

THE POSITION OF THE SCIENCE OF MEDICINE IN THESE LATTER DAYS.*

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IN opening this meeting, as president of the Toronto Medical Society, my first pleasing duty is to thank its members most cordially for the very real honor they have done me in electing me to the highest office in their gift. In accepting the office, I can assure them that I do not lightly enter upon the duties appertaining thereto. On the contrary, I am painfully conscious of the responsibility which attaches to the chief executive officer of such a society; the more so when I recall the able and energetic manner in which my predecessors have fulfilled the duties of the position.

"May blessings be upon the head of Cadmus, the Phœnicians, or whoever it was that invented books," says the sage Carlyle, in a moment of somewhat rare eupepsia, and, when we recall the advances which medical science has made through the labors of medical societies, we may, not inaptly, beatify their originator, whoever he was, in somewhat similar terms. The advantages which we may look to reap from thus associating ourselves together as a medical society are many and far-reaching, embracing benefits to ourselves and our patients, and enabling us to contribute, to some extent, to the advance of medical science.

In these latter days we are disposed to plume ourselves upon the advanced position which our profession has attained, and to look back with self-complacent indulgence upon the crude pathology and empirical practice of our progenitors. In many respects, it may be admitted, we have cause; but, if we reflect that, fifty years hence, those who succeed us may look back upon us as well-meaning, but clumsy and benighted barbarians, we may be able to retain our becoming modesty.

THE CUMULATIVE NATURE OF SCIENCE.

Learning, in all sciences, is cumulative in its nature, and the science of medicine is a striking example of this law. The present proud position of medicine is ours largely by heredity. We are, in fact, the resultant of a

* President's address before the Toronto Medical Society.