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PART I.

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

ART. XIX.—*Some Lessons of Life.** By W. THORNLEY STOKER,
President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland;
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IN pursuance of a honourable custom I am here as President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland to declare its School open for the Session of 1894-95, and to address to its students a few words of welcome and of advice. As regards welcome, I need not expend myself in much speaking, because the interest this College has always taken in its School speaks more strongly than I could for the pleasure with which we see a new class commencing its studies and the earnest hope we entertain for its welfare. As for advice, I shall remember that you get a good deal of it. La Rochefoucauld says: "We bestow nothing so liberally as our advice," and in pity of you under the avalanche of counsel which has fallen on you in introductory lectures within the last few weeks, I shall place a strict limit on my benevolence in this respect, and be as brief as I may. Sydney Smith has said that some one deserved "to be preached to death by wild curates," and I have no wish to

* Being an Introductory Address delivered to the Students of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Thursday, November 1, 1894.

become polemical or inflict so dreadful a penalty on a number of young and, for the most part innocent, persons.

It is a pleasure to be able to tell you that certain matters which you wished changed, and concerning which you addressed the Council last Session, have received the attention of that body and have been altered in the directions you desired. The four principal points of your representations were—

1. Increased accommodation for students in the way of waiting and refreshment rooms;
2. Alteration of fees for the re-examination of rejected candidates;
3. Reduction of the cost of the Conjoint Diplomas; and
4. That candidates who had failed to pass should not be required to take out additional courses in the subjects in which they had been rejected.

Concerning the first of these, increased accommodation for the students of the School has been provided, and more will be done in the same direction; you can now have that physical pabulum which you require as well as mental food, and can keep your bodies nourished as well as your minds.

Regarding the second, we have conferred with the College of Physicians, and have arranged a sliding scale of fees for re-examination, which is now in force, and under which a charge is made proportionate to the number of subjects in which examination has to be carried out. I may remind you that even before this change was effected the fees for re-examination were here much smaller than in either Scotland or England, and that you were, and are, greatly better off in this respect than your fellow-students across the Channel.

The third subject is the more difficult one, of the reduction of the diploma fees. Here we are encumbered by difficulties. One is that the College of Physicians shares the fee, and although technically we can reduce our proportion of it without reference to that body, in actual practice mutual action would be called for. Let me remind you that our fee, although somewhat larger than that in Scotland, is not in excess of that in London, and let me also tell you that any money derived by the College from its diploma fees is entirely spent on matters proper to your interests—on examination, on the sustenance of a library and a museum, and on the expenses of this School. Do not imagine that the School is a source of profit to the College.

On the contrary, it is a very costly appendage. It is one on which, in the interests of medical education, the College has spent large sums of money, but which, although it is a severe yearly drain on our exchequer, we have cheerfully maintained in your service and that of the public.

Of the possibility of reducing this fee, I can say no more than that it is receiving anxious consideration, but it is a matter in which we must go slowly, for this College has no endowment, and is only able to serve the cause of surgical education by the profit hence derived. Having reduced those fees I have previously referred to, we must see what lies in front of us before we step farther; we must write *festina lente* on our tablets; and not hurry into a reduction which would impede or prevent our public usefulness and lessen our power to be of service to you and to those who may succeed you.

The fourth matter, that of requiring from rejected candidates evidence of having attended additional courses of practical instruction, is one we need not stop to discuss. The rule is not ours. It is made by the General Medical Council, and we are powerless to alter it. We have one protection against its abuse—that it is discretionary; and as it has not yet been made compulsory by the General Council, you have as yet no grievance about it. Time enough to complain if it becomes operative.

To pass from matters which have troubled you to those which seem to be exercising other people of late, I would like to say a word about the alleged falling off in the Dublin School of Surgery and Medicine. I utterly repudiate the idea that any decadence in the quality of teaching has taken place. I am convinced that the abilities and devotion which marked the teachers of a past generation is existent in that of to-day, and that those who succeed the Irish workers and thinkers of our time will do them the justice of a recognition they can surely claim. It is the fashion with certain pessimists to glorify the past at the expense of the present. View these persons with doubt, and consider whether they may not have formed a standard for their contemporaries founded on a narrow introspection of their own intellectual position.

Apart from a change in quality, it has been stated that a falling off in numbers has taken place in the students of the Dublin School of Medicine, and it has been inferred that this

implies a material decadence. Supposing the fact to be true, I deny the inference. But, do not number Dublin students only, when you measure the Irish School; recollect that three new centres of education have sprung up in Belfast, Cork, and Galway, and that they have naturally subtracted from the congregation of students in this city. Or if you come to gauge our strength by the number of men who obtain qualifications from the Irish universities and colleges, do not forget that nearly every student educated in certain provincial schools who does not proceed to the Degrees of the Royal University, goes to England or Scotland for his diploma. If these students elect to obtain Scotch or English qualifications it is surely no argument against Irish schools, where they have obtained the training necessary to fit them for their diplomas. Let us see if this exodus can be fairly taken as an argument against Irish Licensing Bodies. Why do these students go? Is it because the diplomas are cheaper than those at home? If this be a reason it does not apply to England, and the difference is so small in Scotland that it can only influence a moderate number of students, and is of no general import. This is the more true in that the apparent economy of the Scotch fee is lessened by the amount of the charges for re-examination. Or is it because the examinations are more easy to pass? If this be true, it is to the credit of the Irish corporations that they have not entered into an unworthy downward competition, but have in the best interests of the public good maintained a proper standard of professional fitness and refused to flood the market with practitioners of inferior merit.

But even suppose a falling off in the aggregate of Irish students had taken place, would it be wonderful? Look at the impoverished condition of the country and the unsettled state of those classes from which our students have been chiefly drawn, and see the way in which the gates of the approach to our profession are being gradually locked by that most imperious and irresponsible body, the General Medical Council. It seems to be working in nearly every direction except the right one; it is overloading the unhappy student with new subjects and new courses, and now has imposed a sorry burthen on him, and those who pay for him, in the shape of a fifth, and, I believe, wholly unnecessary, year of study. If any argument can be brought forward to justify this fifth year, it is that so much of

so many things have been given to the pupil to do that he cannot complete them in four years. This is a reason for diminishing his curriculum, not for weighting him with a further period of study. The General Council is working at the wrong end; it is all very well and very proper to bar the gate that leads from the life of the student to that of the practitioner, and to let none through save those duly qualified; but this process has been carried to excess, and enough attention has not been paid to guarding that other gate which leads into the life of the student. Men are allowed to enter the outer court of the temple who can never pass into its penetralia. Registration as a student of medicine should be dependent on passing a much more exact matriculation than at present, and subjects such as physics should be passed at this period, so as to leave the worker free for the more purely medical branches of his work. This would impose no additional penalty on the pupil, would add to his professional opportunities, and would prevent many a poor fellow commencing medical studies who will never be able to complete them. There is necessarily, under the growing severity of tests, an increasing number of such men, and the waste of time, money, and opportunity consequent on their being permitted, by too easy matriculation, to enter on medical studies, is to be lamented.

The latest exploit of the General Council is an act with reference to dental students which seems to me to strike a blow at the honesty and efficiency of their education. The old and costly system of apprenticeship has practically been reimposed, and this College, which had abolished it, has been compelled by the General Council to return to the *status quo ante bellum*. In this I believe the Council has been moved by influences I need not name, and for reasons I forbear to analyse. That a mistake has been made will be evident when the time comes—and it is not far off—when this imposition shall be again removed.

There is a recent occurrence which affects Irish students unfairly, and of which I would say a word. Until lately the class of gentlemen who were appointed to examine candidates for the Army Medical Services was nothing short of a scandal—so much so, that Mr. Campbell-Bannerman proceeded to rectify the abuse, and appointed a new and com-

petent Board of Examiners, but one composed of men working and teaching in London. In spite of strong representations made to him as to the injustice thus inflicted on Irish students, who form a large proportion of those competing for the Army Medical Service, the Minister for War refused to make any change. He was asked to appoint one Irish and one Scotch examiner for each two English, but no, it would not be done. Of course, students do better in competition when examined by those who have been engaged in educating them, and so a direct premium is offered to prepare for the Army Competitions in London. Considering that so large a part of the Military and Naval Medical Services has been recruited from Ireland, this is a grave injustice to our students and teachers.

It is the custom at meetings like ours to offer much counsel to those who are entering on their professional studies. They are advised *ad nauseam*, told when to work and when to play, what to eat and how much to drink, and given such a surfeit in general, that it is small wonder if they often fail to retain any great amount of it. You have been well crammed with unsavoury food of this kind, and I do not purpose to add to your load. But will you allow me, as an old student, to say a few words to my younger brethren, who are leaving these walls to fight the broader battle of life. I remember how much good counsel was given me when I began my medical studies as to how to occupy my years as a student, and how very little advice I got as to the conduct of my more hazardous life outside the walls of a college when I went into the world to seek my fortune. I think that out of my experiences I may be able to say a few words to others who will feel the want that I did. It is now 33 years since I sat for the first time on those benches to listen to an introductory lecture by Arthur Jacob; I have ever since been connected with this College—as a Student, a Demonstrator, a Professor, an Examiner, or a Member of its Council, and now as its President; and it is with grave feelings of responsibility that I come here to-day to renew the associations of my youth and mingle once more with those of a younger generation who are commencing to walk that path which, by the favour of God, I have trod for so many happy years. At such a moment I am full of earnest thoughts, and if I stay for a while to give some words of advice as to their

governance of themselves, to those who are about to enter on the active struggle of life, they will, I hope, believe that I am speaking out of a full heart, and in the trust that one or two of the many lessons of life which I have learned may help some wayfarers younger than myself. I do not presume to teach; I wish to speak as an elder to younger brothers, and one learns so much in his own life from his mistakes, that it may help you to know the pitfalls into which a previous traveller has been beguiled. Our mistakes are the milestones that mark the passage of our years and the growth of our knowledge, and from them, and not from our successes, we gather what wisdom we have.

I have learned that the quality which carries men most happily and successfully through life is that most uncommon one called "common sense." If you will watch—not one man, but all men, you will come to the knowledge that genius and learning, great though they be, are not such important factors in our lives as this precious gift. Ask what is meant by "common sense," and I will say, for want of more facile definition, "that possession of sound judgment which avoids mistakes." It is an attribute which can be improved by cultivation, and is a most comfortable one to contemplate, because although we may want genius or great learning, we may all own it in a measure, and may all increase it in ourselves. Mr. Whistler is not the class of philosopher I would, as a rule, recommend to the study of young men, but in that clever and eccentric "*Gentle Art of making Enemies*," he formulates some pieces of advice which, if not taken in too worldly a spirit, are worth considering in relation to your cultivation of your own common sense.

"Do not mind what men say of themselves."

"Do not mind too much what other men may say of them."

"Pay much attention to what you think of them. Watch them, study them, for by your study of other men you learn to see yourself and know your place in the scale of life."

As I have spoken of the attribute of common sense in connection with "success," do not interpret me as merely meaning that success which the world at large esteems. Remember that there is an inner as well as an outer life. The aspirations and strivings after worldly success which beguile us are but shadows. The true success is achieved when there comes that state of

stable equilibrium of mind which puts us at repose and when we accept our places in the scale of life with resignation or composure. Then our vain jealousies disappear, we estimate ourselves at our true worth, and can look at our fellows with no jaundice in our eyes.

Of all the individual qualities at our own command there are three that seem most precious to our well-being and dignity, and to our relations with those about us; they are—

Silence,

Tolerance, and

Obedience.

Bitterly must he who has lived in the world regret many things he has said; I know one man who does, but who has seldom had cause to lament his want of speech. Judicious reserve is often better than temperate speech; and those of us who can go through life observing the golden rule of silence are more blessed than even the most silver-tongued of mortals. If there are men in any relation of life of whom this is most true, it is ourselves, for the guarded tongue should be the special attribute of the physician, not only for his own sake, but for the protection of those with whom he is in contact.

He who early learns the lesson of Tolerance is spared much sorrow. "My dear child," said George Eliot in one of her letters, "the great lesson of life is tolerance," and an early appreciation of this will bring us peace with those about us, and lend to our mutual regard and esteem. The best loved and most revered men I have known have been those who were most judiciously silent and most tolerant. They have not been men without words, or of weak nature, but have been gifted with a happy sense of when not to speak, and when not to enter into rebellion against the acts or ideas of others.

For the better understanding of your fellows, and the better examination of yourselves, keep not aloof from those about you, for the recluse, or he who walks through the world wrapped in the mantle of the cynic, cannot have that sympathy with his kind from which a lofty morality may spring. A writer I have quoted before, said, "The first condition of human goodness is something to love; the second, something to reverence."

But the sternest discipline of all is that of Obedience. Theodore Watts, in one of his critical articles, has said, "The

finest definition of human happiness ever made was that embodied in the dying words of the good and great Dr. Hammond—"uniform obedience," exercising the instinct for obeying rather than the instinct for directing." In this double pronouncement you have the loftiest morality and the greatest wisdom, and a rule of life which, if you can but follow it, must lead you into the paths of summer.

Young fellow-students, I have said my words, and although they are few, if you and I can follow them we shall be happier, as well as better men, and more useful citizens. Cultivate common sense; be silent, tolerant, and obedient, and be not unrestful or unduly given to striving; accept things as they are ordained, and remember the words of the Caliph Ali:—

"Thy place in life is seeking after thee; therefore be thou at rest from seeking after it."

ART. XX.—*The Effects of Alcohol on our Military and Civil Population at Home and Abroad.** By BRIGADE-SURGEON F. E. M'FARLAND, A.M.D., retired; Consulting Physician, Ulster Hospital for Women and Children; President, Ulster Medical Society.

GENTLEMEN, I thank you most heartily for the great honour you have done me in electing me President of the Ulster Medical Society, and I thank Professor Byers for his generous remarks of me. We have all seen him shooting to the forefront of the Medical Profession, not only in Belfast but in the United Kingdom and further; and this he was bound to do, in virtue of his profound knowledge, brilliant talents, and force of character. He can well afford to be generous to me. When I retired from the army, in which I had been a surgeon for more than twenty years, I settled in Belfast. You received me kindly, permitted me to fall into your ranks, and, in due time, you have made me President of this great Society. I have not been much of an acquisition to the Society, have scarcely added to its literature, or even been a regular attendant at its meetings. Neither am I a North of Ireland man, nor did I study at your College. I did not put myself forward for the distinction—I assure you it came

* An Inaugural Address read before the Ulster Medical Society at the Opening of the Session, 2nd November, 1894.