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# ADDRESS

AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION OF THE

## GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL, 1875.

BY

HENRY W. ACLAND,

PRESIDENT OF THE MEDICAL COUNCIL.

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**THE GENERAL COUNCIL**  
OF  
**MEDICAL EDUCATION AND REGISTRATION**  
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM,  
UNDER MEDICAL ACT 1858.

DR. ACLAND, *President.*

DR. J. R. BENNETT, R. QUAIN, ESQ., E. BRADFORD, ESQ., DR. ROLLESTON, DR. HUMPHRY, DR. PYLE, DR. STORRAR,	} Chosen by the	{ Royal Coll. of Physicians of London. Royal Coll. of Surgeons of England. Apothecaries' Society of London. University of Oxford. University of Cambridge. University of Durham. University of London.
DR. HALDANE, DR. ANDREW WOOD, DR. FLEMING, W. TURNER, ESQ., DR. ALLEN THOMSON,	} Chosen by the	{ Royal Coll. of Physicians of Edinb. Royal Coll. of Surgeons, Edin. Fac. of Phys. & Surgeons, Glasgow. Univ. of Aberdeen and Edinburgh. Univ. of Glasgow and St. Andrew's.
DR. AQUILLA SMITH, R. MACNAMARA, ESQ., DR. LEET, DR. APJOHN, SIR D. CORRIGAN, BART.,	} Chosen by the	{ King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland. Royal Coll. of Surgeons in Ireland. Apothecaries' Hall in Ireland. University of Dublin. Queen's University in Ireland.
DR. SHARPEY, DR. PARKES, DR. QUAIN, SIR W. W. GULL, BART., DR. BEGBIE, DR. STOKES,	} Nominated by Her Majesty, with the advice of her Privy Council.	

**ADDRESS.**

At the last Session of the Medical Council a review of the work of the Council was made by our late President. The absence of Dr. Paget from the chair and from the Council is felt by us all as a grave loss. There was something in the gentle wisdom of that sterling man, which gave us the confidence we feel when crossing slippery paths with a sure-footed mountain guide. Only one change has taken place in the Council since we parted. Oxford sends us no stranger, in one who brings from the sister University to that which Paget adorns, mature experience for our common duties.

Only a third of the members of the Council who formed it in 1858 remain. Not half, therefore, know how great is the change which has come over the opinions of the Medical Profession since eighteen representatives of nineteen Universities and Corporations, all distinct, some in admitted rivalry, met six nominees of the Crown as representatives of the public at large, and proceeded to construct a sound and uniform system of Medical Education, general, scientific, and professional. It is well known in the Council, how rapidly, though silently, the promotion of the general good superseded solicitude for par-

ticular interests, and how soon the arduous task of harmonizing diversities in national sentiment, of seeking the good in every existing system, of purging the evil from every usage, however time-honoured, became the aim of every member of the Council. It would ill become me to dwell on this topic, or even to have touched on it, but for the purpose of our strengthening each other's hands in the discharge of our complex duties.

The construction of the Register, the removal of offenders from it, the completion of the Pharmacopœia, the Visitation of old Institutions, and freely reporting on them, all, a few years since, arduous tasks in prospect, seem now to us a matter of course, and a page in history. What the old Universities would have thought twenty-five years ago of giving up their Examination-papers to strangers without resistance, it is not easy to realize. They now heartily recognise our endeavours, and aid in promoting our success.

I am far from wishing to be understood as implying that our work is nearly done. That is not my opinion. On the contrary, it would seem we have only lately made our tools, and sharpened them for their work. A glance at the subjects to which the attention of the Executive Committee has been drawn during the recess, and at the programme of business, will shew this.

The Committee has had a correspondence with the Registrar-General, on his invitation, as to the working of the certificates of death under the new Act. The machinery of the Council, and your individual care and attention, enabled the President to forward a final answer, which was the result of much thought by representatives of opinion all over the country, without the labour to you of a meeting of the Council.

The Committee has had occasion to address the Home Office on the subject of legal proceedings for offences under the Medical Act. They hope that the letter sent on behalf of the Council will meet your approval.

They have also been compelled to draw the attention of the Local Government Board to Article 178 of the General Consolidated order of the Poor-Law Board, which is contrary to the spirit of the Medical Act. It excludes from certain important professional duties all Surgeons not being members of the College of Surgeons of London. The Board have undertaken to reconsider the clause.

The various letters thus addressed will be laid before you.

It is within the knowledge of the Council that the Executive Committee was summoned in April last to consider the effect of two Bills, brought in by private members, for the amendment of the Medical Act.

First, the Bill of Sir John Lubbock, to enable the College of Surgeons of London to take part in the conjoint scheme of examination in England, was to be opposed by Mr. Stansfeld, in order, if we are to believe report, to make it compulsory on that college, or on the conjoint scheme, to admit women to their examinations. Whatever may be the merits of this real or supposed act of justice to women, it could not receive your sanction or approval, that a conjoint scheme, an admitted good for England, should be impossible except under a condition, to which many entertain the strongest objection.

His Grace the President of the Council, having received the Executive Committee, clearly appreciated the force and the fairness of this view, and promised the fullest attention of the Government.

The second Bill, that of Mr. Cowper Temple, to compel the Council to register degrees granted to women by certain foreign Universities, was open to still graver objection on grounds of public policy. The effect of this Bill would be fatal to two principles of the Medical Act of 1858. That Act makes the Medical Council responsible for the courses of study and examination undergone by all persons placed on the Register. It is clear they could not, without much diplomatic negotiation and great expense of visitations, if at all, be responsible for foreign degrees; and secondly, it would be impossible to refuse to

men so dangerous a privilege if it were accorded to women. His Grace the President of the Privy Council, and Lord Sandon, the Vice-President, considered with courtesy and prolonged attention this subject also. They undertook to lay the matter before the Cabinet. They further assured your Committee that no steps would be taken in respect of Medical Legislation, except after the fullest communication with the Medical Council.

To the subject of these Bills we shall have to return.

Since we parted, Medical and Surgical Examinations in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, St. Andrew's, Dublin, and Examinations in the College of Physicians and College of Surgeons in London, and the College of Physicians, the College of Surgeons, and the Society of Apothecaries in Dublin, have been visited. The Reports on them have, for the most part, been already circulated among you, and will all shortly be laid on the table. We have to thank the Visitors, both those of the Council and those appointed by the Council, for their cordial co-operation. When all the arrangements are complete the matter seems simple enough, but the Council owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Quain and Dr. Bennett, for the pains they have bestowed on the work assigned by you to the Executive Committee.

It has been truly said, that the Medical Council is limited in its powers. It is no doubt bound, and happily, within the four corners of the Medical Act. Nevertheless, the functions which have to be discharged by the Council are wide enough, as the various subjects already enumerated shew, heavily to tax our time and attention. Yet these subjects imperfectly represent what is still before us. When I said just now that we had been much employed in making tools, implying that much work had still to be done, I had in my mind many other things which will come before the Council, as year by year it considers what it is the public want from the Medical Profession, and lays down the conditions under which the Profession can fulfil the just expectations of cultivated men. We have only to take three instances from progressive subjects before Parliament. The duties of Officers of Health; the Qualifications of Analysts; the Medical duties of Women.

It may be reckoned as certain, that the eminent and experienced persons who from all the seats of Medical study come to sit round this Council-table, will sooner or later have to consider the due qualification of all these persons, under their several heads. For 1st, As to the highest sanitary officers; are they to be all on the Register, all debarred from practice, all equally experts? and if so, how educated, examined, and certificated? 2nd, Are Analysts, who are

to arbitrate in doubtful cases of Chemical Analysis, to adjudicate without appeal on what is and what is not injurious to health?—a subject on which we have certainly much yet to learn in this country;—or are they to judge only of the purely Chemical question of Adulteration? 3rd, Are Midwives to be licensed? if so, by whom, how educated, how examined, how certified?

The Council will not fail to remember that these questions have been the subjects of special Reports by Committees of the Council. The Report on Public Health, 1869; the Report on the Medical Education of Women, 1873; and the Report with reference to Public Analysts, 1874, shew that the Council is not unprepared whenever public opinion or Government enquiry calls upon it for advice.

Such Reports, however, and such Visitations, are but the framework, or mould, or machinery by which our work is to be proved. They are not the Work. When once the public is satisfied that the preliminary and most obvious end has been gained, of securing perfectly righteous Examination, then, indeed, two difficult problems still remain: how to secure good Teaching, and What to Teach.

Unjust, indeed, would it be to say that the question of Teaching, as far as Professional subjects is concerned, has not been handled. The Report of 1869 on Professional Education, condensing the re-

flections of no less than 131 teachers of experience, has laid down certain definite principles from which few bodies dissent, and on the whole few schools depart. The consequence is that teaching, though not perhaps uniform throughout the country, is without doubt greatly improved, and the results attained most encouraging. For many deficiencies that capacious critics might point out, for usages prior to 1858, and for the transitional character of the age we live in, neither the Medical Profession nor the Medical Council is responsible. The State has endowed no Medical Schools, and but very few Medical Teachers. It has maintained no Medical colleges. All has been done by voluntary and unconnected effort. Hence our freedom and our success, but also the cause of our failings.

When, however, the testing machinery, for which the Council is responsible, is in perfect order, there will be much need of sober thought as to the period, quality, plans, and extent of literary, scientific, and professional instruction to be absolutely required of all youths destined for the Medical profession. Not seldom is there a tendency to require too much of youth. We see clearly what is needed in the profession as a whole; we ought not to expect that whole to be found in every unit of it. The method of optional subjects is becoming urgent. In the optional subjects limitation of range is every year

more necessary, although we must not forget that the average children of modern educated races acquire the higher knowledge more readily than the children of the past.

When the Council, now sixteen years ago, decided to leave the Education in Arts to the National Educating Institutions, i.e. mainly the Universities, it did so in the conviction that they would represent the full experience and wisdom of the age. Yet opinion is by no means settled, even in the Universities, as to the basis on which the Scientific mind should be moulded. Neither the opponents nor the disciples of Bentham, Mill, Darwin, or Herbert Spencer, have said their last word on the whole theory of human existence, and human aims. When men are divided on the fundamental conception of humanity, they will not be agreed on the objects of practical life in the world. And yet we here have to fit men for some of the most practical, most necessary, most human, most beneficent work, for every climate, for every race,—as well for the millions of all castes in India and the protected negroes of Africa, as for our own poor, our own nobles, and our toilers and defenders by sea and by land. While educational theories are being discussed, we have to act.

I have touched upon these topics, however slightly, because a motion will be brought before you referring to the whole of the Reports upon Educa-

tion; and because the Council has from the first emphatically laid stress on the supreme importance of General Education; has delegated in full confidence to the national Educational bodies the charge of that Education; and has maintained its right to enquire into the mode in which that Education is carried on.

It were not to be desired that we should, with all our other duties, be needlessly entangled in this thorny path; but once the professional examinations arranged, their extent and their method happily agreed upon in the three branches of the kingdom, this fundamental work may not be forgotten. The general, nay the scientific Education of the lower and the middle classes is making enormous strides. For the sake of our successors in our Profession, we must not use the standard of our younger days as the touchstone for their attainments in general culture; not if we mean them to keep their place in the brotherhood of true and thoughtful men.

The withdrawal of Lord Ripon's Bill in 1870, however necessary that withdrawal was, under circumstances which accidentally complicated it, has no doubt delayed the consideration of several important subjects. Perhaps no real harm has ensued. Time is an element in all healthy growth. The progress which has been made since the Re-

ports to the Council on Professional Study in 1869, is shewn by the Report of 1873 to have been great indeed. The Papers which will be laid before you, together with your own opinions, as expressed up to last year (1874), and the Reports of your Committees on Education in 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, may be brought by a Committee into a condition for your full discussion, and indeed form a very complete statement as to the present condition of the attainments of the Medical Students in this country. Nor, I am convinced, need you shrink from the survey. I wish I could say that I am as convinced that the energy, knowledge, high character, and opportunities of our staff of Teachers were arranged with the least loss to the Students, or waste of power to the Teachers. The observations of the Teachers' Association, in Appendix II. of the Report of 1869, will partly illustrate this.

I return now, as I promised, to the subject of two Bills at present before Parliament, viz., Sir John Lubbock's and Mr. Cowper Temple's Bills. It was important that you should meet in time to express an opinion, should you desire it, on these Bills.

These bills touch the very eye of the Medical Act. Sir John's Bill, if passed, will make at length possible the combination of all the Licensing Bodies in England. There may then be one pass examination uniform for all England. If defeated, it would be



defeated, so report says, because it does not enter into the question of the Registration of women, which it leaves unaltered. Your Executive Committee had reason to hope that the Government would not permit so important a measure to fall on a collateral issue. I am happy to say that the Bill passed through Committee on Tuesday night last, the Vice-President of the Privy Council having satisfied Mr. Stansfeld with respect to the intentions and the effects of the Bill.

The effects of Mr. Cowper Temple's Bill have been already described. A letter bearing upon it, written by direction of the Lord President of the Privy Council, will be laid before you. His Grace requests that at this meeting of the Council, the Bill shall be brought under consideration, and that the Council will make to him their observations upon it.

He is of opinion that Mr. Cowper Temple's Bill, though very limited in its direct scope, can hardly fail to raise in Parliament the general question whether women ought to be able to look to Medical practice, or certain branches of it, as open to them equally with men as a profession and means of livelihood; and as Government may have to express an opinion on this general question—with regard on the one hand to women who desire to obtain legal status as medical practitioners in this country, and on the other hand to the Examination—rules or other

conditions which prevent them from accomplishing their wish, he desires that our observations should not be restricted to the particular proposal of Mr. Cowper Temple's Bill, but should discuss, as fully as you may see fit, the object to which that proposal would contribute.

One more topic, that of the Public Health, must be noticed. On no question of first class social importance has the public mind changed more in the memory of most of us, than in this. The prevention of diseases as a subject of common, national interest, strange as it now may seem to us, is but of comparatively recent growth, except as regards our Prisons, our Armies, and our Fleets. Foresight would have prevented evils which have grown up unnoticed, both in our Villages and in our Towns; and are now causing great labour in the removal, as well as greater trouble in the prevention in future. The prevention of disease has become a great branch of our Profession. The Universities have taken the matter up as well as the Profession and the public at large. Education, Certificates of qualification to practise, and Diplomas already exist in Dublin, Edinburgh, London and Cambridge, and are in preparation at Oxford.

I forbear to dwell on this topic any further than to say, that it may be a question whether the Council should ask for power to regulate this Education, and

enter these Diplomas or Certificates on the Register. The desirability of conjoint Boards of Examination in this branch of knowledge will also demand consideration.

And now I have performed, as simply as I am able, the honourable task which you have in your goodness imposed on me, of opening a new session of the Medical Council. I ask of you that which you will certainly grant, your support, as I endeavour to second your efforts. Our hope is, by the agency of ancient and progressive Institutions, to make Medical Education uniformly adequate through the whole kingdom; to bring former experience into harmony with the lessons of true culture and modern science; and to provide, as far as human agency can provide, a constant supply of persons qualified to promote the individual and the public health in a nation, whose destiny calls her children to every form of human labour, in all climates, and every condition of human life.





