Universities and corporations under the new Medical Act : an address to the graduates in medicine at the conferring of degrees in the University of Edinburgh by the Vice-Chancellor and Senatus, August 1, 1860 / by John Hughes Bennett.

UNIVERSITIES AND CORPORATIONS UNDER THE NEW MEDICAL ACT:

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

GRADUATES IN MEDICINE

AT THE

CONFERRING OF DEGREES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,
BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND SENATUS.
AUGUST 1, 1860.

BY

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ADDRESS.

VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROFESSORS, AND GENTLEMEN,—

THE duty of addressing the new Graduates in Medicine having once again devolved upon me, it is with no small pleasure that, in the name of the Medical Faculty, I congratulate you on the high degree you have this day received, and on the position you thereby occupy in the ranks of an honourable profession. The study of medicine involves a knowledge of the structure and functions of the animate creation, and more especially of man. It comprises an acquaintance with the laws which regulate his physical, moral, and intellectual nature. It conducts the mind to ever interesting, ever advancing, and ever instructive subjects of inquiry, and stimulates those who cultivate it not only to appreciate, but to discover and promulgate, all truths that can benefit humanity. Looking at the endless relation man bears to the earth which he inhabits, to the air he breathes, to the food and drink necessary for his sustenance—to his clothing, dwelling, habits, and the various pursuits which influence his bodily powers,—it must be admitted that the range of information necessary to the physician is one of vast extent. He is incited to the acquirement of this varied kind of knowledge, not only by the love of discovering truth for its own sake, but as the direct means of enabling him to benefit his fellow-creatures. There is, consequently, no profession which so eminently unites a tendency to intellectual improvement with the gratifying power of being serviceable to others. If, then, we believe with the poet, that happiness is "our being's end and aim," the study

and practice of medicine, prosecuted with a proper sense of responsibility, and in a pure spirit of sincerity and of truth, will not merely enable you to arrive at this, but confer upon you that true respectability which all conscientious effort in doing good must ever impart.

Although, as the result of a high and expensive education—tested by written, oral, and practical examinations—you have now reached what may appear to be the end of your labours, a moment's consideration will convince you that this day only ushers in a new epoch of labour and anxiety. Indeed, I would strongly urge upon you the necessity of profiting more than ever at this time by active professional study and observation. Such as have made for themselves any name in medicine, and all those who have practised it with ability, will be ready to confess that, to the well-spent years which immediately followed leaving the schools, much of their success has been owing. It is, then, with preliminary knowledge acquired, with examinations passed, with an object in life obtained, and a future position to secure, that the conscientious young physician will seize upon every opportunity which presents itself of preparing for the responsibilities of his profession. Such opportunities he will find in continued attendance on hospitals for the sick, in becoming a resident medical officer in our public charities, in assisting some senior experienced practitioner, or in studying at the celebrated schools and universities of continental cities. Hitherto you have not so much acquired what there is to be known, as you have ascertained what there is to learn. And although a medical man must always be a student, the golden opportunity of making up past deficiencies, and adding to your stores of knowledge, is now arrived; and on the manner in which you employ it may materially depend the success of your professional lives.

It is, I trust, unnecessary that I should at present address you at length in regard to the moral principles of conduct which, incumbent as they are upon all men, are specially so on practitioners of medicine. Circumspection, prudence, sobriety, kind-

ness, delicacy of feeling, and, above all, that great Christian precept, to do unto others as you would that they should do unto you, ought prominently to distinguish those who treat the sick. These are considerations of primary importance and obligation. As such I assume that you regard them, and that you will ever make it your sincere desire and endeavour to keep them practically in remembrance.

Hitherto, as students, you have been engaged almost exclusively in acquiring medical knowledge; but now you should also form a just estimate of the social position and dignity to which you are entitled. This is secured to you by the honourable status which your profession occupies in the world; and it becomes your duty not only to see that this is in no way diminished by your conduct and example, but to assist in elevating it in the various relations it holds with the State, with other learned or scientific bodies of men, and with the public at large. It so happens that recent Acts of Parliament have conferred upon you, as medical graduates, new rights and privileges; and it is of importance not only that you should be made acquainted with these, but that they should be known as widely as possible. I propose, therefore, to say a few words regarding the social condition and mode of government of that profession of which you are the youngest members. When, also, I remind you, that you have just solemnly sworn to retain a grateful mind towards this University to the last breath of your lives, it is obviously not out of place to state somewhat particularly what its interests are, and what are the public obligations which you have assumed.[1]

[1] Sponsio Academica, signed by the candidate immediately before receiving his Degree.

Ego Doctoratus in Arte Medica, titulo jam donandus, sancte coram Deo cordium scrutatori Spondeo, me in omni grati animi officio, erga Academiam Edinburgenam, ad extremum vitæ halitum perseveraturum. Tum porro, Artem Medicam caute, caste probeque, exercitaturum, et quoad potero, omnia ad ægrotorum corporum salutem conducentia, cum fide procuraturum. Quæ, denique, inter medendum visa vel audita sileri conveniat, non sine gravi causa vulgaturum.

In that noble address which we heard with so much delight last session, our Rector described to us the past and present position of Universities. He told us "they aimed alike at the preservation of all old learning, and at the appropriation of all new. They bound themselves to prosecute those studies which fit men for the professions and the daily needs of life, and those which terminate upon man himself, whether by the investigation of truth or by the pursuit of refinement."[1] This correct definition of their objects is amply set forth in their ancient charters, the legal rights conferred upon them by popes and monarchs being as large and liberal as it was possible for them to grant. For example, the bull of Pope Alexander in favour of King's College, Aberdeen, in 1496, authorized it to give instructions "in theology, in canon and civil law, in medicine, in the liberal arts, and in every other lawful faculty; and to confer on deserving persons the degrees of bachelor, licentiate, doctor, master, and every other degree or honourable distinction, with full power and liberty to the persons so promoted, to read, teach, and exercise all those things, whatsoever the persons promoted to the same degrees within the University of Paris, in the University of Bologna, or any other University whatsoever, may do or exercise."[2] The University of Paris—then, as now, celebrated throughout the learned world—gave degrees to practise medicine and surgery, unchecked and unopposed by any other corporation or institution except sister Universities, so that its graduates could legally practise all branches of the healing art. King James the Sixth of Scotland, in founding the University of Edinburgh, granted to it, by charter in 1621, "all the liberties, freedoms, immunities, and privileges appertaining to any free college, and that in as ample form and large manner as a college has or brooks within this his Majesty's realm." In this way the large privileges possessed by

[1] Inaugural Address by the Right Honourable William Ewart Gladstone, etc. Edinburgh, 1859. P. 13.

[2] See Spalding Club—Fasti Aberdonensis, p. 5. In 1506, these privileges were confirmed by a bull of Pope Julius II.

one University were made over to another. The same rights that were enjoyed by the University of Paris were conferred on that of Aberdeen, and those possessed by Aberdeen, or by any other University, were in like manner given to the University of Edinburgh. The evident intention of these Acts was to establish and foster great national schools for the teaching, examination, and granting of degrees qualifying for practice in the learned professions; and, by conferring similar privileges on each alike, there was created a true republic of letters and of science throughout civilised nations, which was rendered independent of popular prejudices on the one hand, and of the power of Governments on the other. It follows, that ever since the diploma of doctor of medicine has been granted by this University—that is, for 155 years[1]—its holder has been entitled, both by statute and by long usage, to practise the profession of medicine in all its branches.

The gradual foundation and influence of guilds, companies, or corporations, restricted the general rights of University graduates, and has subsequently led to great misunderstanding and confusion. To these corporations was conceded by charter a certain jurisdiction over particular towns or parts of the country, in virtue of which they claimed the right of exercising powers independent of the Universities. Thus it came to be established that a doctor of medicine, however distinguished and however well qualified to practise his profession, could not legally do so within seven miles of London, without obtaining the license of the London College of Physicians. He could not practise surgery—that is, surgery as distinguished from medicine—in the east of Scotland, in Edinburgh, the three Lothians, or counties of Fife, Peebles, Selkirk, Roxburgh, and Berwick, without joining the Edinburgh corporation of Surgeons and Barbers; nor

[1] In 1705 the University was applied to by a student to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Physic, when, having no medical professors, the College of Physicians was applied to, to examine the young candidate. See Dr Beilby's Address to the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, 1847, p. 22.

could he practise it in the west of Scotland—that is, in Glasgow, or counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Dumbarton, and Ayr—without joining the corporation of the Faculty of Physicians and of Surgeons of Glasgow. But anywhere else in Scotland, for instance in Dumfriesshire, Stirlingshire, Aberdeenshire, Rossshire, Caithness, Sutherland, Inverness, and all places not previously named, he might have done so. In like manner, though he could practise medicine lawfully throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland, except, as previously stated, within seven miles of London, he could not dispense the most necessary drugs to his patients *in England* without the license of the London Apothecaries' Company. Ireland had also its Universities and Corporations, the former holding large general privileges, and the latter possessing restrictive rights which were jealously maintained. One peculiar monopoly possessed by the corporations operated greatly to their advantage. In the charters of our great public charities for the sick, was introduced a clause, that no one who was not a member of a corporation, should hold the office of physician, surgeon, or apothecary, as the case may be; so that, gradually, all those who looked forward to obtaining opportunities of distinction, or reaching a high position, were obliged to become members of these institutions, which thus absorbed all the leading men in the profession.

Unlike the Universities, which had large and similar powers granted to all of them, and which gave their graduates, when thoroughly educated, the right to practise medicine throughout the country, and, indeed, throughout all lands and among all people, the corporations possessed limited and varied privileges, which they exercised on a kind of feudal or territorial tenure. To the Universities, education and knowledge of the duties to be performed, as determined by examinations and promotion to degrees, were the only titles to public confidence. The corporations, on the other hand, jealously guarded the mysteries of a craft, opposed all encroachments upon their particular domain, and required learning and knowledge, although sufficiently tested already,

to pay toll at the entrance gate of their guild, as an introduction to practice. It would be useless now to inquire what amount of good was obtained by Universities as distinguished from corporations, or whether the ample rights granted to the one were or were not in times past usefully checked by the local powers of the other. The medical corporations have been likened to the City Companies, which, however serviceable they may have been in nursing the infancy of British commerce and trade, contribute little or nothing to their advancement at the present period. For a long time, however, although they were constantly differing with one another, they did not act in opposition to the Universities. On the contrary, we find from their past histories that they willingly acknowledged the value of the instruction therein received, and encouraged its development. In this city especially, so far were they at that time from countenancing opposition schools, that they materially assisted in establishing the Medical Faculty of the University, and in examining for degrees. They even suppressed their own special professorships as soon as the extension of university instruction warranted their doing so.[1]

Under such circumstances, the Universities and Corporations acted, on the whole, harmoniously together, each developing its own resources, and each recognising the position of the other. The Corporations of Surgeons at length separated from their associates the barbers, as had the apothecaries previously from their friends the grocers, and both assumed a more learned and scientific character. The University doctors, on the other hand, readily joined the Colleges of Physicians, and unquestionably assisted in elevating those corporations to the positions of honour and dignity which they subsequently attained.

I do not propose to enter into all the circumstances which have disturbed this satisfactory state of things. Among insti-

[1] Dr Beilby's Address, pp. 22, 23. See also, Historical Sketch of the Royal College of Surgeons, by Dr John Gairdner. Edinburgh, 1859. Pp. 21 and 24.

tutions having professedly similar objects, but founded on diametrically opposite principles, it might have been expected that, as education and scientific culture advanced, they would ultimately come into collision. The separate requirements they demanded from the student before he was allowed to present himself for examination, rendered it difficult for him to frame a course of study that would satisfy the particular bodies which the possible exigencies of his future residence or residencies might require. Instead of a uniform and national education for the country at large, we had numerous local educations, so that one corporation taxed the other with encouraging too low, or insisting on unnecessarily high acquirements. Some boards, for example, required only one six months' course of lectures on anatomy, most of them required attendance on two such courses, a few on three, and one board demanded attendance on four. Again, while some corporations thought attendance on clinical surgery for three months sufficient, others insisted on attendance for eighteen months, that is, six times as much. And so with many other subjects of study, some of which, thought essential by this institution, were deemed altogether unnecessary by that. Ten universities, nine corporations, and four medical boards for the public services, gave twenty-three different systems of education for the purpose of properly educating a medical man—a state of things that does not exist in any other civilised country. The inconvenience thus caused to the student was extreme: so puzzling was the arrangement of study, that mistakes were of constant occurrence, and these could only be rectified by the sacrifice of valuable time, and of great additional expenditure. Again, having obtained his diploma or diplomas, and practised his profession for some time in one part of the country, if he found it convenient to change his residence, say from Scotland to England, he was under the necessity of again being examined, and of again paying fees to other corporations, in order to escape actions at law. These at one time were pretty numerous; and it was shown by repeated decisions, that, whilst ignorant pretenders

and quacks could not be successfully dealt with, well educated physicians and surgeons had to pay heavy damages. It was also made apparent, that if a man were poisoned or badly treated by a person who did not pretend to have studied medicine, the fault was not so much his as that of the foolish party who had trusted him. But if a respectable qualified practitioner made a mistake, he was severely punished. Although this might be very good law, its general effect was to encourage individuals to impose upon the public, to injure those who had carefully studied their profession, and, with the intention of benefiting corporations, to overthrow the very objects for which they were instituted. A medical man pursuing his profession was like a traveller on the highways or great rivers—the Rhine for instance—under the old feudal system, where it was impossible to go far without meeting tolls, barriers, and castles—causing obstacle, interdict, and extortion.

So inextricable was the mass of heterogeneous laws and regulations respecting the education and privileges of physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries of the British Isles, that it seemed irremediable. During the last thirty years, however, many efforts were made to interest the Legislature in the subject, but with very indifferent success. Every attempt was impeded by the obvious necessity of removing those exclusive privileges enjoyed by certain corporations, which they of course were interested in maintaining. The apathy of Parliament proved also a great obstacle. For, while a malt bill or a paper bill could excite intense interest, the question of whether the health of the people should be watched over by well qualified or by comparatively ignorant men, seemed to excite no interest at all. Still less could the public be made to comprehend that it was a subject which more affected them than it did even the medical profession. But I would take this opportunity of saying that, however distasteful and professional this matter may appear, there is, in truth, none literally of such vital interest to the public. For, after all, how few among mankind can be said to escape from ill-health or disease in one form or another.

They must, therefore, at some period confide their lives to the skill and attention of the medical man. For him is then raised the veil which screens the privacy of domestic life, and to him, in many instances not only is the peace and happiness, but the interests and honour of families, entrusted. The patient has no knowledge of his malady, nor of the conformation of that wonderful structure which is prostrated by disease. Yet so interested, although so ignorant, are mankind in all that concerns their health, that their confidence is constantly abused by designing persons. Any presumptuous man who assumes the title of doctor, by telling impressionable persons that some bodily organ is disordered, may strongly operate on their imaginations and influence their feelings. In this manner such persons may be rendered uneasy and miserable, though nothing be visible, tangible, or perceptible to their senses. Not unfrequently, ruin to the peace of entire families has thus been produced. The public, then, are especially interested in seeing that the man who possesses so much power, possesses also the knowledge and character to use it properly; and every Government that watches over the welfare of a people is bound to regulate the qualifications of those who practise medicine under its sway.

These views becoming more general, a bill at length passed the Legislature in 1858, which abolished the territorial privileges of the corporations, and permitted every medical man to practise, according to his qualification or qualifications, throughout the kingdom. It empowered a Council to be formed of delegates from the various universities and corporations—a sort of medical parliament—which was to settle the details of all vexed questions. It ordered the preparation and publication of a Register of legally qualified practitioners, and of a national Pharmacopœia; and provided that the licentiates and fellows of a college in one part of the country, who might desire to join another in a different part of it, might do so on the payment of a small sum (L.2). In this manner the evils resulting from local privileges and jurisdiction were to a great extent removed. Other dis-

puted points as to the nature of qualifications, what should constitute a national and uniform medical education, instead of the vexatious curricula of so many medical boards, and a variety of important but minor considerations, were to be determined by this Medical Council. Since the Act has become law, a Register of qualified practitioners, for the information of the public, and having absolute authority in courts of law, has been published; a national Pharmacopœia is in a forward state of preparation; but as to the other points we have still to wait for further deliberations of the Council.

While these efforts to regulate the medical profession, or what has been called Medical Reform, were proceeding, other attempts were being made to extend and improve the advantages of our national Universities, or what has been called University Reform. It became generally felt that the system sanctioned by long usage in these ancient institutions required modification to meet the altered demands of the times; that the great end of all education was not to acquire abstract learning or science, but to render knowledge useful in life; and that the value of that education ought to be tested by its fitness to prepare men for the various professions and administrative offices of the country. It was maintained that a university education, therefore, should make not merely a learned man, but also a practical man, and that academical degrees should not be regarded only as marks of honour, to be crowned, as in the Olympian games, with chaplets of barren leaves, but should be considered as proofs of proficiency, and rewarded with branches on which, like those from the garden of the Hesperides, we might look for golden fruit. In short, the spirit of our time, and the most obvious good policy, pointed to the support and extension of the Universities as the true source of professional knowledge for the youth of our country. It is there only that intimacies are formed between men of different classes and professions; it is there that the narrow tone of mind, fostered by mere professional schools, is counteracted; it is there that the associated students learn the value of general

information and enlarged ideas when brought to bear upon distinct pursuits; and it is there that the prejudices of caste and of corporate exclusiveness are merged in the catholic desire to render education as general as possible for the good of the country at large. Great changes, in consequence, have been gradually made in the government and regulations of the English and Irish Universities. A new University was established in London, a second in Durham, and another with three colleges in different cities of Ireland, each having a complete medical faculty. And, lastly, the Scottish Universities have been made the subject of an Act of Parliament, whereby, as you are aware, this University obtained a new constitution, which is now in full operation, and which gives students, graduates, and professors a share in its government.

It would be evidently premature to speak of what is likely to be the result of all this legislation with regard to the welfare of the medical profession. But already events have taken place with which, as materially influencing your future position, you should be acquainted.

The Medical Act empowers all licentiates, members, or fellows of the chartered corporations, as well as those holding University degrees, to place their names on the Medical Register, and to practise medicine, according to their qualification or qualifications, throughout the kingdom. This phraseology, while it clearly abolishes territorial rights, causes great confusion as regards the meaning of qualification. I trust that you, as University graduates, are qualified for all kinds of practice. But inasmuch as some corporations give a license to practise medicine, others to practise surgery, others to practise pharmacy, and one licenses to practise midwifery, the question arises, whether it be necessary, under the new system, to pass separate examinations before separate bodies for each of these subjects, or sufficient to pass one examination including all of them. While a College of Surgeons can give licenses to practise surgery, a College of Physicians can give licenses to practise medi-

cine. But these corporations are not entitled to license in both. The framers of this bill, however, seem to have recognised that an unnecessary multiplication of examinations, entailing as they do great expense to the student, should not be encouraged, and this for the obvious reason that they offer no more protection to the public than would a single examination if properly conducted. The bill, accordingly, provides that two or more corporations may unite for the purpose of constituting one examining board, and thereby securing at once an efficient examination in two or more of their especial departments—the successful candidate receiving the licenses of the different corporations who so unite. This plan, if conscientiously carried out, cannot but be of the greatest service, and, without depriving these bodies of their privileges, abolishes one of the great evils to which I have previously alluded. Thus in England, a union of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons would enable those distinguished bodies to appoint able physicians and surgeons in every way qualified to carry out the important duties of examiners, and what seems to be the purposes of the Act. Such would appear to be the reason why the English Poor-law and Army Medical Boards have recently insisted that their medical officers, who are required to practise both medicine and surgery, should possess what is called the double qualification. In other words, they demand to be satisfied that such candidates have been carefully examined in medicine by physicians, and in surgery by surgeons, which is obviously the only way of ensuring that the examination has been a *bona fide* one.

But in Scotland, the Fellows of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons are, with few exceptions, parties who practise both branches of the art, and are what is called in the profession general practitioners. There is, in truth, little distinction between the one college and the other; so that, in forming a joint board, unless the few physicians on the one side, and the few surgeons on the other, constituted that board, there would be no guarantee of a thorough medical and surgical examination,

as would occur in the case I have supposed of the London Colleges. Instead of different elements being united to make a perfect whole, similar elements are brought together from the two institutions, neither medicine nor surgery being properly represented at all as distinct professions. Such a plan does not fulfil the object of the Medical Act, nor meet the requirements of the Poor-law and Army Medical Boards.

While these powers were granted by the Medical Act to the numerous corporations, the ancient large privileges granted to the universities were confirmed. Indeed, had not these concessions been made on both sides, no medical bill could possibly have passed the Legislature. Universities, therefore, are also empowered to grant the degrees of Doctor, Bachelor, or Licentiate of Medicine, and Master of Surgery; and their graduates, on presenting their diplomas, are to be enrolled in the General Register of Medical Practitioners. Thus corporations, by their union, as well as the Universities in themselves, may now grant licenses to practise both in medicine and surgery; nor can I see that any other meaning can be given to the Act of Parliament. The great Continental universities have immemorially given degrees in both branches of the art. The University of Glasgow has done so for upwards of forty years, and the University of Dublin, within the last six years, has followed their example. The Royal Commissioners have proposed that the University of Edinburgh should do so likewise, a privilege which it has always possessed but never exercised, because it was not necessary, until now. But there can be no doubt that the adoption of this course generally will be of great advantage to the public and to the profession at large. It would not only elevate the status of surgeons, by conferring upon them academical rank, but would constitute another means of getting rid of those corporate distinctions which have created so much jealousy among medical men. It is much to be regretted that the corporations are not satisfied with this arrangement, which requires to be sanctioned by the Privy Council.

The necessity of extending the preliminary studies, however, has met with the concurrence of all parties. The conviction has gained ground, that he who wishes to understand the phenomena of the animal economy must approach them by the way of a logical and physical, as well as of a classical education. In future, therefore, no one can enter upon the study of medicine until his knowledge in literature and arts has been more satisfactorily tested than it was formerly. The regulations on this head, it is hoped, will tend to enlarge the attainments of medical students, and produce a favourable reaction on medicine itself.

I must not overlook the circumstance, that it has already become necessary to repeal an important clause in the Medical Act, in consequence of an occurrence which was not anticipated. This consisted in one of the corporations selling its licenses to the surgeons, apothecaries, and druggists of England, without examination, for the sum of L.10; while many of the purchasers, to the astonishment of the profession, assumed in consequence the university title of Doctor of Medicine, which the College in question has taken no steps to prevent. I shall not venture to state any opinion of my own as to this unfortunate transaction, but give you that of an eminent physician, himself a Fellow of the College he complains of, and now President of the British Medical Association:—"It is to be hoped," he says, "that the self-respect of our profession will deter its members from supporting this sale of medical indulgences, and so, by rendering the English traffic less lucrative than was anticipated, lead its promoters to remember the purpose for which their College was established. A distinction in letters, whether in medicine, law, or divinity, which may be obtained by merely paying down a few pounds, is worth precisely what it costs; it proves pecuniary ability, nothing more. The initials of physician by purchase would correctly intimate the estimation in which the possessor of such a distinction will be held by every one but himself. There is a want of more of acknowledged

authority in our profession, and not of less. And although colleges may have but little power to create this, they are not, as in this instance, without the power to lessen that which exists. I feel personally," continues Dr Radcliffe Hall, "that faith is not kept with those who formerly considered it creditable to be connected with the Edinburgh College of Physicians; and that, in bare justice, every Fellow ought to have a vote in deciding whether or not so radical a degradation of his College should take place. Surely there is great defect in the constitution of the Medical Council of Great Britain if it cannot interfere to prevent so grave an abuse of vested authority as this."[1]

Gentlemen, the Medical Council did interfere, and insisted on a medical examination; but how far this was rendered stringent we will not inquire. No less than 356 candidates passed this so-called examination between the 29th March and 20th April of the present year, and during twelve months nearly 1000 persons altogether obtained the license.

The result has been, that the London College of Physicians, having first remonstrated in vain, has properly refused to admit this flood of licentiates to its own body on the conditions provided by the Act; and the clause, which enabled a medical man on changing his residence to join a sister college at a nominal charge, is sought to be repealed in a short bill, which, under the circumstances, all parties admit to be necessary. Thus, not only has the status of physic and physicians been lowered in Scotland, but all fellows and licentiates of every college in the kingdom are excluded from an important reciprocal privilege, which had been long struggled for, and which was conferred upon them by the Legislature.

As young graduates, you will naturally feel indignant that the title of Doctor, just conferred upon you, should be usurped by parties who have no claim to it. Such, however, is the difficulty of legislating on this matter, and the indiscriminate

[1] Address to the South-Western Branch of the British Medical Association. *Brit. Med. Jour.*, July 9, 1859.

manner in which the highest medical title is given by the public, that I have no other advice to give you than this,—viz., that on all proper occasions you should at least do yourselves the justice of pointing out the distinction (not apparently understood in England) between the College of Physicians and the University of this city.

Such, then, is a short account of the mode of government, and the actual political condition of the profession into which you are about to enter. Let us hope, that, as the Medical and the Scotch Universities Acts begin to operate, the cause of medical education, and the improvement of the schools, will advance. Among these, that of Edinburgh has hitherto occupied a proud position; and great indeed will be the responsibility of those who, with the power of supporting and increasing her influence, are induced to cripple her resources and impede her usefulness, in the vain hope of reconciling interests and satisfying institutions which are essentially antagonistic. What we require is a legislation which, instead of maintaining a system of rival institutions and opposing schools, perpetuating disunion and retarding the cause of scientific progress among us, will draw these discordant elements together, for the purpose of co-operation and mutual support. Nor is this impracticable, as such a constitution exists in most Continental nations, and has been found to work admirably. To this end the various universities and corporations, instead of independent and contradictory action, should be empowered to carry out one system of education and privilege in the three divisions of the kingdom, subordinate to a uniform direction. Instead of numerous schools acting as rivals to and injuring one another, a machinery should be devised by which the talent now diffused and wasted should be concentrated under a wise administration, so as to strengthen instead of weaken our national Universities. In this manner the strongest stimulus would be given to successful exertion, while ability and scientific merit might hope to meet something like adequate reward.

Gentlemen, believing that the interests of medicine as a science, its dignity as a profession, and its usefulness to the community, are intimately associated with the manner in which public bodies carry out the spirit of their foundation statutes and charters, you will not, I trust, regard my having directed your attention to this important subject as unnecessary or inopportune. To explain fully the numerous intricacies of this perplexed matter, time would not permit. I shall be satisfied if, on reflection, my remarks shall have led you to see the incongruity in a science like medicine, which is one and indivisible, of its cultivators being constantly opposed to one another on account of corporate distinctions and animosities. I would earnestly urge you to labour in the cause of union—which, proverbially, is strength—as the only method of placing the profession of medicine in a dignified position with regard to the State on the one hand, and the public on the other, and thus furthering the beneficent object for which it is cultivated.

In conclusion, I hope you will allow me to say that, although on this occasion I have principally dwelt on the subject of medical and university reform, such of you as have followed my instructions within these walls, will, I think, acquit me of any design to lessen your interest in medicine itself through the desire of converting you into medical politicians. On the contrary, I believe as firmly now as when I sat on the very benches you now occupy to receive my own degree, that the only method of producing good practitioners and teachers of medicine is a sincere and persevering determination to investigate the nature and treatment of diseases. Accidental means may assist or retard; but this plan, associated with good conduct and well-directed endeavour, must in the end succeed. For at no period in the history of medicine has there been a wider field of inquiry laid open, or a greater demand for earnest labourers to cultivate it. The immense strides which have been made in all the sister arts and sciences have given to us new and powerful instruments by which

we can more successfully explore the mysteries of life; determine with greater exactitude the structure and composition of our bodies, and recognise with closer precision the disorders of its living mechanism. If the social and political state of medicine is changing and making progress, its scientific and practical conditions are undergoing a similar process; and who that has watched its recent vast development will not recognise in it a power that must cause it ultimately to triumph over every retarding system of corporate and interested polity?

As an illustration of this, I may state that physiologists have now succeeded in demonstrating the minutest atoms of which our bodies are composed, each of which, though invisible to naked sight, and minute beyond conception, has its position assigned to it, and its endowment determined by an Almighty power. The process also is well known by which these gradually mix, separate, coalesce, and arrange themselves, so that out of an amorphous mass, such as a seed or an egg, there is gradually developed the perfect creature, instinct with life. And yet, what can be more widely different in form and function than a living plant or animal, when compared with the minute germs from which they originate? This transformation, the steps of which, by the aid of instruments, we can now see, was a short time ago as unknown as the one referred to by the inspired writer, who tells us that there is a natural body and a spiritual body, and that the one shall certainly be changed into the other. May we not hope that our science, which has for its object the well-being of man on earth, if rightly understood and assisted by religion, will some day, in like manner, enable us to view more clearly the mysterious connection which unites his physical and spiritual nature hereafter? If so, it must be by associating the study of medicine, as is done in universities, with the sister Faculties of Arts and of Theology. In this and every other ennobling work of our common profession, whether scientific or practical, you will all, I trust, be partakers, and some of you pioneers, in the path of discovery and of fame. Then your

Alma Mater will be proud to receive from her sons the reflected lustre of their labours and their triumphs, and you will bestow on her, in return for the honours she has this day conferred on you, that delight which the nourishing mother experiences in regarding the growth and prosperity of a vigorous offspring.

Professor Dyce

Aberdeen