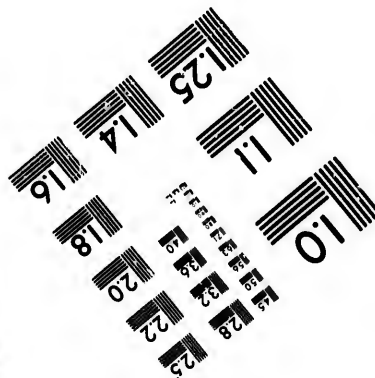
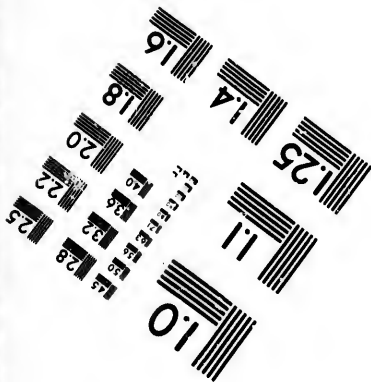
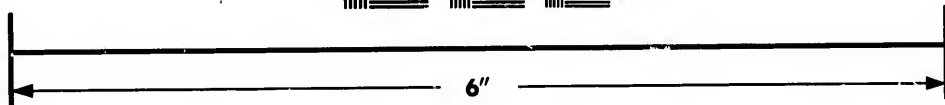
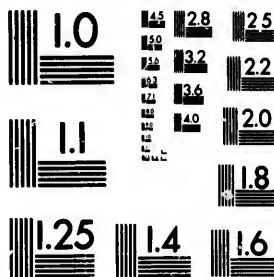


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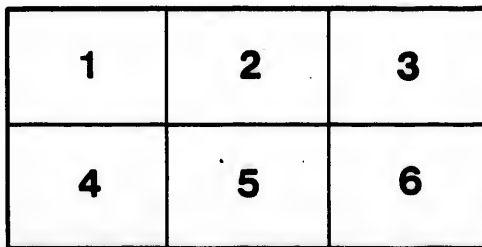
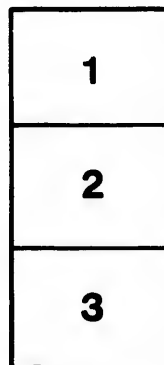
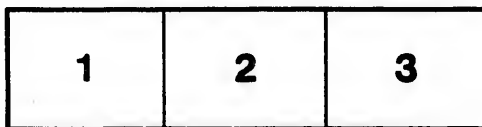
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Va

Fenwick, G. E.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

TO THE

GRADUATES IN MEDICINE AND SURGERY,

McGill University,

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31st MARCH, 1871;;

By GEORGE E. FENWICK, M.D.,

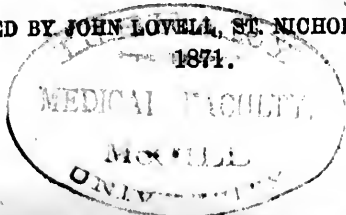
PROFESSOR OF CLINICAL SURGERY AND MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE, MCGILL UNIVERSITY;
SURGEON TO THE MONTREAL GENERAL HOSPITAL; ONE OF THE GOVERNORS
OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF LOWER
CANADA; HONORARY MEMBER OF THE NEW
BRUNSWICK MEDICAL SOCIETY.

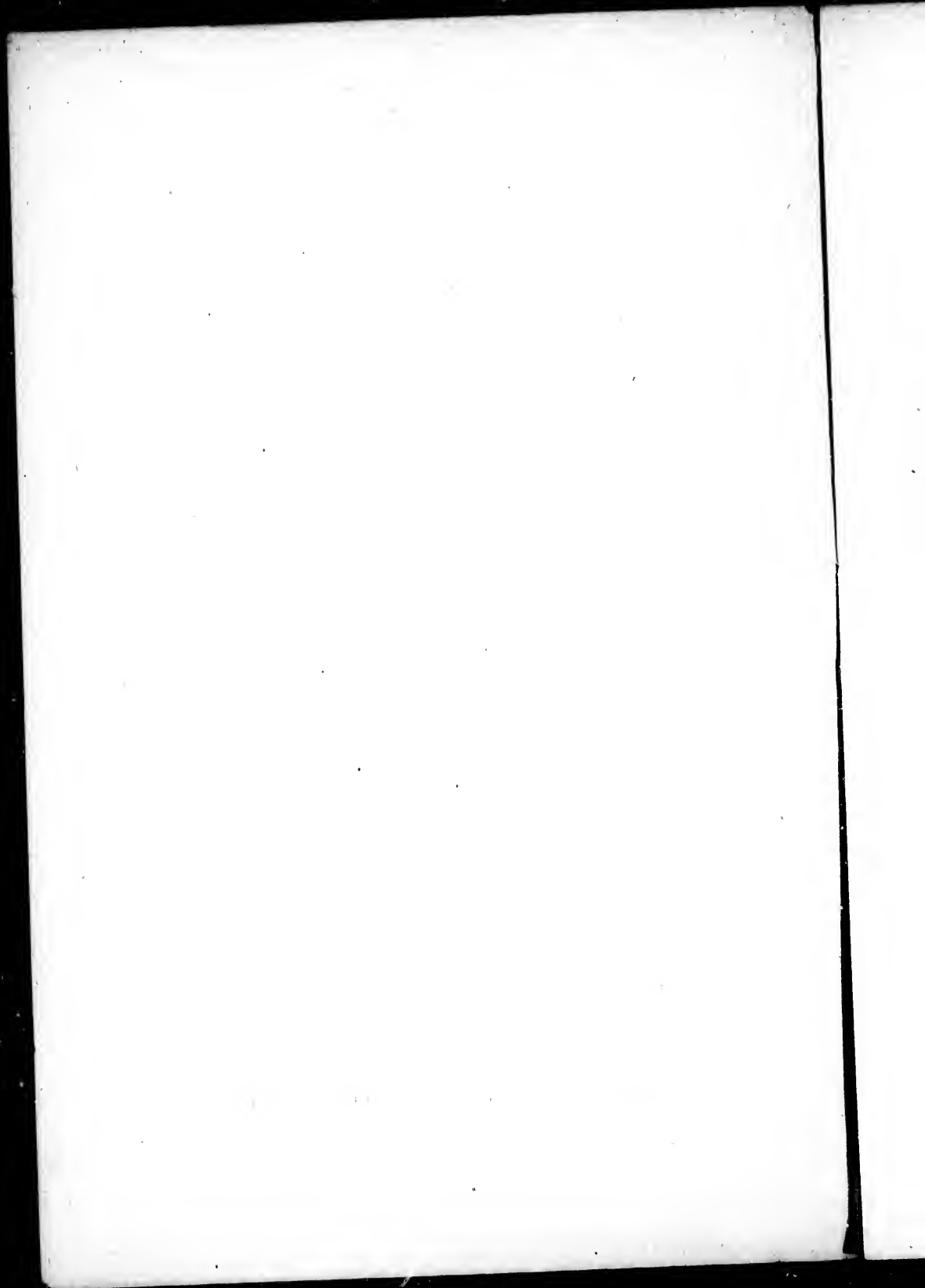


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1871.






VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN GRADUATES.—It is a time honoured custom to address to the Graduating class a few parting words of counsel, and in doing so allow me to call your attention to the very important era in your career which has this day commenced. You go forth from these walls fully recognized by the outer world as regularly educated physicians and surgeons, and in every respect save one we can endorse that opinion; from the very creditable manner in which you have severally acquitted yourselves at the examinations, we feel confident that you will one and all reflect credit on McGill University. The one point alone in which you will for a time feel your own incompetence is that of experience; resembling the period of early childhood you are about to trust to your own powers; your gait may at first be trembling, and for a time you will painfully experience all that hesitancy shown by the infant when first it parts from its mother's arms on its onward walk.

The conscientious physician at the outset of his career is fully aware of his want of experience—experience which lends to him courage to persevere in what he feels is right. Brimfull of theory he assays to treat diseases according to doctrines that he has seen successfully put in practice at the bed-side, and if disaster attends his efforts he is too apt to attribute his want of success to his own short-sightedness, or else to look upon his theory as a delusion. Surgery, on the other hand, being a more exact science, will generally yield more apparent favourable results. But to be a surgeon a man requires all that firmness of resolve and decision of character, with mechanical aptitude, which is occasionally seen, but which is by no means a common gift. To be a surgeon a man requires a special training. Many men can



perform operations; they may possess a sufficient amount of animal courage to risk the severance of vital parts, and even jest at a spouting artery or quivering muscle—but gentlemen, this is not surgery. Let me counsel you, therefore, at the outset of your career, not to be too full of confidence on the one hand, nor yet too diffident on the other. Be careful to study well each case intrusted to your charge, and if you have any doubt, remember that the life, perchance, of a fellow-mortal is in your hands, and seek aid and counsel, if attainable, from those of larger experience than yourselves. Be not hasty at arriving at a conclusion as to the nature of any given case: it may look clever, and perhaps if a lucky hit be made, may tend to elevate you in the opinion of those who employ you. If, on the other hand, by arriving at too hasty a conclusion the interest of your patient suffers through your error, it will be a source of life-long annoyance, although the circumstances may be known to you alone.

Throughout your pupilage you have had ample opportunities of seeing the principles taught in the class room put in practice in the wards of the Hospital. And although medicine and surgery must be looked upon as progressive sciences, and change is almost of daily occurrence, yet many aphorisms received in early life come back to the physician and surgeon with such force as to convince him that the experience and intuitive knowledge of those who preceded him, were based on sound principles. Gentlemen, you have entered on a life of drudgery, where the strain of mental work is only equalled by the bodily fatigue which each day will call forth. While other men take their ease and comfort, the physician and surgeon is forced to labour. No rest can he expect; his days and nights are given in the service of others, and in the end he receives thanks, given grudgingly, for what no money value can compensate. What man is there, that is mortal, who can endure the constant strain on the energies, physical and intellectual, which the practising physician or surgeon has to go through? Throughout your career you will fully recognise the necessity of keeping pace with the advance of knowledge; this will necessarily entail devotion of a great portion of your time to study. Returning home after a day of fatigue and

mental anxiety, you will feel that your work is incomplete and you will be forced to labour still, while your more fortunate neighbour is enjoying the solace of domestic repose, without a care, and without the chance of disturbed rest in sleep, which is to our exhausted energies a physiological necessity.

Remember that to give satisfaction you are expected to be successful, and the successful man is not usually a book-worm; he should, with his mental acquirements, possess an amount of common sense, to know when and how to apply his knowledge. Bear in mind that the world is sensorious, hypercritical; every action of your life will be carefully scrutinized and criticised—criticised in no spirit of benevolence or honest kindness—your very success will be subject of remark and, perchance, disparagement; so that wearied of well doing you may at times feel disposed to relinquish the practice of your profession in disgust. Do not expect to receive anything but hard knocks; and as the world has seemingly conspired against us as a class, let the knowledge of what you are to expect draw you in closer bonds of union towards your brother practitioner. Ever remember, in your walk through life, if brought in antagonism with a brother, that you are fellow labourers, and if you observe error or misconception, give honest counsel and advice. If on the other hand, you are convinced that the counsel and advice of a brother is correct, although adverse to your own preconceived opinion, yield with gracefulness, and do not enter into a controversy, which may end in your own discomfiture.

It may not be considered out of place to refer casually to the present position of the profession in the neighbouring province of Ontario. Those of you who hail from the west are fully aware that the standing of the profession has been lowered by ill-advised but, perhaps, honest men. As professional men, you will find yourselves allied and on an equality with many whom you cannot meet or recognize as physicians or surgeons. Many of these persons constantly advertise in the daily papers that they are Licentiates of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. Some never attended a course of lectures on medical or surgical science, and some never passed any examination as a test of proficiency; nor have

they further qualification than that above referred to. These persons possess greater powers in the Medical Council of Ontario than do members of legitimate medicine. This insult, for I can call it by no other name, has been put upon our profession by the Local Legislature of Ontario; but it admits of remedy. Individually you are powerless; but, as a body, you can wield a power that will, in time, completely change the present aspect. If, as one man, the regular profession of Ontario act for the common weal, they can do much towards obtaining a repeal of the present objectionable law under which they are governed.

During the last few years there has been formed in this Dominion of Canada a Medical Association on the same basis, and with the same object as the British Medical Association, which has been for many years past in the parent state the rallying point of the profession, and has exerted so great an influence in advancing the present high character of medical education in Great Britain. It is greatly to be desired that members of the Medical Profession throughout the Dominion should join our association, and further our objects, which are not alone those of social and professional intercourse.

I would suggest the establishment of Branch Associations throughout the country, and that each Branch so formed should send one or more delegates to our annual gathering. Let the work be entered into in an earnest spirit of reform, and, above all, by the profession in Ontario with a full determination of relieving itself from its present anomalous position.

Coming back to a subject more pertinent, allow me to announce that the governing body of this University has decided on the erection of a new building for the use of the Medical Faculty, and arrangements have been made whereby we hope that before the commencement of another session, a handsome and commodious building will be far advanced toward completion. This, with all modern appliances, will give increased facilities for illustrating the practical portion of the course. This is a want which has been severely felt in view of the increasing number of students attending the classes of this faculty.

In conclusion let me allude to the high trust you have this day assumed

Your conduct in every day life will be narrowly scrutinised, and what in other men would be passed over as a foible, or error in judgment, will in you be censured as a crime. A physician is expected to be grave, serious, thoughtful, as though he were ever dealing with the grim messenger—this, I need hardly tell you, is too much to expect, but there is a wide difference between cheerfulness and levity. Endeavour, therefore, so to conduct your walk through life, that at its close you will be remembered with affection and esteem. Let your life be pure, simple, spotless—ever ready to promote a good work of benevolence in connexion with your profession, so that at the end you may reasonably expect the approbation of your fellow men, and look forward with hope for a reward beyond the grave.

The physician is a very intimate friend in a family, and is often the custodian of family secrets; how necessary, then, for him to be silent and reserved. The world is full of littleness, but, in this respect, the medical man should take a high and honourable stand. Bacon held “every man a debtor to his profession, from the which, as men of course do seek to receive countenance and profit, so ought they of duty to endeavour, themselves, by way of amends, to be a help and ornament thereunto.”

At the outset of your career you will have many temptations, which, if yielded to, lead into the vortex of unsatisfying pleasures. Life is all too short to be frittered away in vanity; time lost can never be recalled, and you will bitterly regret, if, after years spent in frivolity, you arrive at that period when the mental energies are failing, without having availed yourselves of the world's advance. Be therefore no laggards—persevere from the very outset—acquire habits of regularity and industry—so will you experience a measure of satisfaction at the end of each day's toil, and at life's close feel that your career has not been objectless.

