



Editorial — To the Medical Graduates (excerpt)

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The Editorial Board

To our medical graduates, may we say with all sincerity and earnestness, a few words. What follows may appear to you to be bitter and unkindly but then the bitterness is sweetened and the unkindness is softened by the straightforwardness and good-will of the purpose that is behind them. We have always cherished high hopes and expectations of you, and our verbosity is a result of that interest.

Much indeed has of late been written about medical work and education in China and undoubtedly in the next decade or two, medical work, whether it be education, treatment or research, will be brought very much to the fore by the increasing number of medical men whom the various medical institutions, both at home and overseas are sending out. Let us advance into the realm of speculation and ask ourselves a few questions. With an increasing number of Chinese medical men, will any of them in the near future undertake the mission of healing conjointly with the foreign missionary doctors upon whose shoulders that work has fallen for the past years? The inevitable stares us in the face. We owe a great deal to the foreign missionaries and to other benevolent institutions, for what they have done and are still doing for us, but it is clear that we cannot depend upon the charity of other people for ever. In the future adventure for widespread medical education and research, the younger generation of western trained Chinese doctors must take the lead and assume the responsibility. If the gospel of healing is to be brought into the heart of every Chinese home, it is we Chinese that have to do it.

May I ask candidly, how far in the past have our graduates contributed to the common store of medical knowledge in China and what part will they play in this “Great Adventure”? We look round despairingly for a favourable answer to the question — our contribution has indeed been negligible. With a few exceptions, most of our graduates have embarked on the life of a general practitioner in a British Colony. I simply mention the facts and I plead not to be misunderstood.

The vehement optimists among us will even go so far as to exclaim with

disdain at such an indictment. What do you expect from a University so young and with so few graduates? To such a retort we have no reply. We are not in the least trying to show that this University ought to “walk” before it can “crawl”, but we mean to say with all seriousness that this University ought by now to be “crawling” on the field of China. We want our graduates, medical, or otherwise, to realise that China is open for PIONEERING work. To explore its scientific fields, to liberate a China riddled with disease and to carry the banner of our graduates. To speak in the simplest of simple words “China is calling you and as graduates of this University you must answer that call and answer it NOW.”

Most of our medical graduates, it is true, have come from families which many generations ago, emigrated to the British South Sea Colonies from the inland towns and coast ports of Southern China.

They are born and bred on British soil; some have paid visits to their home-land; some have read about China; others have done neither. It may be said with all respect, that with the present conditions in China they are not well acquainted. What, then, are the urgent medical problems that call for immediate solution? How can a medical man be useful? Limited space forbids us going into full details but a brief resume of these problems will not be out of place. The first and foremost is the question of Public Health. China is lamentably backward in the prevention of infectious diseases. If reliable statistics were procurable, the percentage of deaths from infectious diseases would be found to be alarmingly high — it is a curse truly more terrible than internecine war. One counts sadly the few well organised public health bureau throughout China in cities such as Harbin, Peking, Shanghai, and Canton. In the less modern treaty ports such, for example, as Foochow and Swatow, definite preventive campaigns are not organised until the epidemics have reached a high degree of malignity — attempts towards their eradication are then undertaken by such institutions as the Y. M. C. A.; and in the rural districts the epidemics are left alone to take their natural course. Any sane man will see that in the future evolution of rural and district public health organisations, medical men are greatly needed. So long as there is a lack of medical and Government support, so long will the curse of infectious diseases remain.

The next and not the least important role which a medical man can play is that of a general practitioner. In the vision of a future healthier China, one sees great value in the collective work and co-operation of a large number of medical practitioners.

We are at last beginning to notice signs of the dawn of a new united China — A China eager to learn and to improve. We shall see hospitals built, medical colleges founded and sanitary boards formed. Who, then, will run the hospitals, teach and conduct research in the colleges and organise the sanitary boards? It is a duty which the sons of this generation must fulfill.

To those graduates who are out for pioneering work in China, we venture to offer a few suggestions. The foreign educated Chinese have been rightly accused of over-westernisation. Some have come back to China denouncing everything that is Chinese and advocating everything that is western. China has her own civilisation which has stood the test of ages. What would it profit her, if we, the “new voices of awakened China” are going to condemn indiscriminately the Chinese civilisation, to pull it to pieces and to build anew on a western basis? We want our graduates to return home morally, intellectually and in every way Chinese. We want them to come back with an open and unbiased mind, mastering the quintessence of Chinese culture and with western knowledge and methods, sustain, improve and develop a China on her own age-long cultural lines. There is yet another point which we must specially bring home to our medical graduates, namely, the importance of a short period of first-rate post-graduate training and apprenticeship in up-to-date hospitals for those interested in clinical work and hospital administration and in well equipped laboratories for those keen on further research. In this University the various hospital appointments provide good opportunities for post-graduate training.

In the paths of our medical adventurers, there will be seemingly insurmountable difficulties; fate will sometimes be unkind to them; disappointment will meet them at every turn; but we say to them “conquer on, let courage lead the way.”