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Dr. John R. Keith,  
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(Post-card)  
13, Norham Gardens, Oxford,  
16.V.17 (May 16th)

Many thanks for your paper. So glad you refer to King Chambers  
whose Renewal of Life is still a favorite with me as it was with my old  
teacher in Toronto.

I wish St. Paul had give(n) us a list of his books.

W<sup>m</sup> Osler.

**The Perusal of =  
Medical Literature**

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By  
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## The Perusal of Medical Literature.

By JOHN R. KEITH, M.A., M.D. (Aberdeen),

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IN his essay "Of Studies" the immortal author of the *Novum Organum* observes that "Reading maketh a full man," and no more than a medical practitioner requires to be made such, for expediency urges it and duty demands it. I doubtless owe a debt of gratitude to my preceptors, but at the same time I cannot help feeling that I have a grievance against them, inasmuch as they failed to impress upon their students that they must remain diligent perusers of medical literature to the end of their career, and that when they passed from their tutelage they had merely crossed the threshold of professional learning.

The torrent of medical literature, which issues from the press, in ever widening and deepening volume, while certainly to some extent arrested by the exigencies of the present war, is certain sooner or later to resume its course. In dealing with this output of literature, another remark of the author already quoted is most apposite: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested."

Not only must the medical man be constantly acquiring new tracts of knowledge, but he must also retain possession of the territory he has already won. We occasionally hear of men possessed of phenomenal memories who remember nearly all they read. The number of such men, however, must be very small, and the best method of remembering what one reads is to transcribe. Not long ago one of the most popular living English writers stated that whenever he met anything of interest in his reading he began involuntarily to feel for his pen: truly an excellent habit to have acquired.

An eminent Transatlantic clinician asserts that "There is no profession in which enthusiasm thrives so easily as in Medicine. Every case is different, every patient a new disease in himself. There is no room for ennui. This enthusiasm is the best antidote for the blues. Never forget that ours is the most interesting profession under the sun. No profession or vocation can offer the same variety of themes."

Instead, therefore, of cultivating a hobby, the practitioner may as pleasurably and far more profitably devote his odd hours and spare minutes to culling from books and periodicals material which, arranged in handy and easily accessible form, will repay his labour by enabling him to bring to a successful conclusion the treatment of not a few obscure or difficult cases. In connection with this it is unnecessary to point out the supreme utility of THE PRESCRIBER, through its containing so many choice gleanings from various sources.

While keeping oneself conversant with the most recent advances in medical science, the writers of bygone generations should not be ignored. In the works of such authors as King Chambers, Balthazar Foster, Inman, Ward Richardson, Furneaux Jordan, Kent Spender, and Milner Fothergill is to be found an immense amount of most valuable information, which I venture to assert is not to be obtained in any English medical book published within recent years.

But it is useless to refer to such men as these, for they have been consigned to oblivion by the medical profession of the twentieth century. Surely the books of such delightful and instructive authors deserve better fate than being left to moulder on the top shelves of libraries and museums.

To the practitioner of many years' experience is apt to come the temptation to think that further reading is uncalled for. "He has been preaching for thirty years and yet he wants books," is the comment of a famous divine on St Paul's request to Timothy to "bring the books." Praiseworthy is the man of whom it can be said, "He has been practising for thirty years and yet he wants books."