ANNUAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, LONDON.

By SIR JAMES ALDERSON, M.D., D.C.L., F.R.S.,
President of the College.

I HAVE now again the honour of making a brief statement of the occurrences of the year, which I am able to do with much satisfaction, although there may not be much to record beyond the usual transactions of the College.

There have been several official communications with the Government. In the month of July, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley, appealed to the College to nominate a physician whose opinion would carry weight with the whole profession, who should proceed to the West Indies to investigate the value of Dr. Beauputy's alleged discovery of a specific treatment for the cure of leprosy. The College were invited not only to nominate, but to fix the remuneration. It was unanimously decided that Dr. Milroy was eminently fitted for the appointment, and his nomination, together with the amount of the remuneration, were approved of at the Colonial Office. The delay in the departure of Dr. Milroy is now only owing to the Colonial Office not having quite completed their arrangements with the local authorities of the islands in regard to the expenses of the mission. Towards the end of the Parliamentary session, a deputation of the College waited on the Lord President of the Council to explain the tendency of certain clauses of his Medical Bill. I need not enter minutely into the subject, as the Bill was withdrawn from the House of Lords, a slaughtered innocent; and many more are likely to follow the same fate.

The usual delivery of the Harveian Oration and the Endowed Lectures have been this year especially conducive to the reputation of the College. Dr. Gull's Harveian Oration was acknowledged by all to be an admirable, and instructive composition most effectively delivered. Dr. Gee's Gulstonian Lectures were obviously the result of earnest study, and displayed a power of handling medical philosophy which it is most satisfactory to observe in a younger member of the profession. Dr. Parkes's Croonian Lectures have been listened to with great approbation, and it is considered that some of his investigations and statements on the subject of animal chemistry will cause a modification of certain generally received opinions. I must be allowed to refer especially to Dr. West's Lumleian Lectures, which he has just concluded. Whether I should specify the graceful exordium—the amount of keen observation and practical experience displayed throughout—or the beautiful connection of his subject with the *religio medici* at the conclusion, I feel sure that I should not overstate the general opinion by saying that these lectures will reflect lustre on the College.

Whilst adverting to the superior character of the lectures of the year, it is an appropriate time to introduce a proposition which has been made to me by the Registrar; it appears to me most judicious, and calculated, as all his well-thought-out suggestions are, to benefit both the College and the profession. I therefore recommend to your consideration that in future the Endowed Lectures should be published by the College. The step would only be the resumption of an old custom; and if the idea should meet with the concurrence of the Treasurer, I hope that it will also obtain your support.

In regard to the election of Fellows, I have to report a considerable expansion of the usual number, an increase which we shall not probably err in attributing to the greater number of meritorious names brought before the Council in consequence of the altered bye-law. The number elected this year is twenty-four, of whom twenty-three have been admitted; the twenty-fourth, who resides in Australia, not having yet answered the letter of the Registrar. The number of members admitted has been seventeen, and forty-nine gentlemen have received the Licence of the College to practise. The number of Fellows deceased amounts to nine; the number of Members to fifteen; the number of Extra-Licentiate to six; and the number of Licentiate to seven. The list of deceased Fellows includes names which are prominent in the annals of the College.

One of the first in the date of his departure—Dr. Mayo—will also be

considered first to claim the consideration of the College, since he filled the office of President for a period of five years. He was several times Censor, and in 1847 was chosen one of the eight elects under the Act of Henry VIII, and under the same Act he succeeded to the Presidency after the death of Dr. Paris. Dr. Mayo's early academical career was unusually distinguished; competing with and distancing men who, in other professions, subsequently obtained the highest positions as regards honour and emolument. He took a first class in classics, gained a Fellowship at Oriel, and was esteemed a sound critical scholar. It was unfortunate for his career that his peculiar mental endowments were rather adapted to metaphysics and speculative philosophy, than to pure science and those practical attainments required for his profession. He first commenced practice at Tunbridge Wells, where his father preceded him, and he removed to London without, however, attaching himself to any public hospital. He received the compliment of being retained in his office as President for one year by the free voice of the Fellows, on the change of the system of election. On retiring from that position he made a most desirable marriage, and spent many of his declining years in affluent seclusion from professional life. His well chosen partner unhappily preceded him. It was not long, however, before he closed his long life, aged 82, under the kind care of one of his sons.

Next in order stands the name of Dr. Copland, worthy of our special mention, as inferior to few who have made their mark in medical literature. In form of biographical notice, I will only mention that he was born in 1791, in one of the Shetland Islands, and received his medical education in Edinburgh and Paris. He was elected Fellow of the College in 1838; served the office of Censor several times; and delivered the Gulstonian, Croonian, and Lumleian lectures. He was also Harveian Orator, and gave the oration in Latin in 1857. Dr. Copland's reputation rests chiefly on the results of his indefatigable labours in medical literature. His *Dictionary* was composed by himself, without seeking contributions from any other person, and the work is highly esteemed by students both at home and abroad. Dr. Copland enjoyed much popularity with the profession, which was fully earned by the clear sincerity of his character, by his strong judgment, and by his unswerving adherence to his carefully adopted opinions and rules of conduct. He closed his long life at Kilburn.

There are many among those whom I address who will bestow a tribute of regret on the name of Dr. John Meyer. He took his degree of Doctor of Medicine at Heidelberg, and held a government office in an asylum in Tasmania. After his return to England he obtained an excellent field for the employment for his talent of organisation, by an appointment to form a Hospital at Smyrna during the Crimean war. Having performed his duties with the utmost credit, he again returned to England, and was appointed Physician to the Surrey Lunatic Asylum; thence he was transferred to be Superintendent of the Criminal Asylum at Broadmoor, of which he was the organiser. Dr. Meyer was a most conscientious and efficient public servant, and deserves honourable mention among others who have proved themselves worthy.

The College will gladly join in a regretful record of the death of Dr. Symonds, who was among the most gifted and successful of the Fellows. He was Physician to the General Hospital at Bristol, in which town and neighbourhood he had pursued a most extensive practice, winning a high reputation and great personal esteem. He was elected Fellow of the College in 1857, and gave the Gulstonian Lectures. He not only wrote on medical subjects, but also on many general topics, displaying a highly cultivated and accomplished mind. In his provincial practice he was the leader of all scientific and benevolent institutions, and his career may in every respect be regarded as a model of the highest type of the provincial physician. He died at the comparatively early age of 63.

I close my special notices of the deceased Fellows with the name of one on whose memory my personal feelings prompt me to dwell a little longer than his recent small intercourse with the College may seem to justify. Dr. Thomas Waterfield, who lately died at his house at Brompton, was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he entered as a Fellow Commoner in consequence of being older than the men of his year. After taking his M.D. degree he settled in London, and filled the office of Censor to the College. He was early appointed, chiefly through the influence of his intimate friend Sir Charles Locock, to a Commissionership in Lunacy, and he performed the duties of the office with great zeal and ability, until a Bill in Parliament limited the number of Commissioners, and, being one of the juniors, he lost his appointment. Being possessed of an ample fortune, he made little effort to return to the private practice of his profession. He passed the last twenty years of his life in comparative seclusion, enjoying only the society of a few select friends, by whom his numerous good qualities were highly valued. It is to be regretted that circumstances withdrew him from the profession of which he would have been a most honour-

able and honoured member. A character of more firm integrity could scarcely be conceived. He had a high sense of honour, true and kind feelings, and he possessed an excellent judgment on every topic which he handled. Few men will be more deeply and affectionately regretted.

Amongst the members of the College whose loss we most deplore, there stands prominently forward the name of Sir James Clark—illustriously distinguished by high personal endowment, and by having been the recipient of such a measure of royal favour as it has been the lot of few courtiers to enjoy for so long a period and without the smallest intermission. It seems superfluous to me to record the circumstances of his career or to sketch his character. His career was one of uninterrupted prosperity, receiving no shock from adventitious circumstances. His character was as pure and serene as his life was prosperous. He, too, lived to the extreme term of natural life. In regard to his connection with this College, it is to be regretted that he came upon the scene of English professional life when a certain leaning towards academic exclusiveness, joined to the elevated position which he had achieved in the confidence of royalty, introduced a certain difficulty to his uniting himself heartily with College interests. Several communications which I had with him in later life caused me to regret these circumstances, because it was quite apparent that he was disposed to regard our Institution with most favourable and respectful interest.

I may now refer to the two topics—the property of the College, and the trusts which are officially vested in the President. In regard to the property, though it has sometimes been spoken of in former reports, it is a subject which properly belongs to the Treasurer, and on which he has made his own statement. I may more appropriately say a few words about the trusts. The Tancred Trust has been allowed to pass through a year of unmolested tranquillity, greater than might have been expected from the attack which had been previously made upon it. Greatly through the influence of Mr. Spencer Walpole, the entire concurrence of the Charity Commissioners has been obtained in a Bill, now likely to pass through Parliament, by which the management of the Charity will be placed on a sure foundation. I have to report that I again joined the other trustees in the annual visit of inspection in Yorkshire, and found the condition of the property and the state of the establishment much more satisfactory than on some former occasions.

When I last rendered a short account of the proceedings regarding a proposed new system of joint examinations by the medical authorities, I concluded by expressing a strong hope that the labours of your Committee would shortly result in some truly beneficial and permanent arrangement. We all lament that we are not yet in a position to congratulate ourselves on that wish having been fulfilled, although the desire on the part of the College to meet a pressure from without for what has been rightly or wrongly called medical reform has not abated, and although the past year has been spent in anxious deliberation and unsparing devotion both of time and energy in attempts to solve the great difficulty of how best to establish that reform.

I now offer you a brief sketch of the proceedings since I last addressed you. Our last annual meeting was quickly followed by the introduction into Parliament of a Government Bill, in which the scheme so carefully prepared and so nearly brought to perfection by the Joint Committee—a scheme which contained much disinterested concession and the utmost probability of working for the good of the whole profession—was adopted as the basis of the Government measure. There was, however, this difference, that it was proposed to place the working of the system exclusively and entirely in the hands of the General Council of Medical Education and Registration. I need not point out that this was a proposal simply to dispense with the functions of the old Corporations, and to invest their licensing powers in another and variously constituted body—a body which possesses few qualifications for the performance of those other important duties for which the original Corporations were instituted. Every Fellow of the College is competent to judge for himself whether such organic change would be likely to ensure a higher standard of knowledge and general competency among the vast body of practitioners; whether also it would increase the means of attracting into the higher walks of the profession men of the best education and most commanding talents, uniting the highest cultivation with purest tone of thought and with habits most refined and gentlemanly. That our ranks should continue to be recruited from such a class of men, must be the ardent wish of all who long to see the profession sustained in the highest possible social and scientific position. The fate of this Bill, which was little calculated to promote these important objects, was, however, decided, not by opposition from the ancient Corporations, but by the dissatisfaction of a large body of associated practitioners who desired to remodel—in fact, almost to revolutionise—that identical General Medical Council to which the Government proposed to entrust the whole licensing power

of the kingdom. The Bill was withdrawn; and our scheme, which was still awaiting this full co-operation of the Universities, remained in abeyance. Thus the work which had been laboriously effected by the Committee, and which had received your sanction, was rendered nugatory.

In this apparently discouraging state of things, the College was still not disposed to be inactive. You were not prepared passively to allow that those ancient institutions which severally include all the qualified members of the profession, and which have worked so well for centuries, should resign the function which they are not merely the most fitted, but which they alone are fitted, to perform. You organised another effort, and appointed a fresh Committee, with "instruction to consider and report to the College how best to form an Examining Board for the examination of candidates for licences to practise medicine, surgery, and midwifery." In conjunction with the College of Surgeons and the Society of Apothecaries, a scheme was agreed upon in Committee, complete in principle, but still unfinished in detail. At that stage of the proceedings, it was expedient that each College or its governing body should sanction the work as far as it had proceeded. Your Committee therefore placed the scheme before you; and it was accepted by the College, although, I am bound to say, not without some degree of hesitation. It appears that the College of Surgeons have not been so united in sanctioning the scheme of the Committee. There seems to have been some misunderstanding as to the nature of the instructions given by the Council; but we have no official communication as to their ultimate decision.

It is, perhaps, desirable that I should now explain, for the information of those Fellows who have not followed the subject very closely, that there exists a question about a minor and a major scheme. I speak first of the minor scheme, since it is that with which the Committee have been lately occupied. It consists of the union of the three corporate bodies to form a joint Board for the examinations of practitioners in medicine, surgery, and midwifery, and its advantage, besides that it reduces the number of Examining Boards from three to one, comprises this—that no candidate would be passed as qualified to practise except by the decision of the whole Board of Examiners, the Corporations agreeing not to admit any candidate for their separate licences.

The major scheme—that which occupied the Committee of last year—required all the Universities to join the Corporations, either as examiners or assessors. The examinations of this Board were to be undergone by every person on entering the profession, to whatever ultimate status he might propose to proceed. This major scheme thus includes what has been called the one-portal system; it received your approbation last year, and it is probable that you may be asked again to empower your Committee to carry it forward. In regard to the present position of medical affairs outside the Colleges, you are aware that there are numerous attempts at legislation going on. One Bill we understand to have been already withdrawn; and I have no doubt that you will all be of opinion that the most hopeful way of arresting crude legislative propositions, founded on doubtful principles, will be to anticipate change by agreeing amongst ourselves about the soundest and most practicable arrangements, always preserving the government of the profession in the hands of the profession itself, as embodied in the ancient institutions.

I beg to reiterate the earnest hope that our efforts in this direction may lead to the happy solution of all our present difficulties.

TREATMENT OF DELIRIUM TREMENS BY HYDRATE OF CHLORAL.

—M. Curschmann adds his testimony to that of many other writers to the value of this remedy. In his earlier cases he states that he did not exceed from 45 to 60 grains for a dose, but subsequently administered 105 grains, a quantity that we at least should consider to be dangerous. He states that Liebreich has even gone as far as 120 grains for a dose. When it has been given, the patient should be allowed to remain at perfect rest and, if we may use the expression, have his sleep out. He thinks, the stronger the alcoholic potations in which the patient has been accustomed to indulge, the larger is the dose required. Sleep is usually induced in from fifteen to thirty minutes, rarely more speedily, sometimes much longer. The respiration during sleep becomes deep and regular. The pulse is sometimes increased at the commencement of the narcosis, but subsequently falls. The usual duration of the sleep was from nine to twelve hours, but in one case it was twenty-one hours, with a break of half an hour at the thirteenth hour. Disagreeable effects from chloral of any kind were rare, but he thinks an augmentation in the number of cases of laryngitis was due to its use. (*Deutsches Archiv*, Band viii, January 1871; and *The Practitioner*, April 1871.)