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## HOW A DOCTOR MAY GET ON IN LIFE.

Sir Dominic Corrigan gave the following advice on this head in his address to the students at St Mary's Hospital:—“What was in the very beginning of my professional life I received from numerous acquaintances and friends an abundance of what none of them would take from me—namely, advice, and that on a point of great consequence to me—viz, how I was to get on in life, how I was to attain eminence and competence.”

The first of the advices I got, as I recall them, was to take the house of an eminent physician, who was just deceased, and try to step into his shoes; but, however applicable that advice might be to succession in trade or business, I felt that in our profession it was the man and not the house that was sought, and therefore I did not act on that advice.

The next advice I got was to frequent “flower shows,” “charitable bazaars,” “matinées musicales,” and “afternoon teas,” and perhaps learn to twang a little on the “zither,” or “guitar.” This advice did not suit me; I had “no music in my soul,” and I felt, like Richard, that I was “not shaped for sportive tricks”; and, moreover, I felt sure that such accomplishments, however suited to festive scenes, could not be the qualities which the sick would lean on for relief. The advices I got did not end there.

Some of my kind friends assured me the very best way to get business in my profession was to pretend to have it—to put on the appearance of being overpowered with it. They assured me they knew for certain some who succeeded by having themselves frequently called away from church and from the dinner of their friends by urgent summonses to sudden and important cases. They considerably, however, added that the note marked “immediate and pressing,” while ostentatiously handed to me, should, however, be at a suitable time for my own comfort, so that I should not lose the good things of the table.

The next kind friend recommended me to take to driving hard in a carriage, particularly on wet and muddy days, so as to scatter pedestrians and endanger lives at crossings, and make every passer-by inquire who I was. That did not meet my views or my pocket, and I thought of the lines applied to one of the profession, who was said to have so acted. I did not desire to have them applied to me—

“Thy nags the leanest things alive,  
So very hard thou lovest to drive;  
I heard thy anxious coachman say,  
It cost thee more in whips than hay.”

I should tire you were I to enumerate the numerous advices my kind friends pressed on me as to the best way of getting on. I listened to all, and I must confess that I was at first inclined to grow sad and to regret I had entered a profession which, up to that time, presented to my young dream glorious eminences to be attained by bat-

ting forward under the flag “Excelsior.” But, as I was beginning to despair, there was a little book published, “The Lives of British Physicians, extending from Linacre in 1410, to Gooch's death in 1830,” a period of about 400 years. If my young friends have not perused the book I would advise those who are ambitious of eminence to read it, and I think they will come to the same conclusion to which I was led from its perusal, that there is but one road to excellence and success in our profession, and that is by steady study and hard labour; and you will at least always have this consolation in your dreariest hour of labour, that “no proud man's contumely,” no “insolence of office” nor “spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes” can bar your way.

The great Dr. Johnson, who said in his day a great many wise things, but also several foolish things, and who thought he knew everything, has thus written in his *Life of Akenside*:—“A physician in a great city seems to be the more plaything of Fortune. His degree of reputation is for the most part totally casual: they that employ him know not his excellence: they that reject him know not his deficiencies. By an acute observer who had looked on the transactions of the medical world for half a century, a very curious book might be written on the fortune of physicians.”

These observations are a bundle of fallacies, and if I think them worth noticing, it is to ask you not to be so mistaken as to believe in them. If you do believe in them, and act on them, you will assuredly repent it. Go through the lives of the eighteen or twenty men included in the volume I have noticed and you will learn this: that whether they were polished in manners like Linacre and Meade, or boorish like Radcliffe, a staunch royalist like Harvey, or a Roundhead like Sydenham, a very martinet in dress like Jenner, or plain as a Quaker in costume like Sir Thomas Browne, there was one quality which all possessed in common, and that it was which placed fortune at their feet—unremitting hard work in their early days. They were never the playthings of fortune as Dr. Johnson foolishly ventured to say; they commanded fortune.

Dr. Johnson in the same passage has put forth other fallacies. He says: “Those who employ the physician know not his excellence: they that reject him know not his defects. Do not believe in this. A few members of the public may go wrong occasionally, and for a time, in their judgment, but on the whole seldom, and the universal continued voice of the public is seldom wrong. I never yet know a man in our profession hold the confidence and trust of the public for a lengthened time who did not deserve it. I have occasionally, nay, often seen men raised by the influence of connexion or extraneous circumstances into temporary eminence; but if they went up like a rocket, they came down like the stick. Connex-

ions, friends, influence, can do no more than this—give you a field, such as a hospital for your practice, just as solicitors may give a young barrister briefs; but if there be not the head and the hand to do the work the young physician and the lawyer will soon sink to their true level.

Look to the lives of all those physicians who have risen to eminence and held it, and you will find, without an exception, that they had all been working men.

Cherish this in your young minds all who are ambitious. It is not given to all to be field marshals, or admirals, or bishops. There must ever be grades in every sphere of life; but you who are ambitious and look for the highest places, keep this impressed on your minds,—that unceasing labour is the only path to them. Remember the celebrated saying of Sir Thomas Browne, the author of “*Religio Medici*,” one of the most extraordinary men next to Bacon who ever lived, who held a high position as a practising physician, and a world-wide reputation as a philosopher. He used often to say, “I never could be doing nothing.”

I am, of course, precluded by good taste and propriety from bringing before you the names of living men in corroboration of the views I desire to impress on you for your guidance; but look around you here, look around you abroad, on the men that in this great city have risen to eminence in our profession, and who have continued to command the confidence of the public, and you will not find among them one who has not laid the foundation of his success in his own early and continued labour; and this explains what we so often see, that many of the men who have attained the highest positions and greatest wealth are men who had in early life neither connexion, nor party, nor sect, nor wealth, nor influence to aid them on their way. And it ever will be a proud reflection in our profession, that we can achieve position without depending on the smiles or fearing the frowns of fortune. The celebrated Cullen, one of the most illustrious of our profession in the science as well as in the practice of it, was the son of very humble parents in Lanarkshire. He began life as the apprentice of a surgeon-apothecary in Glasgow, and then was surgeon to a merchant vessel trading between London and the West Indies. Next we find him attempting to live by the practice of his profession among the peasants of Shotts, a region in Scotland proverbial for its bleakness and poverty. There now comes a curious episode in his history. The celebrated William Hunter was at the same time in like manner endeavouring to earn a scanty livelihood in the same poor district, and Cullen and Hunter, to enable them to support themselves and follow up their medical education, entered into partnership under an agreement that they should alternately work and study, each taking an alternate year to attend lectures and hospital practice in