherefore, daughters of affluence, covet ye the cottager's content ?
Take the good with the evil, for ye all are pensioners of God,
And none may choose or refuse the cup His wisdom mixeth."

In reference to this subject, I cannot help thinking that if professional men were more faithful to each other, and more true to their own interest, their pecuniary rewards might be much enhanced. The public is not generally ungrateful for the services of the physician, nor unwilling to reward his labours ; and I believe that if there were greater uniformity in charges, and a more regular and speedy delivery of accounts by general practitioners, than at present prevails, the results would be altogether more favourable and satisfactory.

The success of the young practitioner often depends more on his attention and general deportment towards his patients and their friends, than on the amount of skill he may exercise. It is not always the most learned and talented that succeed best ; the public are not able to appreciate these qualifications, and rightly to discriminate them ; but they are sensible of the little attentions which are paid to their ailments, and of the tenderness and sympathy with which the necessary means for their relief are applied. They usually judge of professional ability by the result of cases ; and, although it is to be deplored that they sometimes commit grievous errors, and do great injustice to the attendants, still, in the average of cases, the public form a pretty correct estimate of the skill and ability of the medical man. While, therefore, the student must lose no opportunity of storing his mind with scientific and general knowledge, and of familiarising himself, by practical observation, with the varied phases of disease, in order that he may be fitted to undertake the responsible duties of his profession, he must also be watchful over his general conduct and demeanour—strict in his morality—kind and sympathising, so that he may win the affection, and merit the esteem of

those who may repose their confidence in him. Bearing in mind the limited nature of his pecuniary rewards, the medical practitioner should ever strive to act on conservative principles, and remember the adage, "that a penny saved is a penny got." Happiness in this life does not depend on the *abundance* of earthly possessions, so much as on their well-balanced proportion to our necessities and requirements; and the individual who is accustomed to moderate his desires, and to regulate them according to his means, is richer far than he, who rolling in wealth and affluence, casts himself upon the lap of luxury and breaks asunder the restraints upon pleasure and indulgence.

I have thus, gentlemen, endeavoured to show, that if our profession does not afford the same prospects of pecuniary emolument, as some others, or as the various branches of trade and commerce, it can, nevertheless, boast of many solid advantages; it yields joy and satisfaction both in its study and practice; it is calculated to raise the tone of our moral and religious feelings—and in the spirit of exultation which inspired the poet Cowper, when speaking of his country, I would say of our noble science, notwithstanding the many difficulties and anxieties which bestrew her path—medicine, with all thy disparagements—with all the limitation of thy worldly wealth and grandeur—medicine, with all thy faults, "I'll love thee still!"

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