

A short view of the importance and respectability of the science of medicine : read before the Philadelphia Medical Society, on the 7th of February, 1800 ; pursuant to appointment / by John Redman Coxe, M.D. ; an honorary member of the society.

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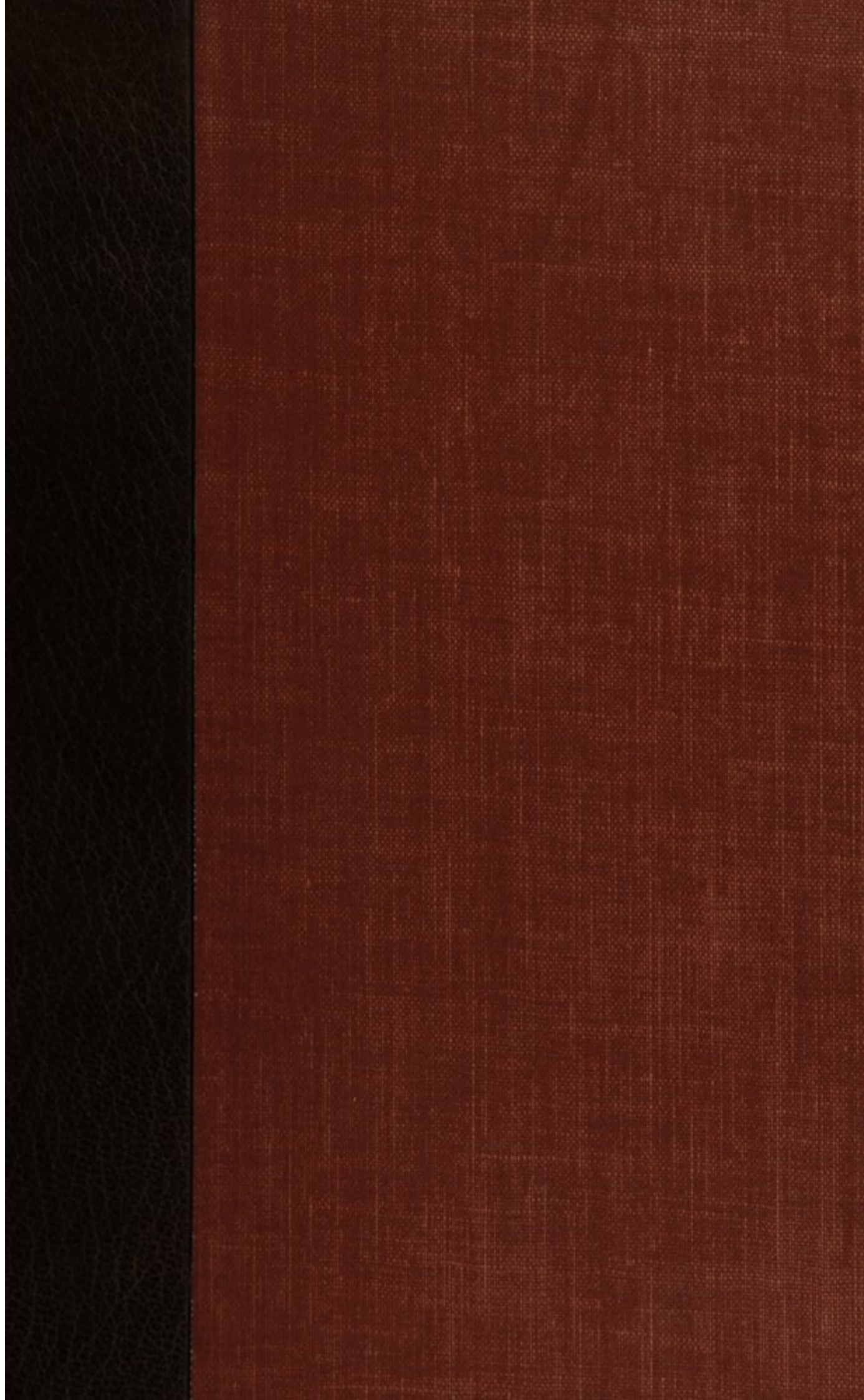
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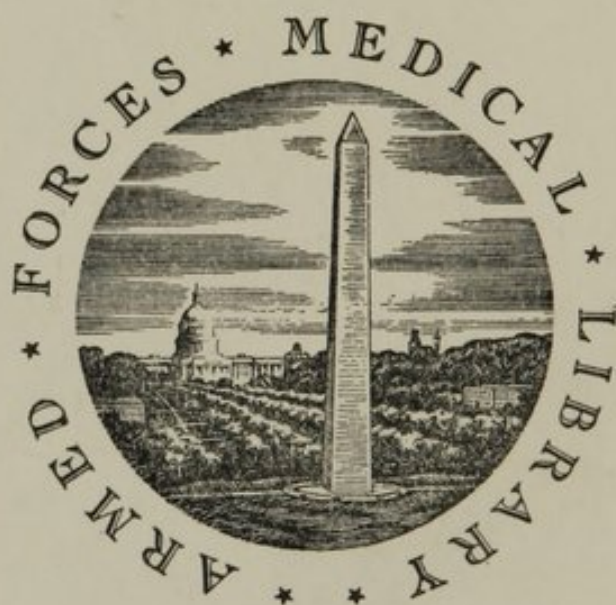
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Alex Knight -
1803

A
SHORT VIEW
OF THE
IMPORTANCE AND RESPECTABILITY
OF THE
SCIENCE OF MEDICINE.

Read before the *Philadelphia Medical Society*, on the 7th of
February, 1800.

PURSUANT TO APPOINTMENT.

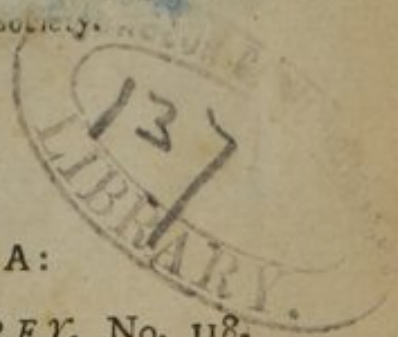
By JOHN REDMAN COYE, M. D.

An Honorary Member of the Society.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED FOR MATHEW CAREY, No. 118,
Market-street.

February, — 1800.



Philadelphia, February 8th, 1800.

In meeting of the Medical Society of Philadelphia;

Resolved, *That a Committee be appointed to wait on
Dr. Coxe, with the thanks of this Society, for
his eloquent and interesting Oration; and that
a Copy be requested for immediate publication.*

Extract from the Minutes;

NATHANIEL CHAPMAN, Sec.

To the Members of the Medical Society.

GENTLEMEN,

IN allowing this Oration to be made public, I am actuated more, from a wish to comply with your request, than from any idea, that it is deserving of this high mark of your esteem.

Many pieces of composition, may answer well enough for the hasty manner, in which they generally are recited; but which, however, are by no means proper to be committed to the press: because their faults are thus rendered permanent; which, in the former instance, were generally forgotten as soon as made public.

As

As various writers have expressly treated on many of the subjects contained in the following pages; it is obvious, that it is not to be regarded as altogether new; and hence, another reason for not desiring to acquiesce in a measure, which was by no means anticipated.

I however, offer these pages to your protection, under a full conviction, that the above considerations will induce you to overlook the many errors they contain.

I am, Gentlemen,

with respect and esteem,

your much obliged friend & fellow-member,

JOHN REDMAN COXE.

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 16th, 1800.

A SHORT VIEW, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

THE unexpected honour you have conferred upon me, in appointing me to deliver your annual oration, could not fail of being highly grateful to my feelings, and would naturally impel me to the strongest acknowledgments, for this distinguished mark of your approbation and esteem. But, whilst I avow those feelings which your conduct has awakened; permit me also to say, I cannot contemplate this respected assembly without regret, when I consider how many gentlemen, better qualified to do justice to the appointment, are now before me. I can, however, confidently assert, that there is no one present, whose wishes for the prosperity of our institution exceed my own. Its present flourishing state, cannot fail of giving pleasure to all who have its welfare at heart; whilst the industry and application of its members, are the surest pledges of its continuation and increase.

The

The difficulty of chusing a subject for an oration, did not occur, at the time of my acceptance of the charge committed to me. Had I been equally sensible of it then, as I am at present ; nothing would have induced me to accede to your wishes, but a thorough conviction, that each member owes it to our society, to comply with every resolve in which he may be concerned, to the extent of his abilities. This difficulty in the choice of a subject, arises from the necessity of its being general in its nature ; and yet, at the same time, so connected with the science of Medicine, as to render it in some measure tributary thereto. From this cause it mostly happens, that a deficiency of matter is made up by a luxuriance of style, and fertility of imagination ; which, although they do not tend to the instruction of the audience ; yet they gratify the mind, by affording a temporary amusement. Under this impression, and without expecting to add much, either to your instruction or amusement ; I must beg your indulgence, whilst I take a short view, of the *importance* and *respectability* of the SCIENCE OF MEDICINE, as demonstrated by the extent of its researches ; and by the universal homage which has ever been paid to it, by all ranks and conditions of men ; even by those who, in health, affect to ridicule and despise it.

This

This ridicule, the offspring generally of little minds, although highly unjust and illiberal, we are not to be surpris'd at, when we consider, how great an opening is given to it by the unfortunate disputes and dissensions of the Faculty themselves. The interests of the profession are lost, in the disgraceful employment of personal invective, or of malicious and slanderous hints. The errors of individuals are rancorously rendered conspicuous to the public eye ; and this is often done without any attention to the voice of truth. The unkind constructions, and ill-timed remarks, of fellow-practitioners, cannot fail of being a great source of that degrading light in which Medicine is often held by mankind. These unhappy jealousies and animosities, frequently prove of the worst consequences to patients. We have seen them carried to their highest pitch amongst ourselves ; and, I fear with the most fatal issue to our fellow citizens : for, as these quarrels do not stop here, but extend themselves to the public ; a diversity of opinion prevails, which ultimately undermines all confidence in the profession ; and prevents any application for advice, until that period has elapsed, in which alone, the powers of medicine might have proved efficacious. By this disunion, physicians lose the advantages arising from mutual communication, and from the confidence which is acquired in their opinions, by the concurrence

currence of each other. Opinions, however, unfortunately, are not regarded according to their intrinsic merit; but according to the person from whom they proceed; and proposals, delivered with openness, are often whispered abroad, and misrepresented to the public, without any regard to honour and secrecy. These quarrels, sometimes ending in appeals to the public, tend still further to heighten the animosity, and widen the breach; and generally injure the contending parties, by making them objects of ridicule to the world: Added to this, they discredit the profession, and expose the whole Faculty to contempt. They also may be regarded as one powerful cause of the introduction of empirics; who diminish the practice of the regular physician. When so little respect for each other, appears to exist amongst members of the same profession; it is scarcely a subject of wonder, if the public should also divest themselves of it; unacquainted as they are, with the many difficulties attendant upon the practice of physic.

In all ages, much wit has been displayed upon our profession: A slight attention, however, will shew, that the ridicule has been employed against physicians, rather than against the art itself. Various mean and unworthy arts have been employed to raise importance, by persons impelled
by

by necessity, excited by vanity, or anxious to conceal their conscious ignorance. An affectation of profound knowledge, or of mystery in every thing relative to the profession; an air of confidence in their own skill and abilities; or a solemn and stately demeanour; are some of the arts, which have been used to give celebrity to persons, who could not otherwise have attained it. Such are the arts, which have not escaped the penetration of the more judicious; nor eluded the shafts of ridicule and humour. Hence, in most dramatic exhibitions, in which the physician is introduced, he is treated as a pedant and a fool. But it is evident, that here, the manners of particular persons are aimed at; not the profession itself; which, from time immemorial, has been regarded as one of the most useful and beneficial to mankind.

The great Hippocrates has told us, that
 “ The art of Physic is the most excellent of all
 “ arts;” and has also observed, “ that it is the
 “ business of a physician to make new discoveries in science, or to perfect such as are already made; rather than to spend his time in
 “ censuring or depreciating others.”* This dictate, the result of wisdom, justice, and experience, the most illiberal of the profession will
 B not

* Hippocrat. de Arte.

not attempt to controvert. The dissensions of physicians are, indeed, the greatest objection which is made to the profession of physic; and may be regarded as the foundation of every other objection. It is that which the illustrious Bacon advances; and even Hippocrates himself, who says, “ When physicians are so much at variance
 “ amongst themselves, about the method of treat-
 “ ing acute diseases, that the same method shall
 “ be highly extolled by one, and run down by
 “ others; physic itself, must of necessity fall into
 “ contempt amongst the vulgar; who will con-
 “ clude from thence, that physicians themselves
 “ have no certain method to pursue, or that
 “ there is no such art as that of Medicine.”*

This objection has been thus answered by the same great man; “ That this very disa-
 “ greement is a proof of the reality of the art;
 “ for if there was no such thing as an Art of
 “ Medicine, no system of precepts, or rule of
 “ practice for the artist to be directed by;
 “ there would not be good and bad physicians,
 “ as there are now, but all of them would be
 “ alike ignorant and unskilful; and the cure of
 “ the sick would depend upon chance alone.
 “ But as long as physic remains an art, so long
 “ will one artist continue to excel another,
 “ as well in the goodness of his hand as head.”†

But,

* Hippocrat. de Ratione Victus in Morb. acutis.

† Hippocrat. de praxe Medicina.

But, in truth, the utility of Medicine has never been seriously denied ; for every person who suffers pain or sickness, will gratefully acknowledge, (in words, at least, which cost nothing) the usefulness of an art from which he obtains relief.

Life, when oppressed with disease, is but a compound of woes. Health adds delight to every enjoyment ; and, as the end of medical science is to restore and preserve health, every person is concerned in its improvement. Medicine is as important in its object, as it is difficult in its attainment.—It is extensive in its researches ; and presupposes an acquaintance with many other sciences : and it demands of those who engage in its pursuit, an enlarged and benevolent mind.

A desire of knowledge, and a spirit of enquiry, are natural to man. These, therefore, should be directed to worthy objects. And what can be more so, than the study and preservation of that most simple, yet most compound and surprising work of an Omnipotent Creator ! Or, what can tend more effectually to raise our thoughts, to the Divine Author of its existence !

In a subsequent part of this Oration, I shall attempt to demonstrate, still further, the utility

ty of the science of Medicine, by a short view of some of those virtues, which the practice of physic either does, or ought to inspire, in the breast of every member of the profession.

If we take a view of the antiquity of the science of Medicine, it would necessarily appear, to have been coeval with the origin of man ; or at least, with the period of his expulsion from that state of felicity, which he is represented to have enjoyed in the garden of Eden. For, as by the curse, which was inflicted on our first parents at the Fall, they were doomed to feel the arrows of affliction, and the infirmities of human nature ; from that period, attempts must have been made for the cure of diseases, and the relief of accidents, which devolved upon them by such a curse. These rude, but well-meant attempts of each person, to relieve the distress of his neighbour, must however have ceased, when some were supposed to have acquired greater skill than others : to these of course, the sick would apply for assistance ;—and this, in fact, we must esteem as the origin of the art : A knowledge of a few simples, probably formed its utmost extent. I have said above, that the science of Medicine must have *necessarily* been coeval with the origin of man :—I should rather have said, that those fundamental principles, on which

which the science is founded, existed at that early period of the world, in as full force as at present. We only excel our ancestors by the developement of facts; and by a judicious exclusion of principles, founded in error, and in the belief of preternatural agents and causes; which existed only in the heated imaginations of their authors and their followers. Succeeding generations, it is to be hoped, will improve upon the present; until the highest degree of knowledge shall be acquired, which is compatible with the imperfect state in which we live.

Medicine seems to have attained to greater perfection, amongst the Greeks than amongst any other nation of antiquity; if we may judge from those writings which have come to hand. We are not, however, absolutely to draw such a conclusion; as, from the great difficulty at that period, of transmitting knowledge to posterity, or even of diffusing it amongst cotemporaries; from the want of some method of rendering that knowledge permanent; which, fortunately we possess in the art of printing; when also we recollect, that a great portion of ancient knowledge was, by the use of hieroglyphics, almost entirely confined in the hands of their priests; we may be allowed to suppose that Greece *alone* did not bear away the palm of science. This supposition is strengthened by the probability
that

that the Greeks derived their literary and scientific knowledge from the Egyptians ; and that they only extended it by the aid of letters.* Be this however as it may, the Greeks certainly have the merit of having conveyed to the nations of Europe, the rudiments of Medicine, and of every other art or science, at that time known—" Hippocrates, who has been called " the great father of Physic, is the first, whose " writings have been transmitted to the present " day ; and we cannot withhold our esteem " from him, whether we consider the morality " and liberality of his works, or his numerous " and acute observations, together with the " great order in which they are conveyed. But" (adds Dr. Denman) " if there be any progressive power in the human mind, if there be " any advantage obtained in the practice of Medicine, by the knowledge of the circulation " of the blood ; or of a more correct anatomy " and physiology at large ; by the application " of chemistry ; by a more copious *Materia Medica* ; by the records of experience, or by " many collateral arts which Medicine calls in " to its aid, we may be allowed to say, that " Hippocrates

* Before the invention of letters, mankind may be said to have been perpetually in their infancy ; as the arts of one age or country generally died with their inventors. *Botanic Garden ; note on Papyrus.*

“ Hippocrates ought not to be considered as the
 “ guide of physicians at the present time, or as
 “ having limited the perfection or extent of
 “ the art ; but as an illustrious specimen of an-
 “ cient medical knowledge and practice : And if
 “ this observation holds good with respect to
 “ Hippocrates, it will have more force when
 “ applied to all his transcribers and commen-
 “ tators.” *

Of the dignity of the profession of Physic, I
 shall say but little. It has stood the test of
 time ; and cannot receive any addition from
 my praise. It has always ranked amongst the
 most liberal of the professions ; and on the just-
 est grounds. To excel in it, requires a larger
 compass of knowledge than is necessary in any
 other science. Mathematics, natural history
 and philosophy, are nearly allied to it : whilst
 the extensive studies of anatomy, chemistry
 and botany, are its immediate branches. A
 knowledge of the dead and living languages,
 is by many thought indispensable : and to this
 we may add, that knowledge of the world, of
 men and manners, which are highly useful to
 the medical character ; and which is naturally
 acquired, from an extensive intercourse with
 all

* Introduction to Midwifery.

all ranks of people. Medicine, notwithstanding the extent of knowledge which it presupposes, is a science, concerning which every one undertakes to reason most, and yet of which they possess the least information. Who, that has not made mathematics his study, will presume to argue on the abstruse and difficult calculations of algebra? Yet the more difficult and abstruse science of Medicine is apparently obtained by intuition; as a previous education seems unnecessary to qualify a person to embrace it at once, in its fullest extent!

The science of Medicine is an ample field for the exercise and display of genius. No profession requires a more comprehensive mind. In the other learned professions, certain laws and statutes exist, to which every question must be referred, and by which it must be determined;—a steady application, and a good memory, are here the chief requisites. Little room is left for the display of genius, where invention cannot add, nor judgment improve; because established laws, whether right or wrong, must be submitted to. In Medicine, where no established laws exist, the case is different—Every man must rest on his own judgment; and it is his business to make a selection of facts, from those theories with which his memory has been loaded in the course of a liberal education. To
effect

effect this, the prejudices of youth are to be overcome. This will prove a task of the greatest difficulty; as much candor and patience are essential, to divest our minds of what, in general, takes such forcible possession.

Were I here to take a view of the many virtues, which the profession of Physic enforces on its adherents, I should extend this piece far beyond the usual limits, and encroach too greatly on that time, upon which, I fear, you already think I have too much trespassed. I shall therefore detain you but a few minutes on this part of my subject.

An extensive field is presented by Medicine, for the exercise of HUMANITY. The numerous opportunities of relieving distress, which a physician enjoys, must, to a benevolent mind, be one of its greatest pleasures. The Faculty have often been reproached with hardness of heart; occasioned, it is said, by being so conversant with human misery. I most firmly believe this charge to be unjust; not only from an acquaintance with many members of the profession, whose enlarged and philanthropic minds are exerted in the daily pursuits of benevolence and virtue; but also from the writings of the most celebrated physicians of all ages; which are, of themselves, sufficient to exonerate their authors from such

a reproach. Who, after reading the works of Sydenham, of Haller, Boerhaave, and others; will be hardy enough to charge them with such a failing? A failing, indeed, one of the greatest of which a physician can be guilty! Humanity may in fact be regarded, as the greatest moral qualification of a medical man. It is the original foundation of the profession; acted upon, long before it was regarded as a distinct science. Doubtless, there are many unworthy members of our profession, (as is the case with every other) to whom such a charge will apply.—The loss, however, of one of the greatest incitements for the relief of the sick, is the proper punishment it brings with it.—Habit, it is true, may insure a command of temper, which may be mistaken for insensibility; but too great a share of sensibility, often renders a physician incapable of that steadiness and vigor of action, on which perhaps the life of his patient may greatly depend. Men of the most compassionate tempers, by daily viewing scenes of distress, acquire a firmness of mind, which is absolutely requisite in the practice of Physic. They can feel both pity and compassion, without allowing themselves to be enervated and unmanned. Those who are callous to every sentiment of humanity, affect to treat this sympathy with ridicule; by representing it, either as hypocrisy, or as a proof of a weak mind. There can be no doubt that it
may

may be, and often is assumed : But it is easily seen through. Real sympathy, will not permit a physician to act differently, to persons in different ranks of life. It is even more careful of shewing itself towards those in better circumstances; lest an unworthy construction should be put upon it. It is equally unfounded, to suppose a compassionate and feeling heart, to be the effect of a weak mind. Universal experience proves the reverse of the proposition; and that rough and blustering manners, are more generally concomitants of a weak understanding; and frequently are assumed to conceal from the world those very infirmities which their possessors blame in others.

HUMANITY is that sensibility of heart, which makes us feel for the distresses of our fellow-creatures; and of consequence, incites us most powerfully to their relief. Sympathy produces attention to an hundred circumstances, which may tend to relieve a patient; an attention, beyond the power of wealth to purchase. It engages the confidence and affection of a patient; which often is of the utmost consequence to his recovery. A patient feels the approach of a physician who possesses a compassionate heart, a softness of manners, and, what Shakespear has emphatically called, “the milk of human kindness,” like that of an angel ministering to his relief:

lief : Whilst the visit of a man of harsh and brutal manners, makes his heart sink, as at the presence of one who is about to pronounce his sentence of death.

CHARITY, the offspring of Humanity, is another important virtue, strongly enforced upon its votaries, by the science of Medicine. The physician, more than any other description of men, is most conversant with misery and affliction. Happy the man who improves from this view of suffering humanity !—True Charity does not limit her bounty to one class or description of men ; She regards the whole human race as relatives ; and the world as her abode. At the bedside of poverty and sickness, she is most at home ; and here, her claims are strongest upon the profession of Physic : From such a claim, none of its votaries are exempt. They here possess the power of stripping death of half his terrors ; and of smoothing the avenues to another world. How high enrolled above the common class of men, does the great, the illustrious HOWARD appear, when visiting the gloomy mansions of disease and death ; and, like a guardian angel, snatching from destruction the miserable wretch, whose feeble lamp of life, scarce glimmered in its socket ; or, when restoring to the caresses of an affectionate family, a hapless parent, whose anxious care and steady industry

industry, could not avert the iron hands of ruthless poverty ! Let us view this extraordinary man, (who lived not for himself, but for mankind) with active benevolence, exposing himself to the most contagious diseases ; unappalled by the rapid strides of death ; cheering, by his affability and mildness, the bed of sickness or distress ; and, like a good Samaritan, administering the balm which should ameliorate the sufferings of the afflicted ! Let us view him ranging through the earth, to offer his devotions at the shrine of humanity ; and ultimately snatched from an admiring world, by that inexorable tyrant, whose regions he had so often successfully invaded ; to be a companion of those heavenly beings, whose actions he had strove to imitate in his terrestrial abode. Where, in that anxious, awful moment of expiring life, was the sympathising friend, to assuage the agony of corporeal sufferings, or close the eye-lids of this dying faint. Alas ! no friend was there ! Of the numbers, to whom he had so often ministered, not one was present, to receive his parting breath. That God, however, in whose service he closed his well-spent life, did not forsake him in the hour of distress, when the mind's eye is fixed upon " that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns." The pleasing retrospect of a well-spent life, upheld him in the conflict, and enabled him to

raise

raise his hopes with confidence to heaven, whose gates were wide extended to receive him.

I am certain you will pardon me, for occupying a few moments of your time, in reading the following beautiful lines, on this illustrious character ; from the sublime and harmonious pen of Dr. Darwin.

SO when contagion, with mephitic breath,
And wither'd famine urged the work of death ;
Marseilles' good Bishop, London's generous Mayor,
With food and faith, with medicine and with prayer,
Rais'd the weak head, and stay'd the parting sigh ;
Or with new life relum'd the swimming eye.
—And now, Philanthropy ! thy rays divine
Dart round the globe, from Zembla to the Line ;
O'er each dark prison plays the cheering light,
Like northern lustres o'er the vault of night.
From realm to realm, with cross or crescent crown'd ;
Where'er mankind and misery are found ;
O'er burning sands, deep waves, or wilds of snow,
Thy HOWARD, journeying, seeks the house of woe,
Down many a winding step, to dungeons dank,
Where anguish wails aloud, and fetters clank ;
To caves bestrew'd with many a mouldering bone,
And cells, whose echoes only learn to groan ;
Where no kind bars a whispering friend disclose,
No sun-beam enters, and no zephyr blows,
He treads, inemulous of fame or wealth,
Profuse of toil, and prodigal of health :
With soft assuasive eloquence expands,
Power's rigid heart, and opes his clinching hands ;
Leads stern-ey'd justice to the dark domains,
If not to sever, to relax the chains.

Or

Or guides awaken'd mercy through the gloom,
 And shews the prison, sister to the tomb!
 Gives to her babes the self-devoted wife,
 To her fond husband liberty and life!
 —The spirits of the good, who bend from high,
 Wide o'er these earthly scenes their partial eye,
 When first array'd in virtue's purest robe,
 They saw her Howard traversing the globe;
 Saw round his brows her sun-like glory blaze,
 In arrowy circles of unwearied rays;
 Mistook a mortal for an angel-guest,
 And ask'd, what seraph-foot the earth imprest?—
 —Onward he moves! Disease and death retire,
 And murmuring demons hate him—and admire."

Loves of the Plants. Cant. 2d. l. 433, and seq.

PATIENCE next to the above mentioned virtues, is of the greatest necessity to the medical man. It might, indeed, in some points of view, be regarded as a branch of humanity. The necessity for the exercise of this virtue, arises from many and various sources. I have already noticed a very considerable one, in the dissensions of the Faculty, and the illiberality, which sometimes prevails amongst them. I shall therefore here, only mention that, arising from the conduct of patients themselves; together, with the contradictions and disappointments, to which, in the course of his practice, the physician is subjected. The last, more frequently arises, from too great strictness in his directions; which, if not absolutely essential to the welfare

fare of the patient, had better be avoided ; as the almost invariable non-compliance with them, necessarily leads to a concealment of such a deviation. Hence, he is ignorant of the true state of the sick ; and ascribes to the disease, what is probably owing to irregularity in diet ; or attributes effects to medicines, which were daily thrown into the fire, or out of a window. A physician should certainly be absolute in his government over his patients : To this, however, few will submit ; and indeed, a physician has no just title of complaint, if his advice is not followed ; as he has no right to prevent any one from going out of the world in his own way.

Those afflicted with nervous diseases, contribute not a little, to call forth the patience of a physician. Though their fears are groundless, for the most part ; yet their sufferings are real ; and hence, to treat them with neglect, or indifference, is equally cruel and absurd. The disorders of the mind demand the tenderest sympathy ; and the greatest skill is required to avoid neglect and ridicule on the one hand ; and too anxious a solicitude on the other.

As you must all be sensible how much the characters of individuals, as well as the peace and happiness of families ; may sometimes depend upon the exercise of the virtues of discretion

tion, honor and secrecy ; I shall not enlarge upon their necessity to a physician. From his profession, many opportunities must occur, of knowing the private transactions, and characters of families—He views mankind under the most disadvantageous circumstances : Oppressed by pain and sickness ; leading to peevishness, and impatience ; in place of their usual cheerfulness and vigor of mind.

Temperance and sobriety, are essential to the character of the medical man. You will at once accede to the proposition, on my merely stating it. Judgment, discernment, and every requisite qualification to the physician ; are totally incompatible with a want of these virtues.

The high importance of medical science is obvious, not merely from what has been said ; but also, from considering its improvement as in some degree dependant, on the progress of all the other numerous arts and sciences. From these, it borrows many lights ; and acquires new aid by their augmentation.

“ The science of Medicine is so extensive ; and
 “ so limited are our faculties, in attempting to
 “ explore the recesses of nature ; that our know-
 “ ledge on this subject must ever be exceedingly
 “ confined. Perfection in this science is not to
 D “ be

“ be hoped for ; the labour of ages will enlarge
 “ our stock of knowledge ; but we shall be forced
 “ to confess, that perfection is yet far from our
 “ reach. Improvement is, however, undoubtedly
 “ in our power. Industry and abilities will never
 “ want subjects for employment ; nor fail to re-
 “ ward those who exert them.”* In our new, and
 almost unexplored country ; very much remains
 to do, in every department of knowledge. The
 ample volume of the works of nature is open
 to our view, and each votary to science, is
 loudly invited, to a participation of the luxu-
 riant banquet, which its pages afford. Your
 industry, and perseverance, Gentlemen, will go
 far to raise our country, to an equal eminence
 with the most favoured parts of the globe. New
 and certain avenues to the temples of honor
 and of fame, will here be lighted up, by the
 radiant torch of truth : Let me hope, that many
 whom I now address ; are destined to attain
 an eminence, as great as Newton, Bacon,
 Boyle, and all those other illustrious cha-
 racters, who rank so high in the annals of sci-
 ence.

It is a subject of regret, that the knowledge
 of medical science, is so diffused, through vast
 numbers of volumes, and in different languages,

as

* Medical and Chirurgical Review:

as to preclude a complete view of all its improvements, except it be acquired at a great expence, and with great labour. In Europe indeed, this is in a great measure obviated, by the numerous periodical publications, of the highest importance; which monthly, nay weekly, and almost daily issue from the presses. Such works are peculiarly acceptable to persons engaged in extensive practice; or who are remote from the centre of publication. As yet, our country has been backward in adding to the general stock, by similar attempts. One laudable example has been set, and the important work is still continued with undiminished ardour; and I trust will add, not only to the reputation, but also to the emolument of its proprietors.*

Permit me, Gentlemen, to extend for a few minutes, this view of a subject so highly interesting to us, as fellow-members of the same institution. How grateful must be the recollection of its rapid increase! Scarcely have ten years elapsed, since it first sprung into existence, by the active and well-directed endeavours of a few individuals; and already do we reckon amongst its members, most of the respectable and eminent of the profession, throughout the United States.

* The Medical Repository of New-York.

States. By its junction also with the American Medical Society; it has added the respectability of that institution, to the youthful vigour which animates itself.

I confidently trust, that the zeal which has heretofore been evinced in the advancement of its reputation; will still exist, to carry it yet further on the road to perfection; when you are settled in your professional pursuits at a distance from us.

I must remind you, Gentlemen, that the objects of this society, are more extensive, than I believe is generally imagined. We are not to be limited to the reception, or discussion, of medical facts or papers. We must consider, that the republic of Medicine, which extends its influence throughout the universe; and of which, we are fellow-members; has a just claim upon our exertions. The publication of Transactions and Memoirs, is, if I mistake not, an important part of the intentions of this institution. The carrying into execution this important measure, (in which unfortunately, we have been too neglectful) will evince to the world that science is not confined to the shores of Europe. Hitherto, our exertions have been very limited. Let us now endeavour to render ourselves conspicuous, as a literary and scientific Body. Let each member think
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that on his individual exertions, depends the honour of the whole; and we soon shall see it rise to an unexampled pitch of celebrity and reputation. Each member has it in his power to enrich the society, by favouring it with accurate details, of facts and observations; together with the histories of diseases, remarkable either in themselves or treatment; with dissections of such morbid bodies as may come under their notice; and the remarks and inferences, occasioned thereby. A judicious selection from these, for publication, could not fail of soon rendering us known, abroad and at home. Such a work would doubtless meet with a ready reception; especially, as each member would wish to possess a publication, in the honor of which he found himself so closely interested.

I trust I am not singular, in thus wishing to advance the reputation of our hitherto flourishing Body. How honourable such a step would be, I shall not pause to determine. I sincerely hope, due attention will be given to a subject, from which we may anticipate such beneficial effects. We want only those materials, of which each member is possessed; to erect a structure, whose duration shall extend to the end of time; and whose beneficial influence, shall pervade the universe.

The Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, which now ranks high as a scientific institution; arose from a beginning, small as our own. Its celebrity may in part be ascribed to having pursued to a certain degree, the measure above recommended; by publishing a judicious selection of the most meritorious theses, which have made their appearance in that University. And shall an institution, founded under the auspices of a school, where a candidate for medical honors, dare not publish any thing, which strikes at the doctrines there promulgated: Shall, I repeat it, such an institution surpass our own? where, under the extended wings of our beloved Alma Mater; freedom of opinion in Medical science, is not only tolerated, but even encouraged! Most of the experimental theses here made public, I will venture to assert, are not surpassed, either in merit or information, by those which are brought forward in the trans-Atlantic seminaries. A selection of the most meritorious, for publication, under your auspices, would not only extend the credit of our society; but would also tend to double the diligence of the students; by the pleasing expectation of such honourable attention being paid to their investigations. Gentlemen, who come to pursue their medical studies in this place; will be ashamed to leave it, without having it in their power to say, they are members of so valuable an institution; whilst
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the difficulty of obtaining a membership ; will make them exert all their diligence and application, to attain a seat so honorable to themselves.

My wish to see our society on a footing, equally eminent with similar institutions of Europe ; induces me trespass on your time, by recommending such objects to your attention, as to me appear best calculated, to promote so desirable an end. Seminaries of learning, like governments, have their rise ; their acme ; their decline, and fall. The schools of Italy gave place to those of Holland, and they in turn have been eclipsed by the superior brilliancy of the Scottish schools. In the death of a Cullen, and the retirement of a Black, a shock has been sustained by the medical school of Edinburgh ; from which, it will not soon recover. I may be allowed to hope, that the time is not far distant ; when the goddess Hygeia, in conjunction with the genius of Philosophy, shall extend the fame of *our* medical schools ; and, continuing to illumine our Professors, with the unerring torch of truth and wisdom ; shall render America the grand emporium of science, and the arts ; from which the never-cloying streams of knowledge shall proceed ; to augment the mass of human happiness ; and to communicate their cheering influence to every quarter of the globe.

To

To extend still further, the reputation of our society ; allow me to call to your serious consideration, the propriety, of establishing a Library. To expatiate on its utility, is unnecessary ; as you must all be convinced of it.—It is true, the Medical students who resort to this place, possess extraordinary advantages, in having access to the excellent library belonging to the Pennsylvania Hospital ; and to the public library of our city.—But, as I conceive the augmentation of the means of information, is the surest mode of increasing, and extending science ; I anxiously trust, that such a measure will not be long neglected. The medical institution* which I have already noticed ; derives not a little of its celebrity, from the extensive library which it possesses. Such praise-worthy examples, will doubtless meet with that regard, to which they are so justly entitled. It may be objected, that the establishment of a library requires considerable time and expence. From these very causes there is no time like the present, for carrying it into effect ; as we shall the sooner have to boast of its existence. By small beginnings, great ends are frequently accomplished. We cannot walk before we creep ; neither can we, without a commencement, hope to attain, what each of you will admit, is highly to be wished

* The Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh.

wished for. I am certain that all of you feel disposed, as much as is in your power, to add to the reputation of an institution, from which, I doubt not, you have derived both pleasure and instruction: In no way can this be more likely to occur, than by increasing its sources of information and improvement. Let me urge you then, Gentlemen, to carry into effect, a measure long contemplated; that you may be enabled to say, Our Library was instituted, under your immediate exertions: and, I hope it will rapidly increase; as a testimony of your zeal and desire, of promoting the interests of science and humanity.

I have thus, Gentlemen, brought to a conclusion, those pages, which I have prepared in compliance with your appointment. If they have failed in affording you either instruction or amusement; I trust you will nevertheless receive them with indulgence, in consideration of your having made so bad an election.—With every wish for your uninterrupted health and prosperity; I now bid you an affectionate adieu.

THE END.



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