

Valedictory address, delivered before the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery : at its second annual commencement, February 18, 1842 / by W. C. Handy.

Contributors

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Handy (W. R.)

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

BALTIMORE COLLEGE OF DENTAL SURGERY,

AT ITS

SECOND ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT,

FEBRUARY 18, 1842.

Box 4.

BY W. R. HANDY, M. D.

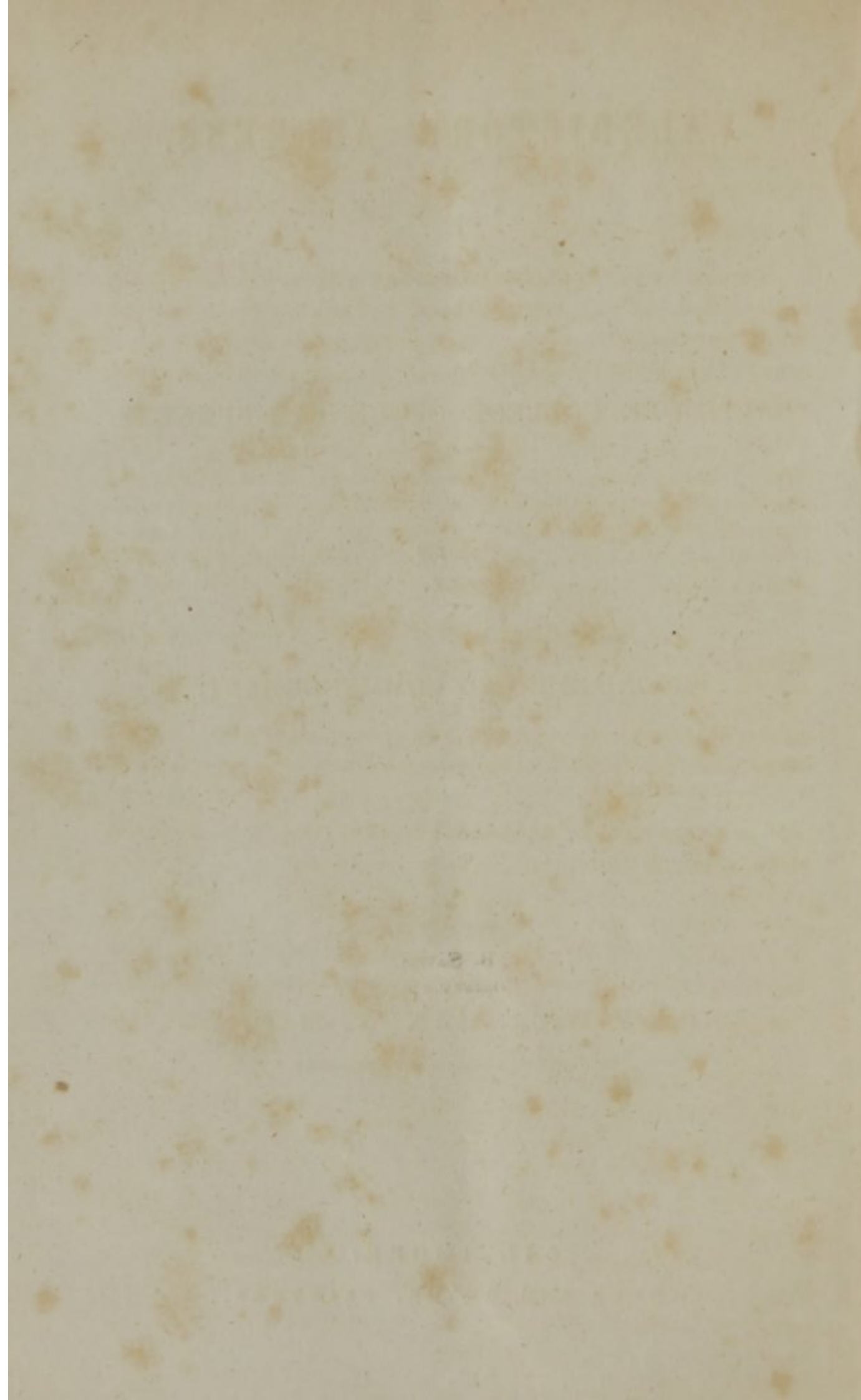
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BALTIMORE:

WOODS AND CRANE, PRINTERS.

1842.



TO PROFESSOR W. R. HANDY—

SIR :—At a meeting of the Students of the “BALTIMORE COLLEGE OF DENTAL SURGERY,” held this day, of which Thomas C. Connolly was chairman, and W. W. H. Thackston, secretary, the undersigned were appointed a committee to communicate to you the following preamble and resolutions, then unanimously adopted :—

“*Whereas*, the class in attendance upon the *Baltimore College of Dental Surgery*, having convened for the purpose of offering some feeble tribute of respect to the Faculty to whose instructions they have attended during the past session, agree to the following :

“*Resolved*, that the signal ability and indefatigable industry exhibited by the several professors of this institution, entitle them to our unqualified admiration and respect.

“*Resolved*, that the demonstrations of lively interest in the personal welfare of the individual members of this Class, frequently manifested in acts of generosity and kindness, have entitled them severally to our affection and gratitude.

“*Resolved also*, that the thanks of the Class be tendered to Professor W. R. Handy, for the eloquent Valedictory Address, pronounced by him on the occasion of the late Annual Commencement, and that he be solicited to furnish a copy of the same for publication.”

In performing the duty thus assigned them, the undersigned beg leave to renew to you, sir, the assurance of their respect and esteem.

B. RANDOLPH ROBINSON,	}	<i>Committee.</i>
W. W. H. THACKSTON,		
J. B. SAVIER,		
THOMAS CHARLES CONNOLLY,		

Baltimore, Feb. 19, 1842.

BALTIMORE, *February* 19, 1842.

GENTLEMEN—

Your letter of to-day has just come to hand. Allow me through you, to return my sincere thanks to the Dental Class, and to each of you, severally, as members of the Committee, for the sentiments of kindness and instruction which you have been pleased to express as having received at the hands of my colleagues. Your last resolution requesting a copy of my lecture for publication, I cannot but think, springs from the sincerest motives.

It was prepared solely for your entertainment, and I trust profit—and though it was by no means designed for the press, and as I am not aware it contains any thing very worthy of general publication, it is, nevertheless, in one sense, your property, and I do not therefore feel myself at liberty to deny your wishes to dispose of it as you may think best.

Yours, most sincerely,

W. R. HANDY.

To Messrs. B. RANDOLPH ROBINSON,	}	<i>Committee.</i>
W. W. H. THACKSTON, D. D. S.		
J. B. SAVIER, D. D. S.		
T. C. CONNOLLY,		

A D D R E S S .

GENTLEMEN, GRADUATES IN DENTAL SURGERY—

You have now received the highest credentials of your profession. This audience are so many living witnesses to the ceremony and the fact. This ceremony, therefore, should be viewed by you, not simply as one of idle display—but of solemn import, consecrating as it does, in the most public manner, you and your credentials to the world. For it makes public declaration, in the warrant you have just received, of your character and qualifications—hence your industry, integrity, and capacity are asserted. It tells you have reached the long-looked for goal of many anxious hopes and fears—it proclaims you have run the race and won the prize—it declares the joy and satisfaction of your teachers at such a result—it speaks the heart-felt gratification of your parents and friends at the consummation of their wishes; and it doubtless breathes the hearty amen of this audience, who have honoured us with their presence, and whose good it is your desire and interest to promote.

These are truly pleasing and gratifying truths, giving in a general way, joy and satisfaction to all; but only felt and properly appreciated by such as you who become the practical recipients of their value.

But, gentlemen, this is not all: there remains another truth embodied in this ceremony, and warrant, of a different kind and more serious moment than those just stated, and which becomes our duty not to overlook. It is this: declaration is further made that you are at this moment standing upon the wharf of the great ocean of practical life, with your vessel properly freighted and chartered to serve the public.

You have safely passed over the sea of preparatory life, encountered without injury all its storms, eddies, and currents, and are now participating with your relations and friends in a public celebration of the happy termination of your voyage.

But you are now to commence and cross the ocean of practical life. Are you certain of as safe a voyage, and as happy a termination?

This is a question of most serious moment, and one we would entreat you to solemnly put to each of your consciences at the outset of the voyage: to narrowly scan the difficulties and dangers which lie in your path, and ask yourselves, are you really and properly prepared for the journey?

It becomes us here as part of our duty to you, however painful it may be, to announce the fact, that the difficulties you have already encountered in reaching your present position, are but amusements, pleasures, yea trifles, when compared with the trials, disappointments, and deceptions which now await you.

But, gentlemen, it is by no means our wish to discourage; on the contrary, there is every thing to buoy up your hopes and encourage you onward, by simply guarding with care against the many shoals and pits into which you may fall.

To aid you in this, is the principal object of the few imperfect remarks we may have at present to offer. And we must here in the outset be allowed to express our regret that some one of my colleagues, whose greater age and experience would have enabled him to give you better advice and counsel, had not undertaken the task assigned us; for the same truths, uttered by the lips of age, fall upon our ears, and very naturally too, with more attention and veneration, are more carefully cherished in our minds, and more frequently practised in our lives, than when coming from more inexperienced years.

We have, however, no apologies to offer or promises to make for the impassable or passable manner, as the thing may be, in which we may discharge our duty at this time to you, further than to state that it is our ardent desire, and shall be our endeavour, to meet your wishes as far as we are able, by presenting before your minds in a plain and unvarnished way, *truth*, and such *truth* as seems most useful to you as members of the dental profession.

We propose considering our subject by first stating two great general truths, and then briefly examining the *duties* and *respon-*

sibilities of members of the dental profession in relation to these truths.

When we survey the whole field of human action, we find this truth universal and pervading every part, to wit: That mankind are divided into two great classes, *the one for the doing of good, the other for the doing of injury to the human race.*

The two great branches of this general truth are in direct opposition the one to the other.

The first division of good embraces all the lovers of science, morality, and religion. It includes the three professions of divinity, law, and medicine, all the various mechanic arts, the science of good government and education, with all the possessors of christianity of whatever clime, name, or denomination.

All these divisions and subdivisions of mankind, though forming a numerous host, are nevertheless all so universally admitted to be for good, and so necessary for the general welfare, that not one division would be willingly dispensed with. We could not do without the farmer who furnishes our daily bread, the mechanic who provides our clothing and dwelling places, the physician who gives us health; and so with all the rest, intended purely to restore man to his original rectitude, nobleness, and godlike form. The whole and every part making so many streams of one grand system of temporal and spiritual good, and all converging, notwithstanding their great diversity in form, name, and action, all, we say, converging, and with the utmost harmony, to one central point—that point being the best *good* of man. Thus forming, by their united contribution, as it were, a mighty river, whose waves rise higher and higher as they roll onward and onward, constantly increasing in majesty and strength; but at the same time moving with such gentle and equable motion, that every pilgrim mariner trusting his bark to their guidance, is borne along with confidence and safety, not only over the limited sea of time, but also, with equal certainty and security, over the boundless ocean of eternity.

The second branch of the general truth includes all the haters of science, morality, and religion.

This also has numerous divisions and subdivisions; and when we cast our eye over the field of human action, we find it also pervading every part, and commensurate in extent with the first branch of good just noticed.

It embraces all speculators and pretenders in science, morals, and religion, known under the general names of quacks, empirics, infidels, humbugs, &c. who originate new sciences, falsely so called. As for instance in the science of medicine, which seems more prolific than all the rest, we have the so called sciences of Thomsonianism, Hahnemannism, and Animal Magnetism. And here we would not wish to be understood, by any means, as making war upon the founders of these different sects and their followers, simply as the founders and followers. Far be it from us; for many, many we believe to be the most estimable of society. But we do think it the solemn duty every one owes to his conscience and his God, to declare to the community against sciences which he believes to be false, and against principles which he believes are perpetually at war with, and destructive of human health and life.

Such we believe to be the fact in regard to the three sciences just mentioned, as being based on false principles, and wearing the cloak of deception under the garb of medicine.

As for instance, the fundamental principle of Thomsonian practice, that heat and life are identical, and the more heat the more life, is utterly at variance both with the laws of chemistry and the principle of life itself; which principle every one knows can not only sustain but actually resist a degree of heat that would roast to a cinder animal matter.

And, with regard to the great principle of Homœopathic practice, the *smaller* the dose, the *greater* its power, is also utterly at war with common sense as well as the true principle of science; for as well might it be said, the plantaris, a very delicate little muscle of the lower limb, had greater strength in consequence of its excessive smallness, and in a direct proportion to its minuteness, in bending the limb, than its neighbour, the gastrocnemius, which is probably a hundred times larger, having a similar situation, and engaged in the same duty.

We say, this seems quite as reasonable as that a dose of arsenic which is hardly perceptible to the eye, and can be safely given, is more powerful than a large dose, which every body knows is absolutely poisonous.

And as to animal magnetism, its principles really appear so preposterous and unblushingly presumptuous, that it is almost incredible how any rational being can for a moment entertain them; for it asserts contrary to every law of nature as well as experience,

that our eyes, our ears, and all our senses which the God of nature has made and given as the only inlets of knowledge to the mind—these we are told are of no use, and with the utmost of modest effrontery imaginable, assured, that it is not the eye that sees and the ear that hears, and so on, but it is the brain, and that by animal magnetism.

Now all such sciences as these in medicine, and the same in regard to all false codes of morality and religion, have a direct and positive tendency to injure man in his whole being, physical and mental—for by them his physical frame is sadly lowered from its original dignity—changed, mutilated, and stript of its godlike form, while his mind more sadly still, is wrapt in the insensibility of night, and like the sot, degraded to a worse condition than that of the brute.

In a word, the whole tendency of all the efforts of human action, comprising the numerous divisions enumerated as belonging to the second branch of the great general truth—all we say tend directly or indirectly, and whether designed or not, to the injury of man.

The second great truth, we have to state, if any thing, is still more fundamental and equally universal; to wit: the *natural and spiritual wants of man* and the *absolute necessity* of gratifying these wants.

This truth, every where admitted, forms the foundation to the first truth, is its grand motive and propelling power, is the real basis of all the various professions and employments known in society, and constantly held up as the unanswerable argument of all the good and all the mischief done to mankind—and strange to tell, assumed by both parties, the bad as well as the good, and proclaimed with equal vehemence by both as the great essential and natural cause of all their actions towards their fellow-man.

Both assert with equal truth, that the body must be fed, housed, and warmed; that the mind must be educated, enlightened, and purified—that all these are natural wants—absolute requirements, and must be supplied. But the grand difference between the two contending parties consists in the kind, quality, and amount of supply; for while the one deals out physical and mental nourishment, producing health and happiness, the other scatters bodily and spiritual poison causing every where disease and death.

From this imperfect statement of these two general truths, we learn—

First, the divisions of mankind into two great conflicting parties, and the cause of these divisions with their general results.

Second, the vast amount of hypocrisy in every profession and employment, and especially in that of medicine ; and

Thirdly, the absolute necessity of great caution and close investigation before we receive and countenance the introduction of any new or false science, any real or false improvement in the different mechanic arts.

To try the whole first, in rigidly applying the various tests for detecting their truth or falsehood, their good or bad tendency. The principal tests may be stated under the following heads:—

1st. Trial by the two great general truths just stated, and admitted as fundamental in governing human actions.

2d. Trial by the unerring lights of science, morals, and religion.

3d. General approbation of the people.

4th. The sanction of legislative authority.

These several tests, if faithfully applied, like the chemist's crucible, will, regardless of fear or favour, certainly analyze the true character of the thing presented to our acceptance, determine whether it be imposition or not, and whether it be for our good or injury.

Now, gentlemen, the science of dentistry is regarded by some as a new thing, a new science ; consequently unknown, untried, and of course liable to all the objections and drawbacks which necessarily attach to uncertainties of every kind, whether real or supposed.

This supposition, strange as it may seem, has been stated, notwithstanding it is well known the practice of dentistry is as old as the science of medicine itself.

It is true, it has but recently received at the hands of the legislature a legitimate name, form, and habitation, and may still be regarded by some as yet in the school of doubt and experiment.

But is this right and is it the fact ? For the honour of your profession, we are happy to say it is not, and that your science, like every other founded upon truth, does not flinch from, but on the contrary invites the severest scrutiny of all the tests which may be applied.

Will you try it by the fundamental truths of human action ? Why, every one admits it does good and is based upon a necessary and natural want.

Will you try it by the lights of science? By this its good is equally manifest, for it is science itself, composing as it does an essential part of the science of medicine, whose utility no one pretends to question.

That this is the true position of the dental science to the science of medicine, may be readily seen from the relation which the dental organs sustain to the whole and every part of the human system. The human body, pronounced by Sacred Writ to be most curiously and wonderfully formed—we find composed of a multitude of parts, constituting a vast family of organs. The great number of this family excites our wonder, the astonishing variety in the form, size, colour, and structure of its different members, challenges our most prying curiosity; the wonderful diversity of their several functions or uses, with the inconceivable minuteness of their operations, commands our unceasing admiration; and the still more astonishing wonder of all, that amidst all this diversity, we see at the same time the utmost harmony of action, the most perfect understanding, if we may use such expression, of every member with every other member, the most perfect adaptation of every part to every other part and to the whole, thus exhibiting the mighty spectacle of converging by one united, unequalled, inimitable, and persevering effort, to the one grand and common result, the preservation of life.

Thus, this family of organs, from their inseparable connection the one with the other, represents a chain, whose members constitute the several links which, or whenever broken, or however minute the division, in the language of the poet—

“Whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.”

Now the teeth are one of the links essential to this grand chain of the science of medicine, whose utility, importance, and relationship in the animal economy, may be readily judged of by simply asking the following question or two. What mother has not with pain and tears seen the muscular system of her child writhing in convulsions from teething? What one has never had the toothache, and seen and felt its action upon the brain and nervous system, so as to completely change the whole current of his temper and feelings from their natural course, and leaving behind often a most unpleasant and irritable state of the whole system? And

finally, who has not heard of even a decayed tooth producing derangement of the digestive organs, and they in turn operating upon the dental ?

All these instances furnish so many illustrations of the intimate and inseparable connection of the two sciences, so close that if the one falls the other must likewise fall with it.

Will you test your science by the people ? It is unnecessary to say its practice at least has had their universal approbation from time immemorial ; so much so that many will give all they possess to the dentist for a sound and beautiful set of teeth, while they will withhold a trifle for a long time from the physician to check the ravages of disease and death, which may probably at the same moment be preying upon the vital organs of their very existence.

And as to the last test, legislative sanction, it has been already stated its approval has been received ; and here, for the benefit of public information, as well as to show the necessity and utility in which the legislature of Maryland holds the science of dentistry, it may not be improper to state the provision which this body has made for the extension of its principles.

A college has been founded, which all present are aware, has been called the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery. This college has four professorships, the duties of which are to teach respectively the following branches, viz : Dental Physiology and Pathology, Practical Dentistry, Special Pathology and Therapeutics, and Anatomy and Physiology.

Now it seems necessarily to follow from all this that your science, gentlemen, is acknowledged to be both useful, dignified and honorable, tested to be in perfect harmony with the fundamental principles of doing good, and lastly absolutely necessary to supplying some of the most urgent and natural wants of mankind.

We now come to the second point of our subject : to inquire what are your duties and responsibilities in view of the necessity of your science and in relation to the two general truths that have been stated.

These duties may all be classed under three heads :

- 1st. The duties you owe to yourselves.
- 2d. Those you owe the community, and
- 3rd. Those due to your profession.

It has been already stated that you are now about commencing the voyage of practical life, that you are furnished with the neces-

sary knowledge, skill, and virtue, for this commencement, and thus buoyant with hope, may feel yourselves fully armed and equipped, not only to begin, but to successfully end the voyage.

In view of such feeling and hopes the first consideration which we see most generally obtruding itself upon the human mind, is, what is our duty first to self?

This question which we find so common and interesting to all, can hardly be supposed to be entirely overlooked by you, and your reply, if given in accordance with common feeling, will doubtless be to immediately steer your vessel directly to that port where you can acquire most speedily, *reputation* and *wealth*. This is the grand mark, the great central point of the most of human actions, and, in a limited sense, is certainly commendable—a prize worthy to be run for and obtained. But while relying in your inherent strength of unsullied purity of purpose and action in getting this prize, allow us to give a caution in the language of the poet, which can be pondered on at your leisure in the journey :

“Oh in thy truth secure, thy virtue bold,
Beware the poison in the cup of gold,
The asp among the flowers.—Thy heart beats high,
As bright and brighter breaks the distant sky—
But every step is on enchanted ground ;
Danger thou lovest, and danger haunts thee round.”

We would have you remember that reputation is the good opinion of others, and may be true or false : true, when founded on the intrinsic worth of the individual himself, and permanent in its duration ; false, when based on boasted pretensions, short-lived in existence, and soon passing away. If you wish, therefore, to acquire permanent reputation, and possess wealth with honour and without sorrow, we would beseech of you bear in mind that it is absolutely necessary to make all the duties considered as belonging to self, to act in harmony with and under the especial guidance of the great fundamental principles of doing good, and supplying every where, as far as in your power, the natural wants of mankind.

2nd. Your duties to the community.

The community have certain rights which every one in his official as well as in his social and religious relations is bound to respect.

In the practice of your profession, honesty and a high moral sense of duty will be looked for. It is expected of every member to conscientiously examine the teeth when placed under his inspection, to repair or replace with others if needed, and not as is, we fear, too often the case, set to work, and clean and file unnecessarily; thereby irrecoverably injure the teeth, then advise a new set—and all for the getting a large fee.

We do not for a moment, gentlemen, suppose that your sense of high moral duty, and your respect for the rights of others, will ever allow such course of conduct to be laid to your charge; but it seems proper to be reminded of the fact, and to ask you to ever bear in mind that to properly fulfil the duties due the community, you must yourselves faithfully respect all their rights, and as faithfully guard them from the daily and hourly impositions of others; and all this must likewise be done in accordance with the fundamental principles of doing good.

The third and last class of duties we have proposed to notice, are those belonging to the dental profession of which you are now members.

These duties, appear to be of a complex kind, exciting emotions both of pain and pleasure, and involving responsibilities of most serious character.

To properly understand their nature, it seems necessary to cast a glance at the past, present, and probable future condition of your profession.

If we look at the past, the heart is pained at the cruelty, and the mind astonished at the ignorance, every where so prevalent.

If we survey the present, we still have to deplore the yet feeble rays of knowledge which are used to disperse this gloom.

But when we look to the future, we have hope and encouragement that a brighter day has begun to dawn, and will certainly reach the meridian of promise, from the fact, that the great truths of dental science are now being gathered together from every quarter, concentrating in a focus of tangible form, easy of access, and inviting all who may desire it to examine and possess for themselves.

Have you, gentlemen, examined these truths? The degrees just conferred give your reply in the affirmative. Do you value them and honestly believe them designed for good and suited to the necessities of the people? The time, industry, and zeal you have each manifested in their acquisition is your best answer.

In view of all this, then, we would seriously ask what seems to be your duties and responsibilities, as members of the dental profession, in regard to its present and future condition ?

We feel assured there can be but one feeling of response in your every breast : to unite as a band of brothers, and reciprocate feelings of the most intimate, social, and professional intercourse ; never hiding a discovery for your own benefit, which is the selfish characteristic of a quack ; but deprecating every thing of the kind, nobly step forward and give it to the profession for the benefit of mankind.

Value as your lives the great truths and principles of your profession, and valuing them as such, ever feel it your pleasure as well as duty, where ever you go, to aid your alma-mater in extending these principles, thereby allowing, as far as possible, their benefits to reach every creature.

The honour, dignity, and still more extended usefulness of the dental profession, rests, gentlemen, greatly under your care and keeping. We would therefore, earnestly beseech each of you to remember your great responsibility, and so far as in your power, ever strive to preserve its high attributes, pure and unsullied.

One word to those of the class who expect to return again with us.

You are now fully in the race, and are pressing to the enviable point at which a few of your fellows have just happily reached. Our advice to you, as a friend, is to follow on in their footsteps, keeping always as your constant companions, industry, patience, and perseverance, three well-tried friends who never disappoint, and who, if you faithfully rely on and trust, will certainly carry you to the end of your race, and as certainly honour you with the victor's crown.

In the language of a Latin author, let your motto ever be, "*patientia, perseverentia, et vincit omnia,*" and you have nothing to fear.

Gentlemen Graduates—In conclusion, the most affecting part of our duty remains yet to perform.

The time is now arrived when we are each to part. The period is at hand to sunder all the endearing ties of preceptor and pupil—distance will soon intervene between us—and death may overtake before we again meet.

These deprivations are truly great, which we cannot but acknowledge and feel. Let us, however, repine not, but recollect that memory yet lives, and in the beautiful language of the poet, console ourselves by exclaiming with him.

"Hail memory, hail ! in thy exhaustless mine,
From age to age unnumbered treasures shine !
Thought and her shadowy brood thy call obey,
And place and time are subject to thy sway."

Allow us now, on our own part, and in behalf of our colleagues, in taking this our public farewell, to give you each our best and sincerest wishes, that wherever Providence may cast your lots, health, success, and happiness may ever attend you.