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Original Communications.

ON THE EDINBURGH TRADITION AND OTHER TOPICS.\*

BY

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I had recently forwarded to me by Mr. W. B. Cannon—a medical student of Harvard—an article published in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, detailing what the writer regarded as an ideal method of teaching medicine.† The main feature of this method, and one that I must confess is attractive, is the application to medicine of the Harvard mode of teaching law. At Harvard instead of there being a course of lectures and quizzes upon the different branches of law, the heads of the different departments distribute written or printed statements of actual cases and by a certain day certain of the students are expected to have turned up or ferreted out the authorities bearing on the subject and are expected to argue the matter, pro and con, before the class. In short, the method is but a putting into practice during student days of what, if he does not sink to the level of a scrivener or lawyer's clerk, the law student will be called upon to do each day of his legal career.

You can understand the stimulus that this must be to the keen student. There is no longer the wearying grind at eviscerating and memorising text-books and lecture notes, but in its place an actual living study of the law. Mr. Cannon proposes a somewhat similar plan in medicine. "Do away," he would say, "with didactic lectures; in their place let the quondam lecturer distribute carefully compiled notes of actual cases, with clinical history, symptoms, course of the disease and treatment all noted; then let the student go to the library and diligently work away until from the data given he has made out his diagnosis; until he is able

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\* Being the Presidential Address delivered before the McGill (Undergraduates) Medical Society, April 13th, 1900.

† The Case Method of Teaching Systematic Medicine, *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, January 11, 1900.