

# *Editorial*

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,  
Have oft-times no connection. Knowledge dwells  
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;  
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.  
Knowledge is proud that he has learnt so much;  
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.

OSLER in quoting these lines of Cowper in his classic address, *The Student Life*, commented that he was never tired of repeating them in a medical audience. Where then do knowledge and wisdom meet? At the cross-roads? How harness them to the same chariot? This is the conundrum which has always bewildered the teachers and still it does.

The modern doctor, replete with wisdom founded on facts learnt years ago but lacking in up-to-date knowledge, is more dangerous than he who knows not and knows that he knows not; for he who is aware of his ignorance will more readily seek further advice, and will engage others to think for him and be wise on his behalf. How to break through this barrier of ignorance in those who never read or attend postgraduate courses is a problem. One experiment is worth noting. Should he be living in the west-country he might one lunch time have his self-satisfaction jolted by having to share his attention to his chops and cheese with one of his local consultants, discoursing over the radio on some such subject as depression or cervical carcinoma *in situ*. This novel attempt at the postgraduate education of the unwilling may succeed in those households which tolerate the ingestion of 'shop' with meals.

Then there is the man at the other extreme, the professional course-goer, who is seen at every medical society meeting, who attends every refresher course and symposium that he can. He always sits towards the back of the assembly and is quiet, sometimes he sleeps. He never asks a question. He is a great believer in

continuing education; it is respectable and rather soothing, and it is nice to have other people thinking for him. To be away from home in a comfortable hotel with no telephone or night bell and no washing-up to do is sufficient compensation for the small risk of being snared into having to think; and how considerate it is of the government to pay for all this. He absorbs nothing from all these courses, but the words buzzing round his inattentive ears have a familiar sound and he will return home full of self-righteousness, but will admit candidly to those who ask, that he has learned nothing new; he little realizes that it is his inability to learn which is at fault, and he will be away again on the next course always hoping for fresh knowledge to grow within him. How can this kind of practitioner be helped?

A Ministry of Health memorandum, circulated to regional hospital board hospitals, urges on them the value of contacts between hospital doctors and general practitioners at refresher courses, seminars, ward rounds and conferences at hospital centres, thus bringing into effect one of the recommendations of the report on the *Field Work of the Family Doctor*. How right this is. Whether our chosen work lies in hospital or outside we are all doctors, and by definition we should be teachers and perpetual students; we must learn from each other. To sit at the feet of a distinguished professor is a privilege; to share with him in the give and take, the cut and thrust, of a discussion or debate is a stimulus which even the most hardened back-bench browser finds hard to resist.

The College is interested in obtaining the best instruction not only for its members but also for all practitioners. The wisdom that goes with knowledge can only be taught by the wise. It is good to learn that the College is to hold a course for trainers next year, for there is an art in training. We may hope that the course will concentrate not so much on what should be taught but rather on how the knowledge which all trainers already have, should be most wisely imparted—"knowledge comes but wisdom lingers".