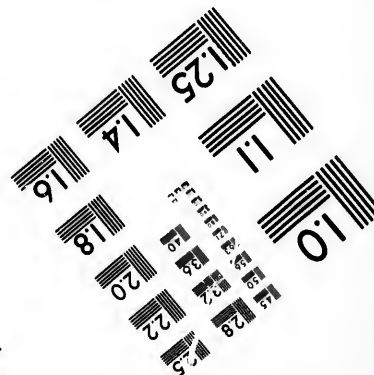
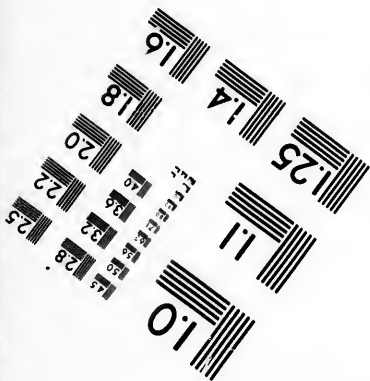
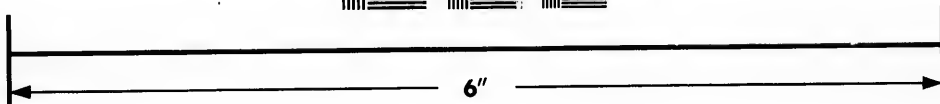
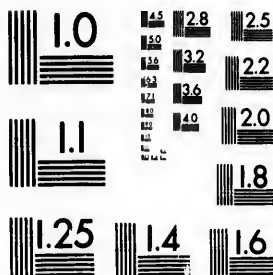


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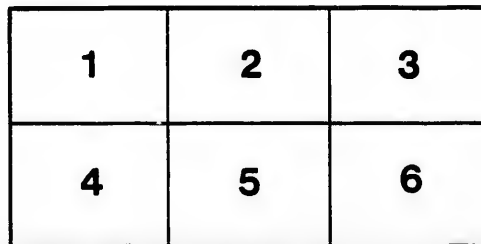
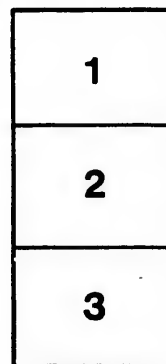
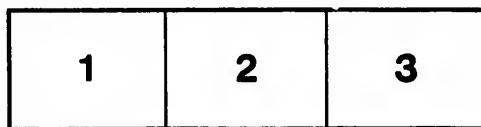
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Burgess, T. J. W.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE GRADUATES IN
MEDICINE AT THE ANNUAL CONVOCATION OF THE
MEDICAL FACULTY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY,
JUNE 15, 1900.

BY

T J. W. BURGESS, M.B.

Professor of Mental Diseases, McGill University ; Superintendent of the Hospital
for the Insane, Verdun.

Reprinted from the Montreal Medical Journal, June, 1900.

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With all my heart I would that to one more capable had been entrusted the duty of bidding you farewell,—of wishing you that success and happiness which, as the voice of the Faculty, I do most heartily wish you.

During your collegiate course your Alma Mater has done what she could for you; now in your own strength you must stand or fall; she has laid the foundation of your future life, and I trust laid it well; it is for you to raise a superstructure perfect in its parts and honourable both to her and the builder.

It may seem to you as though your days of toil and study were over, and that, with a diploma certifying to your fitness and proficiency in learning, you will be armed and equipped with everything necessary to secure your success. I trust that none of you will reason thus. Remember that your work, your studies, and your readings have not ended,—they have indeed but just begun.

To-day you are entering upon a new world, a world of labour, and pain, and sorrow, a world in which there is at last but one event to all the sons of men, be they rich or poor, high or low. You must be prepared to deal with anxiety, fear, grief, and despair, as well as fever and physical pain; you are to be not only physician, but friend, confessor, guide, and judge; you cannot avoid these responsibilities if you would, nor should you if you could,

Do not, however, even for a moment imagine that I would have you look upon the world before you as one of utter darkness. The very shadows that I have mentioned prove that there must be plenty of sunshine as well, the sunshine of good deeds wrought by brave men and fair women, whose best and noblest characteristics are brought out most vividly amid such scenes as those in which you will be called to act.

In so large a class there cannot but be many natures,—men of the most diverse capacities, aims and destinations. Each of you, too, has his aspirations, a little vague no doubt, but nevertheless real. Keep them, I conjure you, as long as possible, strive to realise them. In the words of Nathaniel Willis :—

“Press on! for it is Godlike to unloose
The spirit, and forget yourself in thought;
Bending a pinion for the deeper sky,
And, in the very fetters of your flesh,
Mating with the pure essences of heaven!
Press on! ‘for in the grave there is no work
And no device.’ Press on! while yet you may.”

In the ever-increasing competition in the medical profession, you will probably find the struggle for existence an arduous one,—will meet with many worries, many cares, many disappointments,—will find many of youth’s golden visions fading away into gray, cold mists. But I would counsel you to be of good courage, remembering always the old adage that “every cloud has its silver lining.”

Doubtless, among other things, you will all desire to make money; not for the money’s sake, but for what you can do with it. It is not a desire to be ashamed of. “He that does not provide for his own household is worse than a heathen,” were the words of one who has also declared that “the greatest of these is charity.” The words of St. Paul are nowhere more applicable than to the profession of medicine. He who is ever on the alert with the gift of his services, or, what is more common, is careless in demanding proper recognition of his work, sins trebly,—against himself and his family, against his brother practitioners, and against those whom he thinks he is serving. But mark this. The best works in the world are not done for money, or from selfish motives of any kind. While all the giving of this world is not committed to the doctor, he has a special heritage in the poor, and if you are to achieve true success,—the success that brings happiness and is the only kind worth seeking,—you must do a vast amount of work, not for money, but in part because you like it, and in part because it will do good and help others. The privilege of relieving suffering humanity, of being a messenger of peace to those in pain, of endeavouring to

imitate the example of Him who went about doing good, is indeed a reward above all monetary considerations. No more Christlike emblem can be found than the physician braving the dangers of pestilence in the wretched hovels of the poor, or the surgeon upon the battlefield, ministering alike to friend and foe, without hope of earthly reward, but feeling amply recompensed in the conscientious discharge of his merciful calling. One day of such an opportunity to render service to God and man is worth a whole life spent in the acquisition of a science which confers such power upon its possessor.

In his poem, "The Physician," read at Washington last month, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell thus beautifully sets forth the lesson which our profession inculcates :—

"To give what none can measure, none can weigh,
Simply to go where duty points the way;
To face unquestioning the fever's breath,
The hundred shadows of the vale of death;
To bear Christ's message through the battle's rage,
The yellow plague, the leper's island cage,
And with our noblest 'well to understand
'The poor man's call as only God's command.'
One bugle note our battle call,
One single watchword, Duty,—'That is all."

Transpose { As medical men you are expected to play a twofold part. It is your professional matters, but you should also lose no opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the world. Your success in life will depend as much upon the latter as upon your professional attainments. Remember always that you are men amongst men; and that no matter how great your medical skill may be, if you have not acquired an ease and grace of manner, you have not the key to unlock the door of public confidence. Often you will find it true that people will first call you in because they like you as a man; and then retain you because they like you as a physician. To attain this happy result, it is above all things necessary that the medical practitioner should be a gentleman in the widest sense of the term. I do not mean in appearance only, in outward demeanor, in the cleanliness of his linen, or the cut of his clothes, but in very heart. Thackeray, at the close of his "Four Georges," asks :—"What is it to be a gentleman? Is it to have lofty aims, to lead a pure life, to keep your honour virgin; to have the esteem of your fellow citizens, and the love of your fireside; to bear good fortune meekly, to suffer evil with constancy; and through evil or good to maintain truth always? Show me the happy man whose life exhibits these qualities, and him we will

salute as gentleman, whatever his rank may be." Nowhere will you find a better definition of what constitutes a true gentleman,—follow it and you cannot fail to be such.

A word now as to your leisure time, because when first entered in the field of practice it is not likely that a host of sick people will be waiting to avail themselves of your kind attentions or superior skill. On the contrary, you must expect much wearisome waiting, many hours of enforced idleness. How may you occupy these hours to the best advantage? Good literature is, I think, beyond doubt the most valuable resource at the command of the young practitioner. Not medical textbooks, for the jaded brain, after a five years' course of cramming, calls loudly for a change of diet. Instead, avail yourselves of the great masters of dramatic and poetic literature, or take excursions with some of the standard essayists, historians, or novelists. Believe me, every moment spent in the society of such men as Shakespeare, Tenayson, Montaigne, Macaulay, or Fielding will repay you a thousandfold.

Nor is it only on your entry into practice that the resources of general literature will be found of incalculable benefit. There is no human occupation which taxes the vital energies more than the practice of medicine. In the severe strain imperatively entailed by close attention to a large visiting list, and the constant devotion of the mind to one line of thought, we have just the conditions most favorable for a premature breakdown in the delicate mechanism of the human mind and body. The remedy against such a catastrophe is thus cogently put by Sir William Mitchell Banks, in an oration, "Physic and Letters," delivered before the Medical Society of London a few years ago:—"The essay, the review, the poem, the incident of travel, the glamour of history, the romance; these are the things that for a short, sweet, evening hour or two will carry him into a land where there are no querulous complainings of sick men, no tearful faces of anxious relatives, no thankless words of ungrateful patients."

Or, if you would hear a more ancient authority on the same subject, let me thus quote you from Langford's essay, "The Praise of Books": "As friends and companions, as teachers and consolers, as recreators and amusers, books are always with us, and always ready to respond to our wants. We can take them with us in our wanderings, or gather them around us at our firesides. In the lonely wilderness, and the crowded city, their spirit will be with us, giving a meaning to the seemingly confused movements of humanity, and peopling the desert with their own bright creations."

It may seem superfluous to tell you that in order to reap these advantages you must be readers not collectors of books. I have known some good men develop into the latter only. Better! a thousand times

better! a dozen good books well thumbed than a whole library of ancient volumes, though of the choicest. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in his "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," says—"Certain things are good for nothing until they have been kept a long while; and some are good for nothing until they have been long kept and used. Of the first, wine is the illustrious and immortal example. Of those which must be kept and used I will name three,—meercaum pipes, violins, and poems." The latter part of the saying is equally applicable to books as a whole.

As your instructor in mental diseases, it would hardly be right that I should allow you to escape all mention of the place occupied by my own specialty in your future career. "The proper study of mankind is man" said the poet Pope, and in a very special sense is this true of the medical profession. You, whose duty it will be to consider all that relates to the health of your fellow-men, have to regard man not only as an organized being having certain relations to the external world, but also as endowed with a mental constitution, through which his material organization is constantly influenced. You know how closely the mind and body are related to each other in health and disease, it therefore behoves you to watch well and carefully analyze the mental peculiarities of your patients. Believe me, there is no department of study to which you can give attention that will yield more therapeutic aid in dealing with the sick than a thorough cultivation of the power of quickly estimating their mental states. The psychological conditions of a patient exercise an important influence on the progress of disease, on the character of secretions and excretions, and on the effects of various remedies. It is, therefore, just as necessary that you should give some study to the intellectual powers of your charge, that you should know how to handle his will, imagination, and emotions, as it is that you should know how and when to give certain drugs, and the effects you expect them to yield. When you come to the bedside of the sick try to enter into the feelings and moods of the patient, remember that pain and disease are stern realities, changing the mental tones so that you cannot judge the sick by the well. At the bedside, too, be brave-hearted and joyous. Physical health is, unfortunately, not contagious, but mental and moral health is. There is much sound sense in the old quatrain:—

"Speak sober truth with smiling lips; the bitter wrap in sweetness,

Sound sense in seeming nonsense, as the grain is hid in chaff.

And fear not that the lesson e'er may seem to lack completeness,

A man may say a wise thing, though he say it with a laugh."

And now, as you bid adieu to all the pleasant memories of student-life to enter on the battle which all must wage, with our united right hands we give you a reluctant good-by, a hearty God-speed. In many

a graver season, I doubt not, you will look back on the busy, happy hours, full of brightest hope, passed in the college halls, and will long cherish the friendships formed therein. Let me add, in conclusion, that in receiving your degrees to-day, you have pledged yourselves to your Alma Mater. Her vows are on you. You go forth as true knights sworn to honour and fidelity. See that no act of yours brings discredit on her.

Always, throughout your life, let your motto be loyalty,—loyalty to yourselves, loyalty to your fellow-men, loyalty to your Alma Mater, Old McGill.

