

**GROUND-WORK OF CULTURE:
ADDRESS DELIVERED IN KING'S
COLLEGE, LONDON AT THE
DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES ON
OCTOBER 2, 1883**

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Ground-work of Culture: Address Delivered in King's College, London at the Distribution of prizes on October 2, 1883 by Henry W. Acland

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HENRY W. ACLAND

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ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN

KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON

AT

THE DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES ON OCTOBER 2, 1883.

BY

Wentworth
HENRY W. ACLAND, F.R.S.,

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

HON. PHYSICIAN TO H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES,

PRESIDENT OF THE MEDICAL COUNCIL.

1883

²LONDON: J. AND A. CHURCHILL.

OXFORD: PARKER AND CO.

ADDRESS.

IN the year 1847 the first Professor of Surgery in King's College, in concluding the Hunterian Oration, thus addressed a highly critical audience in the Theatre of the Royal College of Surgeons of England:—'By the institution and protection of seminaries of learning, in which is cultivated *Science* anterior to the Sciences, as the Sciences to the especial Professions, may we best ensure the growth and increase of professions united in their attachment to all ancient institutions and in all the hereditary loves, loyalties and reverences that have ever been the precious birthright of an English gentleman—professions united with each other, and in union with the National Church'

Joseph Henry Green never addressed an audience which he did not hold bound as by a spell. He rarely addressed one which he did not convince by his logic. His biographer, one also of the ornaments

and lights of King's College, relates that on this occasion the meeting showed signs of dissent. A feeble minority began to groan and to hiss. An overwhelming majority shouted applause, and for a moment discord seemed to be impending—when the orator, writes Mr. Simon, 'by one stately movement of head and hand silenced the whole meeting so that a pinfall could have been heard, repeated his words with an emphasis so resolute and yet so conciliative that not one murmur resented them, and then, in language which might have been Plato's, concluded his sentence and oration, "with the *National Church* . . . as the universal organ according to the Idea, for educing, harmonising, and applying all those elements of moral cultivation and intellectual progress, of which Religion prescribes the aim and sanctifies the use¹."

The occasion of the distribution of prizes in a Medical School may scarce seem a fit occasion for recalling to mind this pregnant utterance, and this remarkable scene. But reflection will, I think, show the occasion to be not inapt, and of all Schools this the fittest.

The time is not come, nor can it ever come, when the distribution of prizes in a great Medical School can lose its interest for thoughtful men. There is something in the occupation of the student of Medicine

¹ Simon, *Life of Green*, vol. i. p. liv.

which touches every well-constituted mind with singular force. In many vocations in life a certain self-interest, aiming at success, is the mainspring. Though this success depends generally, and ought always to depend, upon the right performance of duty undertaken, whether in profession or in trade, still self-interest is and will be a chief motive.

But in the life of a Student of Medicine this is not, or at least need not be, the case. There is no corner of human nature which he may not one day or other be destined to explore. He may perchance be fitted intellectually for the study of some one of the Sciences with which Medicine is connected, and may be devoted to it. His progress, in that case, is watched with interest only in reference to the Science in question. Competent observers note how much he adds to the mere knowledge of fact or of law in the world; and they estimate him accordingly. But in reference to the practical work of his future profession, men take measure of his whole character, as fitted by sympathy and singleness of purpose, as well as by scientific knowledge, to relieve the varied sufferings and sorrows of afflicted humanity.

What therefore is to be the true aim of those who seek to influence the medical education of the future should be made clear. Is it to fit average men exclusively or chiefly for amassing knowledge; or is it to make them fit to relieve the sick and the

suffering by every known means of knowledge, of goodness, of unselfish practical care ?

Mr. Green, of whom personally I shall presently have more to say, told a great scientific and professional audience, that the groundwork of professional education was a high general culture with scientific discipline, and that these two should be in union with Religion.

In King's College no uncertain sound on this matter has yet been given. King's College originally laid down certain principles to guide her destiny as a great seat of education. Were her principles right ? Do they need revision ? or change ?

To these difficult questions I purpose, with much diffidence, to devote the short time at my disposal. Neither my brevity nor the limits of my insight can be the measure of the seriousness of the enquiry or of its necessity at the present hour.

Everywhere, as in the highest periodical literature, so in the less refined journals, there is a demand for secular, to the exclusion of religious, education. A protest, not less loud and strong, is made against such demand as illiberal and mistaken, and as injurious to the best interests of human society in the future. The demand and the protest are not confined to one country or one language. Wherever active thought and public life have fair play the discussion is carried on with no little warmth.

King's College was originally founded in the year 1829. It was laid down as 'essential, to maintain indissolubly the connexion between sound religion and useful learning' (I quote the words), and, 'in King's College, instruction in the doctrines and duties of Christianity as taught by the Church of England, should be for ever combined with other branches of useful education.' By an Act which received the royal assent in May of last year, 1882, it was enacted that the 'College shall continue as a body politic for the purpose of giving instruction in the various branches of Literature and Science, and the doctrines and duties of Christianity as the same are inculcated by the Church of England.'

Into the history of the circumstances which led in 1829 to the adoption of this clause, or into any statement of the precise limitation of the doctrines which may be held with integrity within the pale of the Church of England, this certainly is not the time to enter. It is only to be noted that the energetic and devoted persons who founded this College, in what it is now the fashion to describe as a narrow, if not intolerant spirit, did so fully aware of the great social movements of the period,—of Catholic Emancipation which took place in the same year, of the agitation whereby the extension of the suffrage was to be secured in 1832, and of the general tendency of the time to sweep away all so-called restrictions as

fatal to the healthy growth of scientific knowledge and of political freedom.

In the midst of this general ferment, at a notable epoch of our constitutional history, the founders laid down that the educational system 'was to comprise religious and moral instruction, classical learning, history, modern languages, mathematics, natural philosophy, medicine and surgery, chemistry, jurisprudence, &c.; to be so conducted as to provide in the most efficient manner for the two great objects of education—the communication of general knowledge, and specific preparation for particular professions.'

'General knowledge, and specific preparation for particular professions.' What is general knowledge, and what is the specific preparation for the Profession of Medicine? Is it better that this preparation should be, in modern phraseology, wholly secular and physical, or should it be, as the founders of King's College provided, a mixed training, secular and religious?

I have neither the power nor, to-day, the time to thoroughly answer this question. But it is one that has to be met, and speedily. One of Bacon's prayers was that 'human things may not prejudice such as are divine; neither that from the unlocking of the gates of sense and the kindling of a natural light anything of incredulity, or intellectual night, may arise in our