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EDITORIAL

THE VALUE OF EXAMINATIONS.

Sir William Osler, Regius Professor of Medicine, University of Oxford, gave the opening lecture at the Medical School of St. George's Hospital, London. He spoke freely and with no uncertain sound against two old-time practices in medical education, namely, the lecture and examination.

On the subject of lectures he said: "The lectures ought to be reduced. The day of the lecture is past. It ought to be an offence on the part of a senior student to attend a lecture." There are many experienced teachers who would not go so far as this. Lectures have been greatly overdone in the past, but this does not prove that they have no place in the education of the medical student. Take the subject of pneumonia, for example. If all teaching is reduced to clinics in the wards of the hospitals, some students may not see a case, or may see their cases with different members of a large hospital staff and be taught somewhat at variance with each other. The experienced lecturer covers the ground of the entire class and may help very much to clarify doubtful points.

But there is another aspect of the lecture that should not be lost sight of. If only clinics are given, the student will depend upon some text-book for his systematic information. The well-informed lecturer gathers his material from many text-books and adds his own experience. He is thus a gatherer and collator of information. This is spiced and flavored by the experiences of the lecturer. But this supposes a capable lecturer. This being premised, we still believe that there is much value in the lecture, and should form one of the methods of imparting knowledge to the student. An able lecturer is a guide to the student. We would regret to see the lecture altogether discarded.