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THE GROWING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH¹

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It is related of the rugged English surgeon, John Abernethy, that on entering the lecture hall at the beginning of a new medical session he once exclaimed "Good God! What will become of you all?" An attractive and persuasive lecturer, Abernethy gained no distinction in original research; indeed, his dogmatic attitude is said to have been repressive rather than stimulative of original inquiries. An attempt to answer the question Abernethy asked was, later on, made by another British surgeon of entirely different stamp, namely, Sir James Paget, an eloquent lecturer who besides was a truly great investigator of pathological and surgical problems, one who cherished the ideal of uniting scientific studies with practical activities throughout his professional life. He made some statistical studies to determine what actually did become of the students whom he taught in the medical school, and his conclusion was that, as a general rule (with but few exceptions), "such as the student had been, such was the practitioner." The validity of this rule was certainly demonstrated in the case of Paget himself, for, in his first winter session in the medical school, while working in the dissecting room, he found by means of a pocket lens that certain specks in the voluntary muscles were parasitic worms and not, as earlier observers had thought, spicules of bone; as a result of his observations a piece of the muscles containing the specks was sent to R. Owen, who confirmed the discovery and gave to the worm its scientific name, *Trichina spiralis*. Young Paget, who showed his ability to discover new things in his first year in the medical school, later on became, as you know, so great a pathologist that he rose to a place in England comparable with that occupied by Rudolph Virchow in Germany and so great a surgeon that he is always numbered among surgeons of the first rank. His name, you will recall, is attached permanently to a well-known disease of the breast and to an equally well-known disease of the bones.

This morning it was my good fortune to be present during a part of the session when students of this school, members of your Undergraduate Medical Association, were reporting some of the original observations and experiments that they had carried on

¹ An address delivered to the Undergraduate Medical Association of the University of Pennsylvania, Friday, April 3, 1925.

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