

**THE LONDON MEDICAL  
STUDENT AND  
OTHER COMICALITIES**

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The London medical student and other comicalities by Hugo Erichsen

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**HUGO ERICHSEN**

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LONDON MEDICAL STUDENT  
AND  
OTHER COMICALITIES.

DETROIT MICH  
APR 4 1893

SELECTED AND COMPILED  
BY

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MOTTO:—"Fools have a Greater Dread of Laughter than of Pain."

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## PREFATORY.

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PERHAPS the psychology of laughter has never been better expressed than by HAZLITT.

"Man," says HAZLITT, "is the only animal that laughs, for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are and what they ought to be."

Laughter, then, is one of the distinguishing features of man. In aiding every medical man to assert and show his superiority over other animals, I feel confident that my present effort will receive the same appreciation which was accorded to the "Medical Rhymes."

The LONDON MEDICAL STUDENT is taken from the London Punch, where it was published about a half a century ago. To speak of the merits of Punch were as absurd as to paint the beauty of a rose: it is now, as it was formerly, the representative journal of English wit and humor. Despite my strenuous efforts I could not detect who wrote the sparkling portraiture of medical-student-life in the greatest metropolis of the world, but I was convinced by my investigation that its authorship belongs to HOOD, DICKENS, THACKERAY, MARK LEMON, or DOUGLAS JERROLD. Of one thing, however, I am absolutely certain, that is, that I am the first to introduce my friends, Mr. MUFF and J. RANDALL, Esq., to the medical profession at large. They will not find them to be dull companions.

After an interview with these London students, I fear my brethren in medicine will have to adjust their collars; therefore I suggest that they be taken off before the perusal of this book is begun. If waistcoats should tear during the

reading, a copy of this volume sent along with the ruptured garment to the tailor will serve as sufficient apology.

There is nothing that pays a physician better than ready wit and overflowing humor. They are far better matters of capital than a prominent olfactory organ—beg pardon—I was going to say than prompt olfactories and steady nerves. The public entertains the same dislike for long-faced physicians who are as melancholy as a gib cat, that it feels towards funny sextons or jolly clergymen. Smiles have outbidden remedies in many a health purchase; in fact it is well known that “the value of a smile is beyond price.” A joke well administered often removes bile better from the body (and soul) of an irritable patient than any of the most potent cathartics. I am sorry to state that the gall of some acrimonious individuals cannot be removed in any way or manner.

When a student begins dissection, when he for the first time faces disease and death in the wards of the hospital, he laughs away the disagreeable, unpleasant feelings he experiences, and this kind of philosophy continues during his novitiate; but the humor once conjured never leaves him, and follows him on his entry into the profession. This, I think, is the reason why we meet with so many good-natured M.D.'s, and why physicians are as a rule long-lived. Indeed, some of the disciples of Hippocrates actually ruin their pocket-prospects by laughing their neighborhood into perpetual health. They are overflowing with generosity, and would stop in a cane-brake to write a gratuitous prescription for the floor-polisher of a roller skating rink, who in a few days may furnish them with a case of compound comminuted fracture.

I do not remember of ever having met with a hypochondriac among medical students. The almost invariable process of training pursued by these gentlemen cultivates wit and humor and banishes the green-eyed monster. When they have graduated and put in most of their time waiting for patients with patience (while time causes hair after hair to



fall from their heads, like leaves from a tree, bringing on prematurely an aged appearance, which after all proves to be good capital), and for many years the patients of emergency and the rash encouragers of rising merit deal cautiously with them; they console hours of weary waiting with the surest of all hope-revivers—problematical and practical humor. The habit of youth is but subdued as they climb the ladder of professional renown, and score increasing thousands at the banker's. From the desk of the lecture-room, and over the table of the clinic, the professor has his joke of the hour. The medical teacher well knows that he can often impress the point of his lecture better on the mind of the student by relating a little story or a joke, than by the most eloquent flight of rhetoric.

The old adage, "laugh and grow fat," well deserves more than a passing notice, as obese persons are generally considered jolly and happy, and happiness is the great object of life. The life of a physician is arduous; he comes constantly in contact with trouble, pain, and death; to him are confided the innermost thoughts and the burdens of his patients, so that the load he carries is often too heavy and bears him down if his mind is not directed at times into some other channel. A busy man will soon wear out if he has no recreation. To rest and supply new life to an overworked brain, a change of reading matter often becomes necessary.

I hope that by compiling the contents of this book I will meet an existing, though unexpressed, wish of the medical profession. The anecdotes collected in this volume have been obtained from many sources. I am principally indebted to the following medical journals: *Obstetric Gazette*, *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, *The Doctor*, *Louisville Medical News*, *Peoria Medical Monthly*, *Michigan Medical News*, *The Medical Age*, and others. Some anecdotes have been taken from J. C. Jeaffreson's "Book about Doctors."

I must here express my thanks to D. Appleton & Co. of

New York City for their kind permission to reprint two anecdotes from their "Cyclopædia of Wit and Humor of Ireland, England, and America."

H. E.

11 Farmer St., Detroit, Mich.

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