

secting room under the guidance of an experienced demonstrator, who will describe, discuss and constantly orally examine the student, is a rational and effective method of teaching anatomy.

Another useless subject is medical jurisprudence; the interest in it ends after the examination, and to the general practitioner the knowledge thus gained is of no practical value. Few men are called upon to give evidence in criminal cases, and when we do, the knowledge acquired while at College is either useless, fragmentary or forgotten; and in order to cut a respectable figure in Court, we frantically read up Taylor and Reese. All knowledge is useful, but that derived from medical jurisprudence is about as practical to the general practitioner as the geography of Timbuctoo or the philosophy of Confucius.

The object of medical teaching is to turn out good practitioners.

Another subject as at present taught which is a weariness to the flesh is Sanitary Science. Its pretensions are stupendous; it is supposed to teach everything—land surveying, architecture, organic chemistry, agriculture, plumbing, drainage and civil engineering. The student is crammed with this conglomerate stuff which he must intelligently reproduce at the annual examination. In Sanitary science we have a splendid exemplification of the “cram” system and the utter uselessness of the knowledge, the very essence of smattering.

In order to show the uselessness of the hard work expended in Sanitary Science, I will quote a few questions from the examination papers on this subject:

1. What do you understand by the expressions “effective population,” “dependent population” and “density of population.”

2. Define the word “nuisance” according to law. Show the statutory provisions under which “nuisance” may be dealt with.

3. What impurities of a deleterious character may be found in bread.

4. In the event of typhoid fever occurring in a family what steps should be taken to ascertain that the water supply and sanitary fittings are in proper order? I will answer this question for the benefit of the Association:—“Send for the plumber.”

The questions I have quoted are well enough for the candidate for the Science degree, but of no use to the general practitioner.

The burden of the medical student of to-day is very great. More attendance at lectures is demanded; more subjects are being wedged into the curriculum. That conglomerate heap labelled “Materia Medica” might be treated in a bag and baggage fashion. It is impossible to encompass the large mass of dry technical knowledge in the students’ course. Materia Medica is a mere tax to the memory; the acquisition largely of bare facts being necessary, and facts that are neither retained