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Editorial

THIS issue marks the beginning of Volume II of the *Dalhousie Medical Journal*. The publication is now definitely established as the organ of the Student Medical Society, and, if the present active interest and support of the Faculty, Students, and alumni are maintained, the *Journal* is assured of a very successful future. The editors hope that this support will continue, and also that more of the Alumni will avail themselves of the opportunity to keep in touch with the University and with their fellow graduates through this publication.

We wish to extend our thanks to all who contributed in any way to this, our first issue of the year, and we invite your future co-operation.

THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE

DURING the past century the progress of medical knowledge has been one of the most remarkable in a period of phenomenal scientific advance. Particularly during the past twenty-five years have we seen wonderful additions to the methods of disease prevention and cure. We are proud of the rapid advance in scientific medicine and we honor the men who made this progress possible. Medical history contains no more inspiring record of achievement. Yet we must not let past or recent discoveries loom so large in our thoughts, that we forget how much has not yet been done and must still be accomplished in all fields of medicine. There is a tendency for students, like many lay people, to feel that medical science

has scaled most of the great heights, and that only a few peaks are left unexplored, cancer being perhaps the most inaccessible. Such is very far from the truth. Let the person with this opinion but name some common diseases for which medicine has a specific cure,—excepting perhaps malaria, diphtheria, syphilis and some parasitic infestations of the skin and intestinal tract. Let him determine how much, or little, is known concerning the “common cold” which causes millions of dollars annual loss on this continent, or concerning arthritis with its terrible powers for causing suffering and disability. He will soon be struck with a feeling of the inadequacy of our present knowledge. Many of the basic principles of disease and health, of life and death, are still undiscovered. It is the problem of medical research to reveal these secrets, and despite the many difficulties and distractions there is little doubt of the ultimate success.

Perhaps there will come a day when the governments of the world will prefer to finance scientific research for the saving of life rather than the manufacture of munitions for its destruction. Or perhaps Big Business will some time realize that a new five million dollar building on Wall Street might profit less than the same amount of money spent on research into the cause and prevention of the common cold. In any case, science will continue its progress. Medical research offers many fascinating opportunities to the student of today, and there will always be men who will prefer the exploration of new fields to the financial security of a safe career in an established order. But there are many problems also to which the medical practitioner, more than any specialist or research investigator holds the key; problems of heredity, and of predisposition to disease, and it may be that the great discoveries in preventive medicine will come from this source.

While we thus consider the advance in medical knowledge, let us not forget also the final recipients of medical care, and the methods by which improved service is made available to them. It will not be possible for the profession much longer to ignore the growing demand among the people for a more equitable distribution of medical care among those who need it. While the rich man today receives and pays for adequate medical care, and the destitute obtain advice and treatment at free clinics and dispensaries, the common man of moderate means must very often burden himself with an unbearable financial load or do without necessary medical skill for himself and his family. Of course there are many arguments in favor of the present system of medical practice, not the least of which is its wonderful record of past service, but there is a growing opinion in the profession that some change is necessary to provide adequate service for all people. New days, new problems, and new discoveries demand new methods of medical practice. It would be well for the members of the medical profession to see and welcome the change, and actively to assist in the establishment of the new order lest they be forced by an educated public into a system less to their liking than one of their own choice. And it would be well for the student of today to acquaint himself with the facts regarding a major problem which he may have to face a few years after his graduation.