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*An Introductory Address to the Students of the  
Medico-Chirurgical College.*

BY

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Professor of Ophthalmology in the Medico-Chirurgical College.

Delivered October 3, 1894.



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Reprinted from THE MEDICAL BULLETIN, October, 1894.





# An Introductory Address to the Students of the Medico-Chirurgical College.\*

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A SENATOR, quite famed for his eloquence, asked a brother-senator, who sat beside him during an introductory debate in Congress, to stop and hear him speak. The friend replied, "If you are going to make a speech I would be very glad to listen to it, but if you are going to read one of your infernal compositions I do not propose to stay." By a dispensation of your Faculty, I have been obliged to trespass upon your indulgence this evening, and ask you not to leave the room before my composition is read.

This day marks an epoch in your lives. You have launched your canoe on a stream full of hidden rocks; many snags, much disappointment, and no few hardships will overtake you before you arrive at the great ocean of your professional life, which as yet hides from you those worlds you intend to conquer. You do not here leave behind you your student life,—you have only shunted to another track; you now only concentrate your studies to a more definite purpose. You have elected to master the subtleties of a noble profession, and an inestimable service lures you toward its mastery. You have no doubt decided upon this avocation only after the most careful consideration and thought. Your friends trust you, and we trust you; see therefore to it that you neither disappoint yourselves nor us.

No profession demands more from her students than medicine. She is a jealous mistress. The midnight oil must be consumed; untiring

and unceasing your efforts must be made before you can become proficient in your art. The late Sir Andrew Clark, in an address to a class of medical students, said, "Labor is the life of life. Nature will let no man overwork himself unless he play her false."

The majority of you come from the rural districts, all endowed with strong constitutions, clear heads, and good nerve-force. See to it that you do not play your natures false. You will be surrounded by the glitter and glamour of city's temptations,—fascinating and pleasant as the Luralei's glance. Some of you may become easy victims to the sorceress. Leave her and turn aside, and stick to your calling. Remember, as Dickens has said, "It is well for a man to respect his own vocation, whatever it is." You have more to do than simply to respect your calling. Remember that, in joining the ranks of the students of the Medico-Chirurgical College, you must respect them. You have also a Faculty to consider, who is closer to you than a parent. But I feel confident, when I look upon the bright, intellectual countenances about me, that the above advice is perforce unnecessary. What a grand thing it is to meet students with a purpose! I see it stamped on all your countenances. I see more; and I hear you utter, "Oh, gentle Faculty, by and through your aid we will win." It is written in letters of burning flame upon all your pennants. You ask, Is it fair that all should be demanded from the student and nothing from your instructors? No;

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your Faculty have grave responsibilities in directing you in the way you are to acquire the science of the healing art. They have been awake to this fact for a long time. The changes in the policy of the school, the selection of the best teachers in the various departments, the addition of new chairs, the selection of laymen of recognized and superior ability in their respective walks of life, all tend to make this college one of the most scientific and practical in the country. Your college has adopted a course which is out of the beaten track, ambitions outside of the old-fashion type of college teaching. Your Faculty do not wish to be known as men who simply know their books; they will show you that here you will obtain not only a safe and sound scientific education in medicine, but also eminently a practical one as well.

“The foundation of our art is knowledge of the material to be worked upon,—the human body. Anatomy to its uttermost details, anatomy naked-eyed and minute, normal and abnormal, healthy and diseased, is the foundation of all good surgery.” So said J. Greig Smith, and so says our Nestor of anatomy, Professor Pancoast.

Your teachers of anatomy will lead you on gradually and pleasantly through the structure of the human body, which you must know all about. How can you expect to become proficient except you know thoroughly the genesis of your profession? The great Titian was a master at mixing paints before he could produce the matchless gems which are still the admiration of the artistic world. Michael Angelo had to know how to temper his chisel before he aspired to produce that wonderful statue of Moses; Morse, the conductivity of metals before he could send messages with lightning speed to the uttermost parts of the earth. Houston, in connection with his former colleague Thomson, had to produce a dynamo before they could let loose the Promethean spark that now illuminates this and hundreds of other cities the world over. In all the mechanical arts men must understand the foundation of their calling if they wish to succeed. Is it less to ask you to labor unceasingly to understand the frame-work, the chemical laboratory, the animated organism, the wonderful handiwork of God,—man?

In the acquirement of your profession you will not so much, as time rolls on, be carried to greater heights, but to broader fields of

knowledge; and, at last, when you have filled the cells of your brain with theory, then the practical side of your teaching will be given you,—a knowledge so essential to your success in life. Many of you will elect to become general practitioners. Of what value to you is the knowledge imparted by your Professor of Anatomy, unless you can appreciate and follow the teaching of an Anders, or the application and technique of surgery as taught by Laplace and Ashton? “What hearing is to the physician, so is touch to the surgeon. It is the intellect which teaches both. So, when the opportunity arises, educate both ear and hand.”

In this class we confidently hope to find many young men born to be masters of their art. To such I would say: Though work comes easy, work all the harder; make the talent given you increase and multiply. Though you may have genius, yet patience and hard work are necessary to make even genius fruitful. To those who have not been so well endowed, much may, nevertheless, be accomplished by perseverance. Your Faculty will lend all of you an ever-helping hand. The fable of the victory of the tortoise over the hare should be fresh in your memories. As the masses, your future patients, become more highly educated it behooves you to aspire to a higher grade of intellectuality. We must to-day have physicians who are not only skilled in their profession, but who have a mind sufficiently broad to cope with the living questions of the day. In no time of the world's history are the intelligence and judgment of physicians so largely sought after and so highly esteemed in the important questions as how best to cope with epidemic diseases in densely populated communities. If I may make a criticism, I must say that the preliminary education of the young men who are choosing the medical profession for their life-work has not been as thorough as it should be. In this State it is now necessary to pass two boards of examiners before you can practice medicine. Is this fair under existing laws? I say, emphatically, no! The State puts on the restrictions, but does she in like manner give us a preventive? While our Commonwealth is doing much to foster education, she is far behind in giving aid to young men who eventually must look after the health of her people. The actual prevention of outbreaks of virulent diseases or of blindness is far cheaper than trying to eradi-

cate such evils after they have become epidemic. But in the mean time where must this aid come from? Clearly, we must look to the men who, in the abundance of their wealth, can afford to build laboratories and found institutions where young men can get this preliminary schooling.

The older countries of Europe are far ahead of us in these matters; their medical chairs are richly endowed by the State, and their occupants do nothing but investigate, analyze, and transmit. If the public wish protection, they must perforce lend us a helping purse. I must quote what one of our leading teachers in medicine says on this subject\*: "In this country, for the most part, we cannot look to the State for endowment for medical education, but we must appeal to private beneficence. A few public-spirited and generous men and women have already given practical proof of their appreciation of these facts. With more general and fuller realization of these needs and present condition of medical education, and the results that can be secured by its liberal endowment, there is every reason to believe that these benefactions will be largely and rapidly increased, and that thereby the condition of medical education in this country shall cease to be a reproach to us."

How can we escape from this reproach? You young men who have not had a college education can now take advantage of your environments. You have arrived at an age when your mind becomes retentive and capable of becoming burnished by attrition. In this large city instructive lectures are given on a variety of intellectual subjects. The Franklin Institute throws her doors open to you all. The Academy of Natural Science in like manner extends a helping hand. The Young Men's Christian Association and our churches, whose pulpits, filled by the ablest clergy in the land, will also welcome you. Select such plays at our theatres as will rest your mind by way of diversion. Study not only the words, but the grace and movements of the actors. Remember, it is not fair to yourselves to try to brighten your minds and let your bodies remain awkward and ungainly. Plato said, "That one must form not only a mind, and not only a body, but both a mind and a body, to become a man."

\* Prof. William H. Welch, M. D., Baltimore, Md.

In practical medicine, as in many of the mechanical arts, we need not fear reproach. We have shown the world what we can do; but how much better it would be if our scientific knowledge were equal to our mechanical skill! Then we should have students flocking to America for their medical education, just as we are having students from all over the world flocking to our twin sister, the Philadelphia Dental College, which leads the world to-day in practical dentistry. Handicapped, as we are, we are nevertheless progressing. Your college is heading toward that plane of efficiency which places her in the front rank of medical institutions. Many additions have been made to the corps of instructors. Two new chairs have been added: a chair of Physics, and it is with great pride that I revert to the fact that the gentleman who fills that chair is eminent in his department, and honored not only in this country, but throughout the whole scientific world. Gentlemen, it is a rare privilege that you will have the opportunity of listening to such a teacher as Prof. Edwin J. Houston. Another chair which has been added, and which will be of superlative value to you, is that of Electro-Therapeutics. In Professor Kennelly you have an instructor who is one of the leading masters in this new department of science.

And so I could continue to speak of the other teachers recently added to the college. With such additional advantages, you will continue to keep the olive and the gold\* ever bright, ever shining. There are other opportunities given you for advancing yourselves. You have a variety of fraternal associations; you will be asked to join quiz classes and societies. Join them, and become active workers. Let the "pride of ambition and the inspiration of generous emulation" help you to individual achievement. Let each week have its review. Not only drive the nail, but clinch it. By this means you will become adepts by asking and answering questions. If you fall below your classmates, their success will be a means of stimulating you to better work. Some of the most pleasing recollections in after-life will be your class-day associations. As you go on from one semester to another your line of instruction will be in keeping with your progress. Your last two years will find you in the field of practical medicine. I mean by this that you will

\* College colors.

be given the opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with disease at the bedside. You will learn the technique of surgery, gynecology, and obstetrics, and in the special departments, such as ophthalmology, otology, and dermatology, you will have opportunities unsurpassed. Our large clinics in the various departments warrant me in making this statement.

You are on the edge of a future which will, at the touch of your hand, show mighty developments. Let another Pancoast, Gross, Pasteur, or a Koch be found among your class. "Do what you can in your life; make what you can of your life; but, above all, love the highest and deepest and best that you can." As you stand on the shore of the great ocean before you, do not think that you have no other motive than to acquire sufficient knowledge to enable you to pass your examination and thus get a diploma. Medicine is not a complete science; many changes have taken place in the medical world during the last decade; many more will be unfolded in the next ten years. Look what changes have been produced by the discoveries of Pasteur and Koch! In many diseases the whole line of theory and treatment has been changed. Contrast the surgery of to-day with that of a few

days ago! How little is known about contagion! The vast field of preventive medicine is almost entirely unexplored. I feel sure that the day is not far distant when such a chair will become the most important in medical colleges. You who are inspired, remember that many crowns of laurels await you. You may not acquire wealth in gaining these honors, but you may do more,—you may confer blessings upon your fellow-man. "Who can estimate the money value of the discoveries of Louis Pasteur to humanity?" asks one of our ablest writers. In the opinion of Professor Huxley, these discoveries "have made good the war-indemnity of five thousand million francs paid by France to Germany."

Personal habits have much to do in making or unmaking a professional career. Abstain from all unpleasant habits. See that your bodily health is as well looked after as your mental. Young men when they join college classes are sometimes led away by the idea that to chew tobacco, use profane language, and approach the slovenly are passports to manliness. Do not make this mistake. If education refine the mind, let your habits refine your body. Remember that, of all men, the medical practitioner should be, above all things, a perfect gentleman.



