

Robert Foster Dill (1811–93)

President of the Ulster Medical Society

1879–80 and 1883–84

Presidential Opening Address Ulster Medical Society 2nd December 1879

GENTLEMEN, We have come here to-night for the purpose of inaugurating another session of the Ulster Medical Society, and I gladly avail myself of this, my first, opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to the Council of the Society for having selected and put forward my name, and to the members, who have done me the honour of electing me – shall I say unanimously electing me – President for the ensuing year.

Then, to be thus called upon by my brethren to fill the presidential chair is, I assure you, to me a source of much gratification and – shall I add – justifiable pride. For when, in the course of a long professional life, after many years spent in very active public and private work, still filling different important appointments, one finds the good opinion of his brethren undiminished, and their voices raised to place him in this elevated position among them, he would be either less or more than human if he did not feel pride in accepting this distinguished mark of approval at their hands.

I have had the honour of being a member of this Society for many years, and longer than many here could remember; and if I did not assist at the birth, I certainly did take part in the operation for its resuscitation. I have watched with interest its development, and I have witnessed its fortunes under many circumstances and at different conjunctures, and I cannot conceal from myself that I never met my friends, the members of the Ulster Medical Society, under circumstances more difficult, more embarrassing, or more trying, than I do on the present occasion.

There may have been a time when I might have been induced to accept of this office with less reluctance – indeed I shall say with more readiness than I do now – but that may have been because I was not then so keenly alive to, or sensible of, the great responsibilities with which it is associated as I am at present.

But why need I dwell on such matters, as formerly no one thought of me for the appointment but *myself*, whilst latterly every one thought of me for it but *myself*. And if this be so, then I can with the more confidence cast myself implicitly upon the kind



indulgence of the members, knowing that they will be disposed to throw their friendly mantle over the many deficiencies and numerous shortcomings which must appear with me, from time to time, during my period of office. Indeed at my time of life I should have been seeking rest, in place of taking upon me more work. But loyalty to my profession and respect for friends forbid the idea of rest, or of not obeying their call.

And now, gentlemen, when I look back over the years that have passed between the period I entered the Society and the present, I can – shall I say it – unfortunately see as much to excite feelings of sadness as I can of an opposite character. But why should we look for an exception here of an unalloyed pleasure when we so often see that—

“Even mirth is gilded with sadness”

Time – inexorable Time – “has been busy, sending his swift shafts and plying his sharp and fatal scythe among the members; and I have seen one and another and another cut down, and fall before the fell destroyer. M'Donnell, Thompson, Saunders, Malcolm, Reade, Stephenson, Stewart, Burden, Johnston, besides many other distinguished members I could name, have died since I joined this Society. – No; they still live, and are enthroned in many hearts – they are

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embalmed in many a memory! But when I look up and around upon this numerously attended meeting, and when I see these well-recruited ranks again filled by men who have already proved themselves possessed of so much intelligence, ability, and discipline for their work, and when I hear of such favourable accounts from your able and unwearied secretary, Dr. Whitla, as well as when I am told of the very satisfactory results arising from the indefatigable exertions of your worthy treasurer, Dr. Esler, I think I am more than justified in giving expression to the opinion that there is much ground for encouragement, much to inspire confidence, and enough to bespeak a prosperous future for this much-esteemed and very useful Society.

And although, as we have seen, one generation cometh and another generation goeth, yet methinks I hear the whispered sentiment, as it floats upon the breeze—

“All men think all men mortal but themselves.”

But men may come and men may go,

But I stay on for ever.”

And now, gentlemen, at the risk of wearying your patience, I venture to occupy your attention a little longer with a few observations regarding the nature, the qualifications, and the responsibilities of the medical profession. I hold what I feel persuaded no one, at least here, will deny — viz., that to perform the important functions of the medical profession a medical man must be possessed of a higher and more varied order of talents, as well as of more extensive learning and acquirements, than are considered necessary for the other professions.

Take, for instance, *divinity*, *law*, and *physic*, which are always spoken of as the three learned professions, and of these there is not one that requires a knowledge of such a wide range of scientific subjects as is demanded by medicine, surgery, and obstetrics.

The student of theology, although admittedly occupied with the highest subject that can engage the attention of man, still is occupied with but a single subject; and law presents to its votaries little or no variety or interest, occupied as they are with the perusal of old, dusty, musty parchments, made venerable, if not by years, by the depth, of dust which gives them *weight*, and almost seals them to their shelves. And so “law is law.”

But what shall I say for medicine. The number of sciences required here are all but endless, and the grandeur of the object which the physician has set before him when he enters on his work is indeed unbounded.

He must be intimately acquainted with the body as one great and wonderful machine — with its two

hundred and fifty bones; with its four hundred and sixty muscles; with its myriads of vessels and nerves, which are quite beyond my arithmetical powers for calculation; with its heart-pump constantly sending the vital fluid through ten thousand channels, at the rate of more than one hundred thousand strokes a day, for seventy years or more. He must also be acquainted with the way in which these materials are prepared, with the manner in which they find their way into the system, with the mode in which they are purified, and, when they become effete or worn out, with the way in which they are eliminated and again renewed. He must, then, be acquainted with the brain and nervous system, from and by which every part is supplied, and out of which supply come sensation and motion — and, at the same time, do not these threads of nerves convey from head to hand the telegraphic commands of the *will* ?

When this magnificent machine is in active operation we can easily see and recognise results, but we cannot comprehend that most wonderful and mysterious association which exists between it and what is called life, or that still more mysterious association which is found to exist between *mind* and matter.

In this wonderful structure or contrivance we discover a furnace, combustion, a chemical laboratory, a galvanic battery, a force-pump; and all mechanical appliances and powers may be found at work in this one system, and which would require more than a knowledge of anatomy to give one even the most superficial, the faintest, idea or insight into its workings. To a knowledge of anatomy we must add physiology, histology, pathology, and chemistry. When this great work is completed we must then enter upon a new series of sciences — viz., *materia medica*, botany, zoology, medicine, surgery, obstetrics, and other collateral sciences. And, after all, we are but on the threshold, the border-land, of the field which must be occupied and cultivated by the high-bred, educated, and *practical* physician.

It were unnecessary before this Society to urge the matter further, or, in establishing my position, to go more minutely into detail; but as students are admitted (and very properly) to our meetings, and as they are to fill our places hereafter and when we are gone, I trust to the kind consideration of the members if, for their sakes, I am drifting into other lines than those which should be kept in an address to a learned Society. Will you, then, allow me to proceed by endeavouring to prove that there are other qualities required by the medical man besides the sciences and the learning of which we have been speaking. By the late Dr. Stokes it was considered

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necessary (and everything this eminent Dublin physician uttered should be remembered) that the youth when entering upon his professional studies should, in the first place, have a medically constituted mind, or he should exhibit an aptitude for medicine, or, as I believe he termed it, be in possession of the "*mens medica*," before he could expect to attain to any degree of distinction, or even the smallest amount of success in the profession. Indeed, he considered this as a *sine quâ non* for success. Under all the circumstances I would be disposed to say that the case stands thus:— The physician must first have an aptitude for medicine, he must next have a knowledge of the sciences, he must also have not only a large and overflowing measure of the *suaviter in modo*, but he must have, in addition, a proportionate amount of the *fortiter in re*. These qualities harmoniously blended are sure to lead to fortune. Without them the physician must soon discover, before he has travelled far on his journey, that "there is a lion in his path."

That much may be done by training, culture, or by art and education, to overcome natural deficiencies or obstacles to professional success, no one will deny; but that there are marked predispositions in individuals to certain pursuits, which it is always well to seize hold of and cultivate, is a proposition which, I think, most persons must accept. There are one or two very appropriate stories which, although you may have heard before, I think may be happily used here to illustrate the point under consideration. Human life has been compared to a broad table pierced with numerous holes, each of which has a pin made exactly to fit it, but which pins, if stuck into these holes in haste, at random, or without selection, must lead to very awkward errors, and, sometimes, disastrous consequences. And in the same way we may speak of men. If the round man be taken and forced into the three-cornered hole, and the many-sided or square man be driven into the round hole, the misfits must lead to serious blunders and most grievous mistakes. The other is that one which has been recorded of Cecco d'Asceli and of Danté, while discussing the subject of natural and acquired genius, and which I shall here advance to further illustrate the matter in hand. Cecco d'Asceli held that nature was more powerful than art, while Danté asserted the contrary. To prove this principle, Danté, the great Italian bard, introduced his cat, which by practice he had taught to hold a candle in its paw while he supped, or sung, or read. Cecco d'Asceli, who before this had expressed a desire to witness the experiment, came prepared for the occasion. While Danté's cat was performing its part, Cecco suddenly lifted the lid of a pot which he had cunningly filled with mice. The creature of art

instantly showed the weakness of a talent which had been purely acquired, and, dropping the candle, flew on the mice with its instinctive propensity. Danté was himself much disappointed, and was obliged to admit that nature and the natural gifts or faculties were more to be depended upon or trusted than art. I could, if it were necessary, give other facts by way of illustration, but I think I have said enough to prove the necessity for — first, the natural gifts and dispositions of the mind should be bent on an object, and, second, that when these faculties are properly cultivated that object is more easily reached. To my mind there is no profession more imperiously demands a predisposition than medicine, and this, combined with culture and natural courage, must as a consequence, as I have already sketched, lead to fortune. Moreover, if, in addition to all these great and necessary qualities, the physician be possessed of that identification — that sympathy of feeling with his patient's interests — he must command a confidence, and wake up a responsive echo in the soul which no material means can ever accomplish or make attractive. How could it be otherwise, for what has been spoken of is natural genius — it is a heaven-born gift which, while it may be fostered and cultivated, can never be communicated? This sympathy and identification of feeling would seem to possess a power and penetrate into regions where art, or that cold and icy philosophy of the age, are quite inaccessible.

I would, then, respectfully but confidently submit, that if this complicated machine — this wonderful mechanism — is to be preserved, this remarkable casket, containing as it does such a precious jewel, is to be renewed, I should rather think it would be safer in the hands of him who can with perfect knowledge, disposition, and culture correctly estimate the value of the treasure, than be placed in his hands who is imbued with the chilling philosophy of the times, and who in the end would consign the whole to the maelstrom-whirlpool of destruction, or, as a modern scientist expresses it, "in the end but melts away into the infinite azure of the past." But I have to congratulate the Society that its members have no sympathy with such doctrines and sentiments as these. On the contrary, does it not belong to our profession as a privilege humbly to follow in the footsteps of Him whom we can call our common Master — who, clothed in human form, went about doing good, and delighted in relieving suffering humanity. Like Him, and influenced by such an example, it is our peculiar mission to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, to make the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk; and from a bed of pain, of suffering,

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and of anguish, to raise up a first-born, and thereby to make a mother's heart to sing for joy.

Allow me further to say, that we are not like those persons in the other professions who use the press, the platform, and occasionally even the pulpit, for their individual aggrandisement and professional promotion or advancement.

Neither is it ever found that the members of the medical profession parade or exhibit themselves before the public as others appear, robed in scarlet and ermine, with mace-bearers and trumpeters before them, and crying "They come! they come!" It has always been the business of this Society and its members to do their work privately and unostentatiously; and whether we be engaged in our common work here or are found in the halls and the chambers of the great and the rich, or in the houses and the garrets of the poor, we are invariably to be found pursuing our professional calling, and making it pre-eminently PRIVATE practice.

In this way we are obliged to throw ourselves, our reputations, and all our professional interests into the hands of those who have no knowledge of what we are engaged in, and no sympathies with us in the difficulties with which we are contending both by night and by day; and how often do we hear our good name and our best intentions assailed and libelled, and that even at the very time when we are engaged on behalf of the dearest interests of our gratuitous and uncharitable defamer, and this without redress. But he that "steals my purse steals trash, but he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him, but makes me poor indeed."

Such being the case, we should be oftener found exercising more of the *esprit de corps* than is found occasionally to exist among us, seeing that we have but one common aim or object — the advancement of science, curing disease, and combating death.

But, after all, there is nothing in life "so well becomes a man as a mild demeanour and manly courage," springing from scholarly attainments and the *mens conscia recti* which must necessarily follow, and before which the walls of opposition must fall and the citadel be taken possession of. On the contrary, is not that miserable selfishness to be despised which prevents a man coming out and taking part in professional work, except when self-interest is the moving power. And when difficulties of any kind may arise, it is a pity to see the *small man* pursued before the wind and seeking shelter in his own retirement; to call this success and happiness is a burlesque upon the terms. I should rather take example from a higher, nobler, braver spirit, which, with fixed purpose and determined will, breasts the storm, and, if needs be,

mounts the hurricane; and as we follow him in his onward and his upward progress, we see him rising higher and higher, until at last he enters into that purer, calmer, clearer light above.

"He lives too low who lives beneath the sky."

When I commenced to prepare this address I thought it would be my duty to bring before the notice of the Society some of the great achievements, progress, and improvements which have been attained within the last thirty or forty years in my own departments of medicine — viz., Midwifery and Gynaecology. But when I considered that I was to address a Society the members of which are practising in all the departments of medicine, I did not believe that this would be acceptable. Then I thought of reviewing the field of general medicine and the progress we had made in it during the same period; but I felt that the short time I had at my command was not equal to the task, and so I have fallen between these two great subjects, without satisfying myself, and feeling conscious that I have not satisfied my audience. I have, however, made an attempt, by throwing together a few crude and hurriedly-expressed thoughts, to prove that medicine occupies a very high (if not the highest) place among the learned professions. I might have easily done more had time permitted, as it is quite capable of proof that numbers of the medical profession occupy the very foremost ranks in advancing and sustaining the most important, because the most practical sciences, and that we accomplish more good work, in all countries and at all times, by ameliorating and improving man's condition, than is done by all others besides. And, finally, I think I may here claim for you what the public must eventually concede, to use the words of an able and accomplished thinker, that—

"We live in deeds — not years; in thoughts — not breaths;

In feeling — not in figures on a dial;

We should count time by heart-throbs. He

most lives

Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best;

Life's but a means unto an end — that end

Beginning, mean, and end in all things — GOD."

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Presidential Closing Address

Ulster Medical Society

9th November 1880

GENTLEMEN, Before retiring from this chair, and from my position as President of the Ulster Medical Society, to which I had the honour of being elected a year ago, allow me to thank you for the honour then conferred, as well as for the uniform kindness which you have so graciously and generously bestowed upon me throughout the session. To occupy such a position – elevated to it as I was by the unanimous suffrage of the Society – is a dignity which I much appreciate, and an honour of which any member may be justly proud, especially when we consider that it is the highest compliment which the Society has in its power to confer; and I shall ever retain a grateful recollection of the hearty feeling with which your vote was accompanied, which encouraged me much in accepting of the office and of this high trust. At the same time I am free to state that I believe it was not because of any special work done by me for the Society, but it was due to the fact that I am among its oldest members, and that I had been taking an interest in the business and prosperity of the Society.

I may be permitted here to call to mind that this Society was called into existence something more than sixty years ago. Consequently it has survived what may be considered at least as two generations; and now that we are about to enter upon its sixty-second, if not its sixty-third, session, it does so, not in the infirmity or decrepitude of old age, but with as much vigour and vitality and with as much disposition for work as any previous session was ever entered upon. And why, may I not ask, should this not be so, when we have met here to-night for the purpose of installing your President-Elect, from whose young heart and cultivated intellect must flow forth an influence and force which cannot fail to inspire the whole body for work down to the most remote of its members? At this period in the history of this Society one might feel tempted to compare the state of medical knowledge as it now stands with what it was when it first sprung into existence, but to sketch this thoroughly would require a master-hand and more leisure than I am able to command, so I leave to another the accomplishment of this great and important task. I may, however, be allowed to indicate briefly a few of the points of interest wherein the differences are found to exist between the present and past, and in doing so I think I am correct in stating that obstetric medicine and gynaecology have not been behind in the race. On the contrary, give me

leave to say that these departments have made more progress than either of the sister branches – viz., medicine and surgery. This, it will be admitted, is all the more extraordinary when we find that midwifery, including in that term gynaecology and diseases of children, has always been allowed to occupy the shady side of the profession – indeed we would be safe in asserting that it has been treated as the stepchild of medical science, and even yet it has not had that recognition to which its friends consider it is but justly or fairly entitled.

The other two departments – viz., medicine and surgery, have flourished under the fostering care of men of science and wealthy institutions, and whilst they have been thus out of proportion sustained, midwifery, it must be admitted, was long left to languish and to struggle through a very feeble existence. You will, therefore, scarcely be prepared to hear that, with all these disadvantages, obstetric medicine and surgery have made more progress and have advanced more rapidly than either of the other departments; and if I prove this, I think you will then admit that I am justified in claiming for it more attention, as well as a higher position, than it has been favoured with as a branch of medical study and practice. Having said so much, you will naturally ask in what does this progress, or in what do these additions and improvements, consist within the last forty years; and while I am advancing a few facts to sustain my assertion, I am fully conscious that most of the gentlemen I address are as familiar with them as I can possibly be. But, even with all this, a rehearsal may, without any disadvantage, be occasionally indulged in. Whilst I undertake to direct your attention to the great progress which has been made within the period specified, I shall not be unmindful of the value of your time or of your anxiety to hear the address from the President-Elect. I shall, therefore, confine myself to little more than a syllabus – a mere indication of the work which has been done – and first let me say that we have a more accurate knowledge of menstruation, conception, and generation than was possessed forty years ago. We have more correct views at present of the structure of the ovum – its progress, maturation, and process of expulsion – in other words, the mechanism of labour, otherwise parturition. We have now a tolerably correct knowledge of the spermatozoon influence, the penetration of the ovule, with a more correct knowledge of the use of the fimbriated extremities of the Fallopian tubes, seizing as they do the ovary, receiving the ovule, by which it is conveyed to the uterus, its nine months' resting place, and during which time it undergoes a wonderful development.

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We now possess a knowledge of the true changes which take place in the Graafian follicles. The growth of the embryo in utero has received much attention, and is now tolerably well understood. The characters and the conditions of the *decidua uteri* occupy different positions now, so that our knowledge here is fixed upon a better basis than formerly. There has been much time and careful research bestowed by Goodsir upon the anatomy, the physiology, and the pathology of the placenta, so that now the uses, the mode of circulation, and the diseases of this organ are tolerably well understood, with much practical advantage to the well-being of both the mother and the child, as well as in regard to the causes of the death of the foetus in utero, which may be now easily diagnosed and accounted for.

The displacements of the uterus, which have of late received such marked attention at the hands of Hodges, Thomas, Graily Hewitt, &c., are now well understood, and by the means which they have suggested and recommended, can be easily and successfully put right.

Vesico-vaginal fistula, which was at one time the opprobrium of the obstetric art, is now not only in many instances prevented by our better management of labour, but, when unfortunately it does occur, it can, thanks to Marion Sims, be subjected to successful treatment.

The mechanism of labour, so interesting indeed, so fascinating a study in itself, has been placed before us in such a clear and intelligible form by the achievements of Baudelocque, Naegele, and Leishman, that we follow it with care, and take advantage from a knowledge of it in the management of labour.

What shall I venture to say of anaesthetics and their marvellous influences for good in labour, and wherever pain is found to exist? And are we not indebted to Simpson, the great accoucheur, in particular for this magnificent additional resource to our art, and inestimable boon to suffering humanity? I need not dwell on what is so well known to you all — viz., the better management of the different stages of labour which has been effected within the time mentioned.

I do well remember that where cases of placenta praevia were, when met with, much dreaded, now they are faced and treated with self-possession, clearness, and precision, and, as I have shown on a former occasion to this Society, with greater success as regards the life of both the mother and the child.

Long within the time of which we speak, has not the after-treatment of labour undergone a complete metamorphosis or change as regards nourishment?

Formerly it consisted in starvation, now it is quite the opposite; yet, with all this, I still prefer (though not exactly to the same extreme) offering nourishment in a light form and in a sparing manner for a few days after labour; but I would add that each case must be treated in this respect according to circumstances.

Braxton Hicks' improved method of version by internal and external manipulation — in other words, as it has been called, the bipolar and bimanual mode of version, has been favourably received by the profession, and I have practised it in certain cases with ease to myself and greater safety and advantage at least to the mother.

In the presence of such a number of experts I would be slow to dilate upon the use of the midwifery forceps, or to say more than a word in regard to the increased and increasing use of this instrument. The more frequent use of the forceps has certainly been the means of relieving the mother from the long, indeed the very protracted, labour from which she was allowed to suffer in former times, but with its earlier use there is greater safety to the life of the mother and her offspring.

The cephalotribe is an instrument of modern invention, and is a valuable addition and improvement upon the old crotchet in bringing away the foetus with more ease and safety to the mother.

The toxæmic condition has received much consideration by Frerichs, Lever, Simpson, and Braun. But perhaps I should, in introducing this subject, have begun by directing attention to Bright's researches regarding the uræmic origin of puerperal convulsions, or true puerperal eclampsia. Through their labours this very formidable complication of labour is tolerably well understood in its chemico-physiological and pathological characteristics, as well as in its therapeutical requirements.

I can now do but little more than mention the names of some other diseases — viz., phlegmasia dolens, thrombosis, embolism, and, more especially, puerperal fever, as having had of late much more light reflected upon them, and, through them, upon the general puerperal condition.

The last-named disease is now recognised as a form of septicaemia — in other words, this disease is believed to originate with blood-poisoning, and that the poison may be absorbed into the system either from within or from without — that is, either auto-genetically or hetero-genetically. With this disease the study and history of the antiseptic plan of treatment have been very intimately associated, so that the decomposition of the coagula *in utero* has received marked attention and has led to a knowledge

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of the influences of septic poisoning and of antiseptic injections.

The use of the speculum, uterine sound, uterine dilator, sponge-tents, laminaria, hydrostatic uterine dilators – associated as these instruments are with names of the highest standing in medical science, such as Simpson, Priestley, Barnes, Wilson, and Marion Sims – have been well received, and have introduced a new era in the diagnosis and treatment of uterine diseases. What shall I say of Spencer Wells and Thomas Keith, who occupy such a prominent position before the profession and the world? for do we not stand in perfect amazement and fascination while we contemplate their magnificent achievements in ovarian diseases and their brilliant successes in ovariectomy – creating as they do a halo around their names while they live, and which will embalm their memories into perpetual spring?

May I be allowed to speak of such men as the Brobdignags of medical science, at whose feet we, their Lilliputian brethren, should sit, and, looking up, listen and acquire knowledge and intellectual strength, so as to enable us to grow up into the full stature of the perfect man.

Time would fail me to speak of many other important improvements and aids to midwifery as they deserve, such as ergotine, perchloride of iron, bromide of potassium, and chloral hydrate.

The alternative operations for craniotomy should be also here mentioned to show you that this department of our art has not been stationary during the last forty years. These operations are – oöphorectomy, hysterotomy, and laparo-elytrotomy.

Although foreign, to some extent, to the subjects under consideration, I had intended expressing a few words on the advantages that we in common with the other branches of medicine have derived practically from the use of the thermometer, the microscope, the aspirator, the spectroscope, the ophthalmoscope, the laryngoscope, and the sphygmograph, which are all instruments of precision, and in the hands of scientific men have yielded some most important and extraordinary results in clinical and pathological investigations. Had time permitted I could have adduced a few facts which would be considered as very striking in the accuracy with which we may by the use of some of these instruments not only diagnose disease, but also distinguish one disease from another; I forbear, however, as I ought rather to apologise for taking up already so much time in “telling you that which you yourselves do know.”

In drawing these hastily written remarks to a close, will you allow me to say that, let the astronomers vaunt their Copernicus, the natural

philosophers their Galileo, the mathematicians their Pascal, the geographers their Columbus, we will worship at the shrine of a Hunter or a Harvey.

From all that has been stated I think I am justified in the conclusion that “the proper study of mankind is woman.” I beg to introduce to you Dr. J. W. Browne as President for the year, who, I have no doubt, will try to verify the old dogma – viz., that “doctors differ,” and attempt to prove that the correct rendering is that “the proper study of mankind is man.”

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Presidential Opening Address

Ulster Medical Society

27th November 1883

GENTLEMEN, I have to thank you, which I do sincerely, for this renewed expression of your confidence, in electing me so soon again to the Chair as President of "The Ulster Medical Society."

It is rather a peculiar coincidence that, on the former occasion when you were so good as to confer upon me a similar honour, it happened to be on the fiftieth year from the time I had entered upon my medical studies; now it is the fiftieth year since the time at which I became legally qualified to occupy any professional position; but I did not then, nor for some time afterwards, sever my connexion with the University. The fiftieth year has been by certain persons and under certain circumstances called their jubilee year, because, I presume, it was the name given to certain joyous celebrations associated with a release which they had experienced. Be this as it may, or whether there is any analogy between the circumstances in which I stand and those in which those persons stood, I need not here stop to inquire; but, this I know, I have not yet sold my inheritance, neither have I felt my position to be a bondage, and I am not, I assure you, at all anxious to be released from it. Nevertheless, I hope you will allow me the privilege of calling this my jubilee year, because of the many friends I have and whom I see around me, and because of the health and the heart I possess to appreciate their earlier and their later favours, and because I can now look back upon half a century of professional life, with its many varied and its chequered incidents, occurring over that lengthened period and appearing in all the tints of lights and shadows, and yet with all the fresh and fondly-cherished memories of the past.

My first recollection of University life is of what was called "The Blackstone Examinations" in Glasgow, that being the name given to matriculation in that ancient University because of the *Blackstone Chair*, upon which the student is seated when undergoing his entrance examinations; and I had occupied it immediately before Archibald Tait, the future Archbishop of Canterbury. At these examinations Archibald Tait scored such high marks that he afterwards obtained the Foundation Scholarship, which eventually carried him up to the Oxford University, and I have always watched with the greatest interest his steady progress and his brilliant career from these Blackstone Examinations, before Sir D. K. Sandford, the accomplished Professor of

Greek, until elevated to the Archbishopric of Canterbury, the highest episcopal chair in the empire; and I fancy I can still hear his clear, distinct, and measured readings of those old pentameters and hexameters; and his readings of passages from Sophocles and Euripides were all but equal to an Athenian dramatist.

My second recollection is again incidentally associated with another great name, but of a different order and under different circumstances. The day after I had passed my examination in the Royal College of Surgeons, London, being disengaged for a short time, Dr. Southwood Smith, the popular physiologist of that day, asked me to give him some assistance in dissecting and in making a dried preparation of the body of no less a person than that most celebrated and able political economist – viz., Jeremy Bentham, and yet with all his acknowledged greatness, I could not, I assure you, discover the slightest difference in the dissections of his body from those which were taken from the paupers' burying-ground, Bully's Acre, Dublin. But I did discover a marked difference between it and that which he considered as his *Great Grand-father the Oyster*.

My third recollection, though not associated with any of the great ones of earth or *water*, is not on that account of less moment to myself. It was the day after I had been appointed a Dispensary Officer to a district, situated in as beautiful and picturesque a little neighbourhood as could be found in all Ireland again; and the women were as lovely as the scenery was charming – a land flowing with the milk of human kindness and the true sweets of social enjoyment. I remember well that bright May morning riding down that village street, on my way to visit a dispensary patient far into the country, and receiving the congratulations and the salutations, and the smiles from every person, in every door and from every window as I passed along; and I could scarcely suppress the feeling that my fame and my fortune were within "measurable distance."

After reaching the patient's house, examining and prescribing for one whom I found far advanced in consumption, and to whom I could hold out but little hope of relief, and less of recovery, I left saddened at the thought of being able to do so little for that young and anxious seeker after life, but had not gone far when I was stopped and asked (as was the custom to waylay a medical man on his professional rounds) to pay a visit at a very comfortable-looking neighbouring farmhouse. At the door I met and was asked by the farmer's wife, who stated that she wished me to take a little blood from her daughter's arm, as was her habit

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at that season of the year, and, as was then our habit, without asking *any impertinent professional questions*. And although a fine strong and healthy-looking country girl, I pulled out my lancet, most pedantically, tied up her arm and bled her freely and to syncope; she was soon placed in the recumbent position, and the arm immediately adjusted by means of a pad and bandage. When at the door and leaving, the good wife put into my hand a nicely-rolled up little bit of paper, which I graciously accepted; and as I *dare* not open it in her presence, I mounted and got as quickly as possible round to the other side of the hill. When well out of sight and with patience all but exhausted, with anxiety to realise my first professional fee, I pulled up, unfolded the little bit of paper, and exposed to view my *first honorarium*, which amounted to — what do you suppose? — just one silver sixpence!

I sighed — but again I thought it might be quite enough for what good was done. However, I rode home an humbler and not a much richer man, and I have often thought since that, let *the fame* go as it may, from that day till the present the fortune has appeared as a dissolving view; and that, had the blood been less and money more, the balance of power might have been better preserved.

You will not be surprised when I say that I have had some difficulty in determining upon the choice of a subject suited to a scientific and a critical audience; and I have felt that the more because of the numberless addresses to which we have been treated of late. But I feel much relieved because of the valedictory address with which we have been favoured by our out-going President. But however able most of these addresses are proved to be, yet there are to be found in some of them scientific fallacy, in others philosophical fiction, and in not a few you may travel over a great breadth before you come upon a useful fact, or a single grain of truth. Nevertheless, what I have to offer to-night must appear beside them as of little importance, and be looked upon as very small fry; so that I feel I am in the somewhat awkward position of the punctiliously polite Greek gentleman who, while performing the funeral functions of an infant daughter, felt called upon to make his excuses to the spectators for bringing out such a ridiculously small corpse to so large a crowd. But though small and insignificant what I have to offer, I hope you will find it to possess a little more vitality than the Greek gentleman's child; though for size and appearance (our late President and *recognised oculist* will set me right if I am wrong) much depends upon the medium through which it may be viewed — through one medium it may be very like a whale, through another it appears as a little fish;

but no matter if viewed through the *spectacles* of a *Bishop Berkeley*.

I hope it may not be considered here out of place if I occupy a few minutes upon some points of interest associated with Medical Education as we now find it, and compare these matters with what we know of the state of education in former times, and, observing the results, draw our conclusions.

Professor Huxley, lecturing the other day, made use of this statement — viz, “that when one of his sons was commencing his medical career he was perfectly astonished when he compared the course of instruction, the requirements, and the kind of examinations which were needed from him, with the very small and perfunctory necessities of his own time.” If the course of instruction, requirements, and the examinations are in his own opinion the *sine quâ non* of an educated profession, then I submit that this statement of Professor Huxley is rather an unhappy one as coming from him, for with the small and perfunctory necessities of *his time*, what shall we say or think of his acquirements or of the rank he holds among the learned and scientific men at present.

And Professor Huxley is no exception, for although it has been stated that the difference between the past and the present is that the former was the age of literature, the present the age for science; yet I think I am in a position to prove that while there was more profound learning, I believe there were also not a few of the most important scientific discoveries made known, so that education altogether stood as high as we, with all the boasted progress of the present day, do yet enjoy; and the son, I feel persuaded, shall have trouble in rising to the level of the sire; that the men of other days possessed a learning and attainments which many of the present day would pale before.

Medical Education is, I believe, at present passing through a severe crisis — it is passing through very troubled waters. For, have there not of late been too many as well as extravagant changes made in some of our Universities, and too many attempts at medical legislation, and I confess that I, for one, was not sorry that the Medical Bill before the House in the last session did not pass into law. And I know that our students are very much hampered and harassed by these capricious changes as well as by the number and eccentric character of the examinations which they have now to undergo, because of which they are obliged to devote themselves to the advanced departments of science to the neglect of more useful, because more practical knowledge.

I would venture to offer an opinion upon another matter of some interest to us in the present day. I believe it was one of the errors of the age to open our

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colleges, our schools of medicine, and our universities to women, thereby enabling them to compete with our young men while pursuing their medical studies, and in obtaining degrees and other medical distinctions.

Indeed I should have hoped that the culture and refinement of the age would have forbidden such a consummation, as that the two sexes should be found receiving united medical education. Which of us would like to see his sister, his daughter, or other young female friend, in the dissecting room, and at work in common with the youths of the opposite sex. Which of us would willingly join in consultation in *certain cases* with Dr. Elizabeth—, or be found investigating *certain diseases* with Dr. Mary —. I believe the properly constituted mind of either sex would revolt at the very thought of such a practice.

But apart from what some would consider the sentimentalism of the subject, woman, from her constitution and her habits, is altogether incapacitated from taking part in the toils, the labours, the responsibilities, the anxieties necessarily associated with medical professional life. When we consider her habits, her functional arrangements, her capricious tendencies, her domestic associations, her bodily weakness if you will, then say is she fit to take upon herself all that is necessary in the work of the profession, both by day and by night. And I believe she is disabled even more by reason of her mental constitution than from her bodily characteristics, which I shall endeavour to show you. It is unnecessary, though, for me here to attempt to prove that it is the brain matter which possesses the power of evolving mind, and which places the beings possessed of this power in the highest rank of creation; but it is necessary, before determining finally the question under consideration, to ascertain what are the essential points of difference between the mind-producing organ of man and that of woman. It is a well-recognised fact that the brain of man is larger than that of woman, the average of the one being forty-nine ounces and that of the other forty-three ounces — the difference in favour of the male brain being six ounces. It is also an accepted fact that the size and weight of an individual's brain are in direct relation to mental capacity; and it is a remarkable fact that whilst in men of high intellectual development, as in Cuvier, the brain has been found to weigh sixty-four ounces, woman's brain has never reached that weight by eleven ounces. We also find that the female brain is not only smaller than that of man, but it is different in structure and in shape, which I would say counts more as regards mental faculties even than does the element of size. Thus we

find that the frontal lobes in man are larger than those of woman, and the depth of the convolutions and the density of the cortical or grey substance are greater. The inevitable conclusion we must arrive at is, that as man possesses more brain than woman, he must of necessity possess more mind. But there is not only a difference in quantity, there is also a difference in quality, as in shape and structure, so there must also of necessity be a difference of function; and from this fact I am disposed to argue that the emotional is the first characteristic of a woman's nature, and which holds its ascendancy over her intellectual qualities; and *that*, no matter how highly she may be educated, inasmuch as the brain matter is not there either in quantity or in quality, she is incapable of a sustained, an original, an intense degree of thought. But while man's intellectual nature is his chief, his supreme characteristic, and by which he originates, he designs, he discovers, he explores — he, in fact, all but creates, yet who will venture to say that the brain from which will flow a wife's fidelity, a mother's affection, a sister's devotion, and a woman's gentleness, does not mark her out as one who shall rise higher in the scale of a moral and a spiritual life, than the brain from which flows the dry interpretations of the laws of nature.

If it were necessary to pursue this line of argument further, I might show that it is impossible for us, properly, to continue to entertain the novel idea of women occupying the field of medicine, because, if for no other reason, of the excessive strain upon her physical and her mental powers by which permanent injury to both mind and body is often found to follow, and this every physician of experience knows to be the case. I might also show that as woman's brain becomes developed at an earlier age than that of man, it is unfair to place them in competition at this time of life. I assert all this even in face of the statement which I see made at a public meeting and reported the other day — viz., "that women *were gradually coming* to the front." In the presence of such advocates and with such advocacy I only wonder that they do not come careering to the front at a *gallop*. But I am persuaded that this movement must soon come to an end, and that when the novelty, excitement, and sensationalism shall have passed away, this phantom caricature will collapse, and woman will return to her normal sphere.

May I occupy your time a few minutes longer, while I shall endeavour to establish the proposition which I have made in favour of the learning, the attainments of the men of former time.

To say that the works of Hippocrates, and Celsus, and Galen, are accepted as amongst our ancient

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medical classics would be but expressing a truism, as they are to be found in the libraries of our Colleges and Universities. And I do not say more of the earlier Arabian authors, as Razes, Avicenna, Albucasis, than that their works still live and exert a power amongst us. If we consult some of the works of the 13th and the 14th centuries, we shall find that at these early periods, Leonicensus demonstrated that difficult problem which then existed – viz., that of making a correct diagnosis of syphilis, which had been up to that period confounded with leprosy. The treatment of syphilis, however, remained for a short time an unsettled question, as Leonicensus rejected mercury because of so many persons dying from its effects. And amongst these Cardinal of Segorbe, Alonso, &c., whose deaths naturally prejudiced the public mind against this drug; soon, however, it was made manifest by Torello and Theodoric that mercurial unction was the true remedy (in fact, it was proved to be a specific for this terrible disease, as then experienced) by keeping up the “flux,” as it was called, for three weeks.

And it is to *our minds* rather an amusing incident to find that such questions in that day were made the subjects of poetry, and that one Fracastorius, in Pope Leo's time, wrote what was considered an admirable poem, entitled “*Syphilis*,” in which the chancre, the bubo, the ulcerated throat, the hoarse voice, the mercurial unction, fumigations of cinnabar, the flux, or rivers flowing from the mouth, are set forth and poetically recorded. Whether this poem is to be accepted as *sacred* or *profane* poetry you are the judges.

There are other instances, at an early period in the history of medicine, of correct diagnostic powers and successful treatment of disease. Sea-scurvy, which appeared in a most violent form at first, was soon understood and mastered by its true remedy – viz., fruits and vegetable diet. Mead, in his travels on the Continent, met with the writings of Bonomo, which contained an account of the cutaneous worms which generate the *itch*. When he returned to London Mead presented an analysis of Bonomo's researches to the Royal Society, and recommended sulphur as a specific for this very nasty and troublesome disease.

Thus we have in remote times not only a correct diagnosis formed of syphilis but also its specific treatment, in mercury. We find that sea-scurvy was successfully treated with lemon-juice, itch with sulphur, and intermittents by Peruvian bark.

Where, in modern times, do we find anyone who can lay claim to discoveries of more value or of more practical importance than are those I have instanced. But in coming a little further on, where is there to be

found, at any period, more scholarly attainments or greater breadth of learning than are enjoyed by Linacre, Letsum, Caius, Sydenham, and Gooch, and a host of others, some of whom Dr. Johnson (no mean authority) pronounces well versed in the writings of antiquity, more particularly in those of the great Roman orator and philosopher, whose luxuriance of style they not only imitated but thoroughly mastered; and we know that the works of these men have not only made their impress upon the age in which they lived, but they have made their mark upon the world's history.

What, in modern physiology, can at all compare with that grand old discovery, the circulation of the blood; and does not the name of Harvey call up recollections that justly place him in the foremost rank of natural philosophers, and whose services conferred upon anatomy and physiology what Newton rendered to optics and astronomy by his theories of light, and by his discovery of the laws of gravitation.

The name of Hunter cannot be omitted in the “roll call” when genius had become the rank and file of the age, and when by his great personal labours, and at enormous expense, he designed, completed, and established the Great Windmill-street Anatomical School, and handed down to us his vast treasures, known as the Hunterian Museum, and of which the authorities at the Glasgow University are the trustees and principal custodians. To Hunter also are we not indebted for his great work on the anatomy of the human gravid uterus, which is unrivalled for its splendour and the correctness of its delineations.

Among the names which ought to be held sacred by the undying gratitude of mankind is that of Edward Jenner, who should stand preeminent among discoverers, for it would be impossible to find his equal as a benefactor of the human family by his discovery and the introduction of vaccination, which has proved itself a safeguard – a specific against the ravages of a disease worse than the plague. And as we travel down the highway of medical science we reach another great landmark, clearly defined, and explicitly directing us on our journey. For has not Laennec put into our hands that most valuable and useful instrument, the stethoscope, which might be suitably termed the key of knowledge, by which we can unlock and lay bare some of the most hidden maladies, and by which are opened up to us mines of diagnostic wealth?

These are old truths which bear to be repeated, and the names of those men who brought them to light, and into use, have a claim upon our gratitude, our sincerest admiration, and our warmest

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acknowledgments.

I have a lively recollection of many successors to those great men, who taught and practised, and who flourished in the early part of the present century. I have only to mention Sir Charles Bell, whose name is so intimately associated with one of the grandest and most important discoveries in connexion with the nervous system. I might also make mention of the names of Abernethy, Brody, Lawrence, and Astley Cooper. But to come a little farther down, and nearer home, I would mention Colles, and Carmichael, and Cusack, and Corrigan, but especially Graves, who was one of the most accomplished and distinguished physicians and fascinating lecturers that ever appeared in the wards and lecture hall of Sir P. Dun's Hospital.

But words do fail me when I attempt to speak of that much-to-be-esteemed and long-to-be-remembered William Stokes, who in the Meath Hospital won not only the confidence and affection of his patients, but also the respect, admiration, and love of his students, by his winning presence, his untiring zeal, but, above all, by his unrivalled powers as a clinical teacher; and from the city of Dublin, which had become the scene of his distinction, and in which he exerted a magnetic influence, he sent forth admiring pupils to all parts of the world, and he really enriched and benefited, by the halo which he flung around, the medical school during his brilliant career.

I have heard him relate, in glowing terms, how (in company with our old friend Creery Ferguson and a relation of my own) he mastered the use of the stethoscope under the eye and the teaching of Laennec himself; and William Stokes was the first physician who introduced and who taught the use of this instrument in these countries.

These are assuredly the fathers of medical science, whose names and whose deeds have been bequeathed to us as a rich inheritance, and upon whose ashes we shall never allow a foot to trample scornfully. For, although it was not theirs (nor has become the lot of any yet) to crown or complete the great temple of medical science, yet it was theirs, amidst darker times and amidst rougher and harder work, to dig deep, and "well and truly lay" the foundation and not a few chief corner-stones of this great structure.

Talk of titles, talk of decorations, talk of even peerages, for such men as these. You may confer upon them all the honours that a cold, contemptuous, and effete Government can bestow; you may cover them with stars and garters and ribbons — you may; but the stars shall become dim and the garters and the ribbons fade away, yet the names of these princes amongst men shall never be forgotten; their deeds

shall form a bright page in the world's history, and their memories preserved, because embalmed in undying remembrances — for there is no death, no night there; or, as is so exquisitely expressed by our own Immortal Bard —

You may break, you may ruin
The vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses
Will hang round it still!