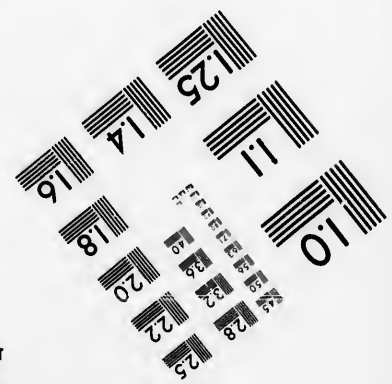
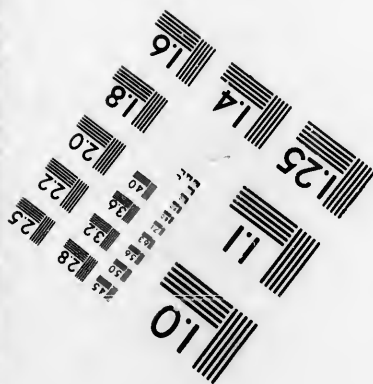
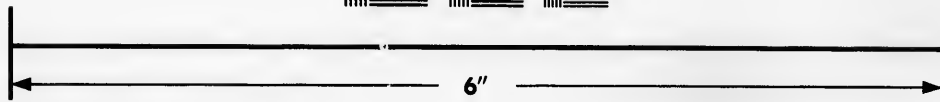
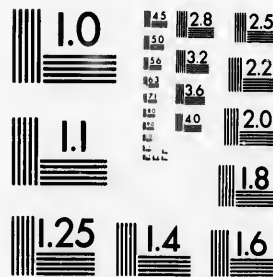


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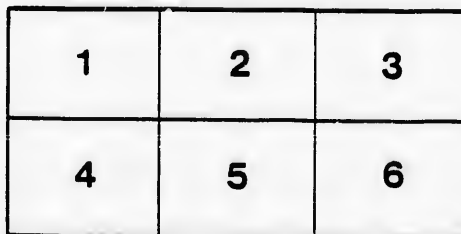
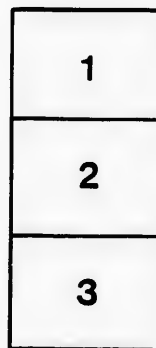
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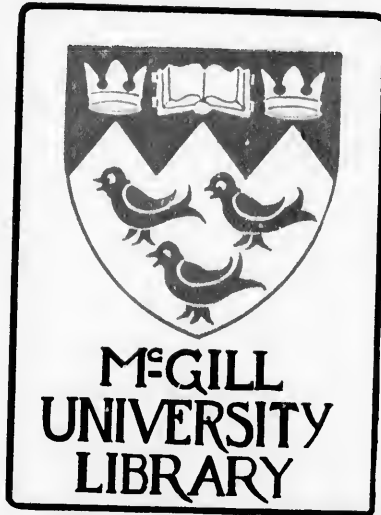
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VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED TO THE

Graduates in Medicine of McGill University,

APRIL 1, 1889.

BY

WESLEY MILLS, M.A., M.D., L.R.C.P., LOND..

PROFESSOR OF PHYSIOLOGY, MCGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL.



VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED TO THE GRADUATES IN MEDICINE OF MCGILL
UNIVERSITY, APRIL 1ST, 1889.

By WESLEY MILLS, M.A., M.D., L.R.C.P., LOND.,
Professor of Physiology, McGill University, Montreal.

Gentlemen, Graduates in Medicine :

Some of my colleagues, with more confidence in my power of rapid preparation than I have myself, suggested that I should avail of this occasion to speak of the achievements and character of our late Dean. But when one has, within a few days, read one thousand pages of foolscap in the form of examination papers, and finds several hundred more confronting him, he is not worth much for any high undertaking.

Canada's greatest physician—the "grand old man" of the medical profession in this country—has passed away! Would that I could speak of him worthily, but the task is too mighty for me! But even were I competent, there are strong personal reasons which would render it impossible. A friendship beginning in profound respect on my part when I had the privilege as a student of sitting under the magnificent lectures of the late Professor of Medicine, and feeling the ennobling influence of the man; and on his part, the fancied or real discovery in me of—I know not what,—a friendship deepening with the rolling years has suddenly been dissolved.

When, in 1881, after being abroad, I settled in this city and began my career as a very subordinate and almost unrecognized teacher in McGill University, one man in the Medical

Faculty extended to me great encouragement. That man was the late Dr. Howard.

When, again, in 1884, after a more prolonged absence abroad, I took the bold, perhaps rash step, and certainly one unprecedented in this country, of wholly relinquishing medical practice for the teaching and culture of the department of Animal Physiology, amid much hesitation, indifference and lack of confidence, again one man with an insight into the importance of this subject for medicine, given to few, wavered not, but from the first supported both the subject and the teacher with that gigantic moral strength which I felt "like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." No one in Canada has, directly or indirectly, so encouraged Physiology as the man that I venture to think will be known in future as McGill's great medical Dean.

But Robert Palmer Howard is gone!

I suffer from temporary discouragement and a feeling of apprehension for the future. A king may arise that knows not Joseph. I am overwhelmed with a sense of personal loss, loss to medicine, to the University, and to my own subject.

You will therefore understand why, were I worthy of such a theme, my feelings, so near are we to this recent awful bereavement, are not under sufficient control to warrant me in undertaking its treatment; and this is my reason for these personal references, which, inasmuch as they explain my course to-day, I hope you will pardon.

I shall therefore deliver the address I had prepared, and which was in type before the late Dean's illness began; and if I tax your patience somewhat by references to matters that I deem of great importance, I think I may at least assure you that my remarks will not be of the nature of an oft-told tale.

Each of you is to-day like one who has been walking in a long but narrow avenue, bounded on each side by pleasant, though not greatly varied, scenery, stimulated to maintain a certain rather rapid pace by his leaders and fellow-travellers, and who, all of a sudden, finds himself about to part from those he has pleasurably accompanied. The avenue opens out into a boundless expanse, neither the nature nor the extent of which

he knows. It is uncertain in how far he may either understand or be understood by the great crowd wending its way by different paths across this great area.

Such is the college—such is the world. To drop the figure, you have now closed a busy but somewhat narrow mode of life, and are about to enter on one incomparably wider in all respects. I think too well of you to believe that any one of your number quits the scene of four years of the most important, and not the least pleasant, part of his life's drama without a feeling akin to fond regret; or that he looks out upon the unknown future without a certain degree of anxiety and a sense of manhood's responsibilities, however hopeful he may be by nature, however keen his anticipations of success or bright his prospects.

It is a fact too little realized that we can never get rid of our past. We do to-day, each one of us, represent most accurately the past that belongs to ourselves and our ancestors, as we are determining hourly the character of posterity.

It follows, then, that, however your fortunes may vary, you must ever owe filial gratitude to your *Alma Mater*. The University has aimed to send you forth armed for the battle of life; and though she may have erred somewhat in her methods, you must give her credit for the best of motives.

This aspect of the subject has been discussed frequently, and I shall therefore for a brief space ask your attention to a few thoughts on the relations you sustain to the University by virtue of the fact that you are now a part—a very important part of the University herself. As undergraduates you could chiefly help the University by conforming to her regulations cheerfully and acquitting yourself to the best of your ability in the pursuit of your studies. Now, however, the day of pupilage is past, and you probably scarcely realize that you are not only each a reflector that should radiate the better light of university culture, but that you are now entitled to a voice in the government of the University. You are now at liberty to express your opinions on university matters, not only through the ordinary channels open to every one in a really free country, but also through the Graduates Society or any branches of it that may be formed. You

are represented on the corporation of McGill most directly by the Representative Fellows, in the election of whom every graduate may cast his vote. And allow me, gentlemen, to suggest to you the desirability of at once, before you leave the city, complying with those conditions to be observed in order that you may be able, without further trouble, to vote annually for Representative Fellows.

On the one hand it is the plain duty of the University to place within the reach of all her graduates sources of the fullest information in reference to all her affairs; and it is equally your duty to give such information the most careful consideration. Remember that the time is past, if it ever existed, when the entire interests of a great university can be safely trusted to any one man or any dozen men, however great their ability or however pure their motives. The government of universities by an autocracy of any kind is directly opposed to the spirit of the age. Not that the great multitude should express itself directly in the councils of the highest centre of learning; but I do maintain that the echoes of the humblest village school-room should be heard and regarded by the powers that more directly guide the university ship; and you, gentlemen, may be the only medium, possibly, through which these significant echoes may reach the centres of university life. If after the best study you can give to the affairs of your *Alma Mater* you are convinced that all is as well as it may be, then support the University methods heartily; but if, again, you feel the contrary, agitate through the mouth-pieces, the University's constitution provides the changes you are convinced should be made. If the Elective Fellows are not sufficiently numerous, see that their number is increased. As soon as any of them lose their usefulness—become mere gilded men of wood, remove them, and replace them by vital organisms.

I do not think the Representative Fellows should always be chosen from Montreal. The corporation should so arrange its meetings that gentlemen from a distance might attend, and their expenses should be paid. Let us have the best men wherever they are to be found.

It is not well with a university when its graduates do not take a deep interest in her affairs ; but this can never, in my opinion, be realized until this important body has the fullest reason for the belief that its representations will receive due consideration. Gentlemen, it is your duty, as well as that of all graduates, to see to this.

Modern Botany has made us familiar with the fact that, though the greater part of a tree is made up of structures now dead or possessed of a very low vitality, throughout the really growing part there is a continuity of the essential protoplasm. Without pushing the comparison too far, may I not truthfully state that the graduates largely represent in the University the essential growing part, the part that most readily adapts to the environment ? A university needs, as a tree, the supporting structures, which may be said to represent the conservative element. But it may have these and neither grow nor adapt. It may have these and gradually decay. Let me remind those that may be inclined to despise the importance of the youthful element in university affairs that life—all life—implies *constant* adaptation and ceaseless change. It is either change and progress or it is stagnation and death. With the life of a cell or the life of a university, it is the same—change, change, slow or rapid as the surroundings demand. The time when any man feels like saying " Now all is well, now I will rest," marks the epoch of commencing senility, arrest of progress, decay ; and this period seems to be reached by some men fearfully soon. With some it began before they were born. The same holds for a university.

When, gentlemen, I had the pleasure of meeting you in my own lecture-room, you may remember that I occasionally referred, with a view of stimulating you with a glimpse of a grand future, to the great change that is coming over every department of medicine. We are in the midst of a period of unequalled progress. Changes of the most profound character are taking place in medicine as an art and especially as a science. Call it a revolution or an evolution as you will, it is coming—aye, it has come ; and happy are they that realize it ! I have always maintained

that until the medical profession comprehends that medicine is a branch of Biology it will never perceive its true relations to the study and the practice of the healing art.

Once be convinced of this, and radical changes in the methods of teaching in medical schools must follow. Perhaps no institutions are so full of educational anomalies as medical colleges. This is owing, as an ultimate cause, to this failure to perceive the real nature of medical study, which was impossible till the recent great strides in biology had been taken. Hence it happened that professors were chosen from among the great mass of medical practitioners quite irrespective of any inborn or acquired ability to teach. As the faculties of medical schools often filled the vacancies in their ranks without being responsible to any other body, it is easy enough to understand that men should be chosen because they were respectable in the community and agreeable to the members of the faculty; and perhaps for no other good reason.

On this continent a few of the more advanced schools rank among their numbers one, two or three teachers that are devoting the whole of their time to their professorial duties. These men are allowed the same college status as their colleagues; they enjoy a sufficiently small stipend; and they mostly find, although they may spend the whole of their energies on their specialties and the study of educational problems, that no more weight is attached to their opinions than those of their colleagues who may be so occupied with the cares of medical practice that they have not an hour to give to any problem, educational or other, outside of the crowding round of their professional duties. Hence progress is slow. The day of great things is at hand, but how many see it not! If anything in education needs reforming altogether, it is the methods of medical education. From the beginning to the end of a medical course real knowledge can only be gained by the direct use of the senses, hence laboratory work of all kinds, in which I would include that of the dissecting-room (morphological laboratory) and the hospital wards, must largely occupy the student. As soon as didactic lectures, instead of helping a man to acquire knowledge for him-

self by observation, and to work up the facts into sound generalizations, load the mind with purely abstract conceptions, and hazy, ill-comprehended ideas, they become a positive injury and not a benefit. Is there a medical school in existence that can claim that correct methods are fully carried out? McGill is well to the front as compared with the best. But let us be candid. If I make to-day a few statements not of that laudatory character so common in this country, I hope I shall not be credited with less love for my own University or my own land than those who only boast of our present attainments.

A system that crowds so much work into four sessions; a system that expects so much at examinations; that keeps men listening to lectures of one hour each from 9 A.M. to 6 P.M., with the exception of a busy period of a couple of hours at the hospital and one hour for lunch, I do unhesitatingly declare an educational monstrosity and a fearful imposition on young, undeveloped natures. This is not the way to develop men, but to dwarf or distort them; and that our students are not more injured is evidence of the strength of their constitutions. No students work so hard and so cheerfully as medical students, and none are more handicapped by educational blundering.

Gentlemen graduates, I am sure you feel the truth of these remarks; you have groaned under the weight you have had to carry; and even the best men amongst you have felt it too heavy. You have been conscious of trying to keep in form for examination a vast mass of details which you have not digested nor even comprehended; and yet *you* have had greater advantages than most students in America for the acquisition of knowledge and for mental development in the right way.

The term I have just used, "development," raises a question I would urge with all the earnestness of which I am capable. Man has a complex organization, and any system of education that fails to develop all the parts of his nature harmoniously must be to a greater or less degree a failure. There are a few universities on this continent that look after the physical development of men wisely; a few others whose methods for the training of the *intellect* are to a large degree in harmony with

the best knowledge on that subject we possess. But where is the university anywhere in the world that harmoniously develops the whole man? Not one—absolutely not one! In all that relates to the social, the æsthetic, the moral, we are far behind. This is painfully evident in the medical course. A student is to a professor an intellect to be addressed—to be trained to a certain extent if you will, and to be very thoroughly examined periodically. The professor is to the student a statement-supplying mechanism, to be satisfied at examinations by a due return of the ideas furnished. Of all teachers a medical faculty should look to the body. But where is the medical school in which physical culture in the best sense is insisted upon? What provision is made to develop the social and moral, the highest parts of the man, and on which his future usefulness so much depends? In the winter evenings, if you pass near the theological colleges which flank McGill on each side, you may perhaps see the students partaking of their tea comfortably together. They evidently have both domestic comfort and social intercourse, and we are glad of it. Why should the Arts, the Science or the Medical student be turned out of his father's house to make his way as best he can in a large city without, in most instances, a single acquaintance at the outset? We have a fearful responsibility, I feel personally, and the hour is at hand when we must grapple with the problem! Among McGill's many wants, none seem to me so acute as the need of the embodiment of this principle of harmonious development of all the parts of the student's nature. McGill needs, on these grounds, a building which shall permit of the students of all the faculties meeting in a great dining hall and in the amusement and reading rooms, the apartments for physical culture, etc., with which it should be provided. Here the professors might mingle with their students—man to man. It would do both good. This requires money; but four hundred subscriptions of \$500 each would ensure the erection and furnishing of such a building. Are there not four hundred men in Montreal with enough patriotism and paternal feeling to subscribe the requisite amount? For the evils that beset our methods in the training of the

intellect of the medical student, the speediest and surest remedy would be a faculty composed of men devoting themselves, as is the case in medicine in some other countries, and in some of the other faculties of our own University, wholly to college work. Such a state of things implies endowed chairs, etc. Already on this continent there is one richly endowed medical school of the character indicated, gradually bursting into the vigor of a growth unwonted in the history of medical teaching on this side of the Atlantic. And McGill has reason to be proud that a graduate of her own (Prof. Osler) has been chosen as one of that carefully selected few that are to man and pilot the new ship. Where shall the next such school be? In the face of the magnificent endowments to this University of one great-hearted man; and to the citizens by himself and a fellow in grand and good works, of a noble bequest for the erection of an institution the usefulness of which all acknowledge,—in the face of these deeds by two of Montreal's citizens, who shall set bounds to the supply of means from the whole body of citizens, especially for what one of McGill's benefactors has called "*the essential profession?*"

The students that McGill has and cares to have are ready for the changes I have briefly sketched as desirable; in fact, many of her present students groaning under the impositions of the present are fondly looking for better days; though it may be they see but dimly in their youth and inexperience what should replace the present; but that there are some great changes devoutly to be wished is felt by the mass of the students but too keenly.

Gentlemen graduates, I am sure you participate in these views and feelings; hence I have thought it not an improper time to give utterance to them, believing that you will endeavor to hasten the day of better things, while still grateful for what you have received, and quite conscious that your own Alma Mater is not in the rear of the best of her neighbors. What I am trying to make clear is that *all* universities are behind; and that, as regards methods of intellectual training, medical schools are especially in need of great and speedy reforms.

But you are, perhaps, aware that one of the sources of embar-

rassment to the universities of this country just now is the result of the interference, either directly or indirectly, of professional bodies with their independent and largely irresponsible examining boards, which are not content with merely examining, but wish to dictate how students shall be taught. This latter is an entirely unjustifiable assumption of power. Those best qualified to judge of methods of training, etc., are those actually engaged in the work, and not, with all respect to them, the busy practitioners of the land destitute of experience in such work. That such men should be appointed examiners of students taught by specialists is at once a gross injustice to the universities and the students, as well as in itself an absurdity. Now, gentlemen, if within the next few years, or at any future time, you should be offered the position of examiner in some of the primary subjects on boards of such constitution, will you accept the position on the plea that if you do not some one equally unqualified will; or will you sacrifice for your university, your country and your convictions any temporary personal advantage? Prove yourself a moral vetebate and say, "No," as a protest against such anomalous practices. For my part I think your course is clear.

But you are under obligations to your country and your race of even greater importance than those you owe your Alma Mater, and I must not linger on your relations to the University. But before quitting this subject, you will, I am sure, join with me in one remark: That whatever changes may take place in the medical teaching of McGill University in the near or remote future, we do not hope to see in the members of her faculty men that will spare cheerfully more of their time and energy from their main work to their college duties than do my colleagues; nor that any future head of McGill Medical Faculty will embody in himself such a rare combination of professional ability, high sense of honor and justice, such integrity, such devotion in the interests of his profession and his university, or such rare ability as a lecturer, united with lofty aims and with an almost youthful enthusiasm, as did the late Dean.*

* This address was in type before the fatal illness of the late Dr. Howard began, and I have therefore allowed the above passage to stand as it was originally written, with the exception of two words.

Gentlemen, I must congratulate you on the prospects that loom up, to my eye clearly, before your chosen profession. Such is the progress of biology and allied branches, as chemistry, that within the next two decades, and certainly well within your lifetime, Medicine must be so transformed in every respect, and especially as a science, as to be scarcely recognizable. I have often thought that one of the best realizations that our profession could experience is the slight degree to which medicine has been a science at all until within the last ten years. And even as yet, witness the isolation of the various subjects in a medical curriculum, and the consequently increased difficulty in learning and the loss of energy from disconnected thinking which lasts beyond student-life and handicaps the practitioner all his days. Older literature is fast becoming shelved. The principles of Biology, vitalized by the great doctrines of organic evolution, will surely—let us hope speedily—like a ferment transform the whole. At present you hear little of biological principles outside of one or two lecture-rooms; but in less than twenty years they will dominate the teaching in every department, not excepting the hospital ward. Nor will it be in the form of crude, unverified statements, but as accurately ascertained facts. From what a height the teacher and practitioner of that day will survey the vast field! How much easier his classification of facts, how broad and how clear his principles!

I congratulate you on that unification and correlation which is taking place, notwithstanding old prejudices, in the different departments of medicine. Dental surgery and comparative, so-called, veterinary medicine, are being carried along on that same wave of progress on whose crest human medicine is riding. Until men perceived that disease was not an entity but a condition, varying with the organism affected, it was impossible to see the connection between the different branches of the science or to understand that as nature is one so must all science, including Medicine, when complete, be one. The dental and the veterinary surgeon and the practitioner of human medicine should no longer stand apart. The claims alike of science, our speechless companions and fellow-creatures the lower animals,

and of man himself, cry aloud to us all to unite our forces in the battle against disease, and to attain unto a better light and a broader knowledge. Gentlemen, it may be difficult for you who, in McGill, sit in the same lecture-rooms, work in the same laboratories, and pass the same examinations in the primary departments, as the students of veterinary and dental surgery, to understand why these branches of the profession and that you have chosen are not more closely united; especially as now the interests of the public demand it, owing to the demonstrated communicability of disease from animals to man and the reverse. But there is a corporate and professional pride against which I would warn you. Beware of those that would seek to impregnate you with that which, like a calcifying process, arrests growth. Wherever you meet a professional brother, if he is good man and true, no matter whether veterinary or dental surgeon, or practitioner of human medicine, commune with him,—it will do you good and him good; and if he is not a good man and true, seek better company, no matter by what name he may be called.

But there is an equally bright prospect before the great public. The profession and the public will alike realize that the great mission of the physician is to *prevent* disease. Families will be willing to pay to have their past physical histories studied; they will take pains to preserve for the use of their posterity fuller and more accurate health-records than those to which they have been heir. The laws of heredity will be better understood and, let us hope, acted upon than now, owing to a quickened moral sense which will unquestionably result if our progress is real. The physician of that day will have a pleasanter career, because of less ignorance and prejudice to combat; but he will require to be a better man in all respects than his representative of to-day. His knowledge will not be confined to what pertains strictly to his own profession, but he must, of necessity, be one of the best educated men in the whole community, particularly in science.

It may be that the pure scientist should rank intellectually above the physician of to-day; but the future physician must be both.

Gentlemen, you leave us to-day well abreast of the knowledge of your time. But allow me to remind you that only the fleet runner can fully keep up in the race. Industry well directed, a mind free from prejudice, ever ready to entertain, though not necessarily to subscribe to, every now thing, will keep you in the safe path of progress. And begin at once this career. Never cease to be students of books, and, above all, of the book of Nature, ever open, yet sometimes hard to read. You will, of course, encourage all forms of learning and especially all departments of science, for no one can tell whence the next great advance may come. The limits set to an address of this kind prevents me referring to many matters of great importance in the details of your career as practitioners; but I think you must at some time during your student life have either heard or read advice on many of these subjects.

In this unresting age old things seem to be passing away and all things becoming new. Every man is a unit-force in the civilization of which he forms a part. He either retards or accelerates the car of progress. In addition to the physician's obligations as a preventer of disease by direct consultation with individuals and families, he owes a great duty to that portion of the human race that, from a multitude of causes, is unable to think out and work out its own salvation. What, then, is the duty of the profession to the great ignorant, degraded, comparatively helpless, mass of our fellows. According to some we are each to look to himself; each develop himself; and these people find a refuge for their selfishness under some ill-understood quotation, such as "The survival of the fittest." They would have us believe that their position is supported by the now no longer despised doctrines of evolution. Such views may harmonize with their "evolution," but not with that of the noble Darwin! Survival under a given environment is a mark of the fittest. But who make the environment for these unfortunates? In great part their fellow-men; and unless they make it as good as their light and opportunities permit they are unjust to their less fortunate brethren.

With all kinds of resource, whether of wealth, talent, learning

or aught else, comes an inalienable responsibility. We can no more get rid of it than of our being. The medical profession has, by virtue of special knowledge, a peculiar responsibility to their fellows both as a profession and as individuals. There are great evils at the very roots of human progress, understood adequately only by medical men, not to speak of their special knowledge of hygiene, by which they are eminently qualified to warn and direct the public. And unless the medical profession soon speaks out on some of these topics in language that cannot be misunderstood, surely the very stones will cry out!

We have all sorts of combinations in these days in the supposed interests of special classes. But who has yet heard of a meeting of capitalists with the direct object of devising means to alleviate the condition of their less fortunate fellow-creatures? Where or when have scientists or physicians met to decide upon plans of spreading the rays of a wholesome knowledge in noisome places? We may boast of our civilization as we will, but so long as there are, on the one hand, gross ignorance of essential truths by vast masses of mankind, squalor, poverty and all forms of degradation in our very midst; and on the other, massive fortunes, great ability, scientific knowledge and skill, all utilized for the benefit of the possessors only, all being perfectly content that things should so remain; and so far as the one side is concerned should increase, it seems to me that we have yet to learn the very elements of a high civilization. There may be those who can understand how a physician who does no more than go the rounds of his practice discharges his whole duty to his fellows. But on purely scientific grounds, if no other, I am unable to see how any man can be true to the potential nobility and greatness of his nature who allows himself to become and remain a mere diagnosing, prescription-writing mechanism, or a neuro-muscular mass co-ordinated to manipulate a scalpel or a saw! To be this only means the atrophy of the best part of man's nature.

If these doctrines seem new it is because they are so old. They are opposed neither to nature, nor science, nor the teachings of the great Nazarene. We pay unbounded homage to intellectual ability in our age. But though we admire the fox

for the cunning by which he secures his prey, or the shark for his teeth, we do not respect them for these endowments; and if so, why should we respect the man who, like the shark, uses his abilities to get the advantages in the race of life without reference to the results to others. I have never been able to understand it. I cannot respect such men. Such deference is a form of material worship, inherited from grosser ancestors, to be dominated as speedily as possible to higher principles.

Gentlemen, I address those remarks to you in the hope that you may not wait for older men to move; but that you may be induced, possibly, to initiate independent action yourselves on higher grounds than have been hitherto generally recognized. But should you do so, I cannot promise you that your equals or others will strew flowers in your path. You will probably be much misunderstood, and as a consequence you may be subjected to some of the many forms of refined persecution of our day. You may expect to be called an "extremist," a "visionary," a "dangerous radical," or perhaps a "crank," a term now often applied by stupid people to those they are incapable of understanding. But take your stand. You may live to see your dreams realized; but if not, you may enjoy the satisfaction of feeling that you have, in some degree at least, assisted in human progress.

Gentlemen, a word in regard to your relations to the schools of our land. If there is anyone who, by virtue of his education, his special knowledge, and his method of viewing things, is fitted to make one of a school board, it is the physician with a broad, liberal education. But how few of our profession occupy such a position. I think I am correct in stating that in the largest city in the Dominion not one physician has sat upon her school board for twenty years, although there has been a great plethora of the members of another learned profession. Your lot may be cast in a small place. The teacher, the preacher and yourself may be the sole representatives of the higher culture. Form a triumvirate for mutual help, and unite your forces in the cause of civilization. Drop into the school-room occasionally; speak a few encouraging words to the teacher. Make him see, if he

does not, that great destinies are in his hands ; smooth his often rugged path ; show the community that education, like all else that pertains to man, must be in harmony with the laws of his physical organization. It seems to me that your privileges and your obligations are, in this direction, great.

Finally, gentlemen, though men differ on this subject and on that, there is one on which all are agreed. Mankind, of whatever race, language, religion or place in the human scale, unite to respect and love the man that alleviates human suffering,—who prevents or wipes away the tear of pain, of bitterness, of repentance, or any form of misery.

Graduates in medicine of 1889, this is your privilege, a part of your noble mission to men. Go—go forth and discharge it. Farewell !

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