THE RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

AS PLACES AT WHICH THE PRELIMINARY SCIENCES MAY BE STUDIED AND THE TIME GIVEN TO SUCH STUDIES COUNTED AS PART OR THE WHOLE OF THE FIRST YEAR OF THE MEDICAL CURRICULUM.

BY SIR HENRY MORRIS, BART., M.A., M.B. LOND.

ON Monday, May 29th, 1911, the General Medical Council by an overwhelming majority decided to place the secondary schools—which it had previously excluded from the scheduled list of non-medical institutions at which the medical curriculum may be commenced—on precisely the same footing as the “teaching institutions” known as the “technical science schools and colleges,” which have been recognised by the Council since the year 1893. Thus at last the Council has resolved on doing justice to a class of schools in which some of the best teaching in the preliminary sciences is obtainable in England; and thereby it recedes from an attitude which, besides giving offence and causing injury to these schools, was absurd and sophistical in itself.

When it became obvious in the course of the debate that all the Council, with only four or five exceptions at most, were favourably disposed towards my resolution, it seemed needlessly obstructive as well as ungracious to refuse to accept a change in the particular form of words in which it had been cast. And as a speech in reply from the mover of the debate was not required to assist the passing of the resolution it was therefore to be deprecated, especially because speech-making entails upon the General Council a cost of 18s. 9d. a minute.

It is, however, none the less desirable that certain of the arguments which have been urged against the recognition of the teaching of physics, chemistry, and biology at secondary schools, should not go altogether unrefuted; and it is well that the readers of the debate in the Council, and any other persons interested in the question, should know what the answers to these delusive arguments are.

Objections to Recognition Answered.

A.—It was said that if the teaching at secondary schools was recognised: (1) it would be impossible to put a limit to the amount of time taken from the five years' curriculum for the study of these subjects at these schools; (2) there would be difficulty in ascertaining the requisite efficiency of the teaching at some of the schools which would be recognised by certain of the licensing bodies; and (3) difficulty in limiting the number of schools to be put upon the scheduled list.

The answer, of course, is that the limit of time to be counted as part of the curriculum, the information as to the efficiency of the schools seeking recognition, and the limit of the number of schools scheduled would be controlled in just the same manner as in the case of the technical science schools and colleges.

B.—The representative on the Council of a certain University advanced during the debate exactly the same reason why the General Medical Council should not yield to the demands of the public schools as did the Dean of the Medical Faculty of the same University in a letter published in the Educational Supplement to the *Times* of May 2nd last.

This argument was to the effect that the teaching of the preliminary sciences ought, from the outset of and throughout the courses, to be directed with special regard to their application to medicine and surgery. The reply thereto is fourfold: (1) the teachers at the recognised non-medical institutions are no better qualified to give specialised teaching than are the science masters at secondary schools; (2) the teaching of these subjects at the former class of institutions is not more directed to their ulterior applications in medical science than that at the public schools; (3) a grounding in the principles of science by means of teaching on lines suitable alike for all commencing students, and not “applied science,” or, in other words, not teaching along lines specially directed to the ultimate useful applications of science to medicine and surgery, is what is wanted in the initial stage of the career of the prospective medical student; whether that stage is completely preliminary to the medical curriculum, as before long it will be, or constitutes, as it

may do at present, the first six months or a whole year of the curriculum, does not affect this question in the least; (4) as long as any knowledge at all of science is not exacted in the examination of general education the medical student would have no training whatever in the principles of science if he were plunged at the beginning of his curriculum into the specialisation study advocated by these gentlemen. And if it is claimed—as it is by the writer of the letter referred to—that in order to facilitate the study of applied science at the very commencement of his course at an university, or at a medical school, the student ought to come up from school with a good groundwork of science already instilled into him, then the whole case of the opponents of the recognition of science teaching in secondary school vanishes, their reasoning is undermined, their argument stultified.

C.—But the most surprising of all the reasons given why it was the business of the Council to “stick firm” and “safeguard the five years' curriculum” by not recognising the teaching of science at the secondary schools was the “whole-time” argument, the argument, namely, that whilst the study of science alone engages the time and attention of students at the technical science schools and colleges, this study is interrupted in public schools by the further pursuit thereof of Latin or Greek, history or mathematics. That men of exceptional ability, of intellectual eminence, and of university pre-eminence, should seriously hold such a view was not to be expected, and would scarcely have been believed had they not themselves made the pronouncement.

In the first place, this objection overlooks the fact that boys who take up the special study of science during the last year or two of school life have already reached the age and the stage when they are qualified to pass an examination in general education, and although they afterwards give some of their time to classics or other subjects of school education they nevertheless devote the larger portion of it to work in the science laboratories. In the next place, it ignores the fact that only a part of each day is spent by the students at the technical science schools and colleges in their science studies. What do these students do with their spare time? How do they employ the intervals not devoted to class and laboratory work? How are they occupied in their leisure hours, away from the discipline of school life and the friendly association with, and control of, their masters? Is it less distracting for a lad studying science at a polytechnic, say, in Chelsea or Kensington, to listen to the aggressive demagogue, the irreverent atheist, or the iconoclastic socialist holding forth in Hyde Park, than for a boy at Eton or Harrow to read the speeches of Pericles or Isocrates, of Æschines or Lysias, or hear his form-master discuss the rhetorical skill of Phocion—nicknamed by Demosthenes “The Hatchet”—and the other Athenian orators; or explain the degrading profession of the “sycophants,” which called forth so much of the force and beauty of Athenian eloquence? Will a youth at the City of London or East London College who frequents or follows the trials in the criminal court at the Old Bailey or in the divorce court in the Strand be a more assiduous student of science than a scholar at Westminster who reads the trial for bribery of the greatest of the Athenian demagogues, and the speeches of Demades, the accuser, and of Demosthenes in his own defence? or than he of St. Paul's School who studies the great orations of Cicero impeaching Verres, and these, by the way, will serve him as an excellent guide when he pays a visit to Sicily? Or again, will the young gentleman at Battersea Polytechnic, who loiters,

“Discussing Thames' craft and woman's wile,”

amidst the broken columns and slabs which once formed the piazza of Burlington House, but now lie higgledy-piggledy on the river bank in Battersea Park, be better informed in science at the end of a year than a boy at Epsom who reads of the Elgin marbles, the frieze of the Parthenon, and the Panathenaic procession? or than he at Dulwich College, who pays frequent visits to the picture gallery not far off, or who hears described the marbles of Ægina and the Chryselephantine figures—early sculptures which were the first to possess “the beauty and significance of the human form,” and to have impressed upon them with complete mastery of hand “the full expression of humanism,” of living human force and energy?

Or lastly, will the lad fresh emancipated from school

régime, who spends much of his time reading yellow-covered novels in a boat on the river or on a seat in the park, or perhaps even in flirting with nursery maids amidst the flower beds and shrubberies of the public gardens, do better work in the laboratories of a technical science college than the boy at Winchester in the excellent laboratories there provided for him, and who at the same time may be learning of the pleasures and delights of a country life from the Odes and Epistles of Horace? or than he of Repton who follows the accounts of agricultural pursuits, of rearing stock, and of keeping of bees in the Georgics of Virgil? or than he of Rugby who finds time to peruse the "Art of Love" as depicted by Ovid?

The History of the Question.

During the recent debate several allusions were made to the fierce battle of some twelve years ago between the Council and the Royal Colleges, on the vexed question of recognising the instruction given at non-medical schools. Deploring as I do the acerbity and animosity of such disputes between bodies each of which has the same aim and object in view—namely, the advancement of general and medical education, and the protection of the public against professional ignorance and quackery—I kept clear of any reference to the bickerings of the past when introducing my resolution.

But, because of certain things which were said, it is as well to recall the following indisputable facts. 1. Whilst the Royal Colleges were the first to recognise (in 1892) science teaching at institutions other than medical schools and universities, the General Medical Council itself was the first body to allow (in 1893) the first of the five years after registration to be passed at a "teaching institution" (other than a medical school or university) recognised by any of the licensing bodies where the subjects of physics, chemistry, and biology are taught. 2. From the year 1892 to 1898 the Royal Colleges adhered to their regulation of 1892-1893 whereby instruction was allowed to be taken in the science subjects *before* registration, and at institutions other than medical recognised by the Examining Board of England, but the time so spent was *not* allowed to count as part of the five years' curriculum.

The curriculum for such students was therefore in effect more than five years, because even those who had passed their examination in chemistry, physics, and biology before registering as medical students had to complete five years of strictly professional study after registration. The endeavour of the Royal Colleges "was by their regulations to encourage the systematic teaching of science in schools at the period of school life when it may best be undertaken—i.e., just before the commencement of actual professional studies in a medical school." This for many years had been the view also of Huxley, Paget, John Simon, and other distinguished teachers both in and out of the General Medical Council.

The Royal Colleges endeavoured, too, by their regulations to obtain for the medical curriculum the full advantage of the additional year of instruction added to the four years' course which had prevailed up to 1892, which additional year had been imposed upon the student with the object especially of his giving more time to the final and more practical parts of his professional education. This, however, was not to be.

Almost simultaneously with the adoption by the Royal Colleges of their regulation of 1892-93 the General Medical Council adopted one which allowed one year of study at certain non-medical institutions, if taken after registration, to count as the first year of the five years of the medical curriculum; and in 1894 the Council, though it had opposed the regulation of the Royal Colleges of 1892-93, adopted the very same as a regulation of its own (Minutes, vol. xxxi., 1894, p. 163).

Henceforth the Council had two regulations recognising this teaching in non-medical schools stamped with its approval: (1) if taken after registration, as equivalent to the first year of the curriculum; and (2) if taken before, as qualifying for examination in those subjects, but not counting as any part of the curriculum. But whilst the "teaching institutions" were allowed, the secondary schools were refused recognition under the first of these two regulations. The Education Committee of the Council stated that by "teaching institutions" they meant technical and science schools and colleges, but not schools

like Harrow (see Minutes, December, 1894, vol. xxxi., app. xvi., pp. 10-11). It was this action of the Council which led the Royal Colleges to frame the regulation of July, 1898, which allowed the time spent at an institution (science college or public school recognised after inspection by the Examining Board in England) other than a medical school to count as part of the five years of the medical curriculum; and it was this action of the Council which put the public schools in an unfavourable and unenviable position as compared with polytechnics and technical science colleges and schools, and which has been the cause of so much confusion and dissatisfaction on the part of those secondary schools.

It was not until five years after the Council had taken this action that the Royal Colleges altered their original regulation of 1892-93 so as to allow any part of the time spent on science at an institution other than a medical school or university to be reckoned as part of the five years' curriculum.

Impulse given to Science Teaching in Schools.

Looking back, it would seem that the action of the Council rather than the regulations of the Royal Colleges in 1892-93 gave the first practical indication and inclination for the preliminary sciences to be placed in a pre-curricular period, but it thereby tended to establish only a four years' course of strictly professional education. The later policy (since 1898) of the Royal Colleges which recognises public secondary schools as well as technical science schools and colleges, and allows the time spent thereat in the study of science to count as six months of the five years' curriculum, has in the long run done more towards putting the preliminary science studies into a stage of the student's career antecedent to entry at a medical school, and thereby to prolong the time available for the strictly professional education and to establish a four and a half years' curriculum after passing an examination in the preliminary sciences. On the other hand, the regulations of the General Medical Council in regard to those students who take out their science courses at a technical science school before entering a medical school proper tend to promote only a four years' curriculum at a strictly medical school.

Advantages Which May Follow.

There is now an opportunity for the Education Committee of the Council when carrying out the instruction of the Council to make their regulations regarding the registration of medical students conform with facts and the statutory powers of the Council, to schedule the non-medical institutions—technical science colleges and public schools alike—in one list. The Council might then adopt a resolution permitting candidates to present themselves for examination in chemistry, physics, practical chemistry, and biology either before or after registering at a medical school proper, and recommend the licensing bodies to require 4½ years' study at a medical school of those who have previously passed the preliminary scientific examination, and 4¾ or 5 years' study at a medical school of those who have not done so; the additional three or six months being regulated according to the length of the period after entering at a medical school proper which elapses before the student passes the preliminary scientific or first professional examination. In this way, the period of school life for many boys would be prolonged to their 18 or even 19 years of age, without really lengthening the present medical curriculum, or delaying the age at which the students take their degrees and diplomas beyond that at present customary.

PRESENTATION TO A MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.—Dr. J. Wright Mason, the medical officer of health of Hull, on May 31st, at an interesting social gathering at the City Hotel, was presented with a silver salver subscribed for by past and present officials to mark the completion of his 30 years' service as medical officer of health. Mr. C. W. Evington, the chief sanitary inspector, presided, and the tray which he presented was engraved with Dr. Mason's family crest and motto. In acknowledging the gift, Dr. Mason mentioned the changes in connexion with the sanitary and health administration in Hull during 30 years. The population of Hull at the time of his appointment was 150,000 and it is now 278,024.