

Sources, evils and correctives of professional discontent : an introductory lecture, delivered Nov. 4th, 1845 / by John P Harrison.

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Harrison (J. P.)

SOURCES, EVILS AND CORRECTIVES

OF

PROFESSIONAL DISCONTENT.

AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

Delivered Nov. 4th, 1845,

By JOHN P. HARRISON, M. D.,

Professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the Med. College of Ohio.

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Cincinnati:

Printed at the Ben Franklin Printing House, 106 Main Street.

1845

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF OHIO, }

NOVEMBER 6th, 1845. }

At a meeting of the *Medical Class*, held in the College Edifice, D. A. Kinchloe was called to the Chair, and E. H. Ferris chosen Secretary.

The object of the meeting being explained, it was, On motion,

Resolved, that a committee of six be appointed by the Chairman, to request of Prof. J. P. HARRISON a copy of his Introductory Lecture delivered on the evening of the 4th inst., for publication. The Chairman appointed the following gentlemen: Messrs. T. Kearny, F. W. Ames, G. R. Hunt, L. Soher, R. H. Johnson and L. W. Clark.

On motion adjourned.

D. A. KINCHLOE, *Chairman*.

E. H. FERRIS, *Secretary*.

COPRESPONDENCE.

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF OHIO, }

NOVEMBER 6, 1845. }

PROF. J. P. HARRISON,

Dear Sir:—The pleasure experienced by the Medical Class in listening to your introductory lecture in which you have illustrated many important truths essential to the success of the young practitioner, induces the undersigned committee in their behalf to solicit a copy for publication.

Respectfully, Yours,

T. KEARNY,
L. SOHER,
R. H. JOHNSON,

F. W. AMES,
G. R. HUNT,
L. W. CLARK,

} *Com. of Class.*

Race St. Nov. 6th, 1845.

GENTLEMEN:—Agreeably to your request I send you my Address for publication. Accept on behalf of the class and of yourselves, my assurance of great respect,

Yours,

JOHN P. HARRISON.

Messrs. KEARNY, } *Committee.*
AMES, &c.

Sources, Evils and Correctives of Professional Discontent:

AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE, DELIVERED NOV. 4th, 1845,

By JOHN P. HARRISON, M. D.,

Professor of Mat. Med. and Therapeutics in the Medical College of Ohio.

THE restlessness of human nature has ever been a fruitful theme of poetic effusion. From the days of Homer to those of Horace, and from the Roman satirist down to the era of Dryden and Pope, the stream of song has poured its lamentations along this channel. "Man never is, but always to be blest," is the hackneyed line of a poet whose beautiful versification conferred an adventitious charm and attractiveness on commonplace moral reflections.

This universal spirit of restlessness in human nature seems an essential portion of man's heritage on earth. All possess it, from fortune's most favored child, who basks beneath a sun unclouded by the dark shadows of sorrow, down to him who treads a path of trial in poverty's low vale, through all the graduated scale of earthly conditions, no bosom is exempt from the inquietude and agitation of unsatisfied desire;—none are freed from the incessant perturbation of those aspiring thoughts that reach forth after brighter and fairer scenes which the future spreads before the mind. With all this inquietude of spirit,—with all the discontent which the present engenders,—there ever springs a hope of change for the better,—a pleasing expectation that the to-morrow will supply the defects of to-day, and chase away the clouds which now environ our path.

And this restless, eager desire of melioration in our state is the prolific element of improvement;—the efficient source of progress, and of perfection. This inherent tendency of man's nature to grasp after the future,—to feel that

"Not present good or ill the joy or curse,

But future views of better or of worse;"

can not be extinguished by any process of raticcination. Logic is too feeble to dislodge it from its strong holds in the heart, and and experience, though it may damp its triumphs, can not extinguish its fires.

The object of this address is not to animadvert on the original tendency of our nature to be ever ready to start away from the limited circle of the present, and to expatiate over the wide tract of the future, but to discuss the sources, evils and correctives of professional discontent. The design is, to point out a very prevalent fault among the members of the medical profession—a fault which exerts the most deteriorating influence on the well being of the profession, and which demands, therefore, thorough and speedy correction.

By professional discontent we mean a state of mind made up of dissatisfaction with the pursuit of medicine as a calling, a dislike of its responsibilities, and an aversion to meet the trials incident to a just discharge of these responsibilities. Whatever the general feelings of a physician may be as to unsatisfactory nature of all sublunary objects to satiate the thirst of the soul for happiness, and however assured he may be that there is but one unfailing fountain of peace and bliss to man; yet superadded to this deep persuasion of the utter worthlessness of mere earthly satisfactions to tranquilize the restless spirit, there may be such a strong distaste to his professional duties as to be productive of the most unhappy results to his own peace of mind.

A sterile, gloomy unquietness of mind, which deadens the heart, and embitters the life; which renders the obligations of the profession a burden of wo, and casts the shadow which dims the sunshine of the present moment on the vista of life, and which forces the melancholy utterance, day by day from the oppressed soul,—

"How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of this calling:

'T is an unweeded garden that grows to seed,

Things rank and gross possess it merely."

The indulgence of such a discontented state of mind spreads gloom on the fairest scenes, transforms this goodly earth into a dry and sterile heath, and hour by hour gathers materials for its devouring activity in the heart from the most familiar trials of the profession.

The sources of this unhappy temper of mind are,—1st, want of self-control;—2nd, defective spirit of emulation;—3rd, a hasty and superficial training of the faculties on professional subjects;—4th, an excessive appreciation of merit, engendering extravagant expectations of quick success in acquiring business;—5th, disgust at seeing quackery encouraged;—6th, loss of patients, connected as such an unhappy termination of the cases committed to the physician's care often is, with various detracting remarks, made by gossiping persons, concerning the treatment pursued; and lastly, a niggardly recompense for the anxieties and toils of the physician, and often instead of any remuneration, or with a reluctant yielding of a part of his demand,

the language of depreciation and of obloquy, from persons snatched from imminent death by his skill. The want of self-government is a very operative cause of professional discontent. Self-sovereignty is exercised in the regulation of our thoughts, emotions, words and actions. Aware that nothing good or great can be achieved without self control, Solomon has told us that, "he that hath no rule over his own spirit," who does not control his own thoughts and emotions, and keep them in subordination to his reason, "is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." Such a man is perpetually the sport of contradictory feelings; tossed about with every variation of outward circumstance, now filled with gay visions of his own worth, and now sunk in abjectness of spirit; now elate with golden dreams of life, and now despairing of success in his profession. Such a one moves in an atmosphere of moody impatience at every petty obstacle presented in his path, or with desponding acquiescence he submits to the difficulties which make demands upon his fortitude and perseverance.

Defective in a warm and generous emulation, the professional man is apt to contract his views to the ~~morrow~~, exclusive of his own personal observations. With the onward march of medical science he will not sympathise. No kindling ardor awakens his thoughts, and spreads an ennobling transport over his faculties, as the bright perspective of new truths opens before his vision, and as science laden with the trophies of her conquests, reveals her majesty and loveliness to his admiring contemplation.

Exhausting his strength in pouring forth querulous complaints against his profession, the discontented physician finds no time, and has no aptitude for matters which appeal to the interests of medical science, and which find entertainment in minds devoted to the advancement of the art of curing disease.

The crude preparation made by many physicians for the practice of medicine disposes strongly to the indulgence of a dissatisfied spirit. Not being thoroughly indoctrinated in the principles of medical science, and but superficially acquainted with its many facts, such persons are prone to indulge in invectives against the whole scheme of interference at the bedside, and harshly accuse the profession of charlatanry. Conscious of deficient information on professional subjects, and with no prompt alacrity of mind to supply his deficiency, the ignorant physician is inclined to deny altogether, the certainty of scientific medicine, or to dote fondly on his own narrow modes of treating diseases.

An exalted conception of merit renders the mind exquisitely sensitive to real or supposed neglect. Hence a corroding fretfulness preys on the heart of the vain man, whenever his high personage meets with no special manifestations of honorable

*narrow
circle*

notice. Eulogy must be forever breathing her soft language into the vain man's ears, else with mortified spirit, he utters his maledictions on all around.

Disgust at the encouragements afforded quackery, in various forms, may create in the ill regulated mind, a strong dislike to the profession. To witness the encroachments of ignorance and presumption, to see the pretender in physic shoving aside the scientific physician, and to hear the pæans sung to some Magnus Apollo of empiricism by a credulous public, are temptations not easily resisted, to forego the exercise of our professional duties. And when with blind and eager patronage, the educated are seen to mingle in the degrading worship offered up at the shrine of charlatanry;—when we read the puffing notices of quacks, and quack nostrums from the pens of lawyers, judges, and clergymen, our disgust then rises into contempt, and we are ready to pronounce,

“Congenial souls; whose life one folly joins,
And one fate oft hurries in quackery's mines.”

The sad event of death is calculated to check our rising pride in the glory of our art. Man goeth to his long home, and this solemn issue of disease reminds the physician of the impotency of all human means to prolong life in many severe forms of illness. The benevolent physician ever feels sad at such an awful event. But he has done his best; all the resources of his art have been faithfully, diligently, perseveringly put forth;—death thrusts them aside;—he has come with a commission from the throne of God to do his work, and he will not be frustrated, for the decree of the Most High has gone forth, “dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.” And now with mournful acquiescence, he must bow his head, and resign his patient up to the Supreme Will. Agonized at the sad spectacle of a dying fellow being, amid the groans and strife of nature, whom he has watched over, and by a sedulous application of his remedies endeavored to restore to health, now about to be torn away from bleeding hearts who surround his couch, the medical practitioner is tempted to abandon his profession, and no longer practice an art so helpless, in many instances, to save.

Superadded to this source of unhappiness in his profession, is the too frequent infliction of injustice upon his reputation, by the circulation of groundless accusations against his humanity, or his skill. The shafts of crimination however, fall harmless upon him who wears the panoply of truth for his defence.

The parsimonious manner in which physicians are frequently remunerated, accompanied, as the stinted emolument often is, with opprobrious language, affords an urgent provocation for professional discontent. What! shall I prosecute a vocation where, at every step, ingratitude, slander, and a denial of my

just claims for services, are as sure to traverse and harrass the rugged road of professional life, as that neither during meal times, nor sleeping hours, nor inclement weather, am I to withhold my person from the bedside, when summoned to attend ?

The evils flowing from professional discontent are,—1st, an arrest of advancement in knowledge ;—2nd, aversion to the discharge of the appropriate duties of the profession ;—3rd, depreciation of the profession in the opinion of society ;—4th, abandonment of the profession entirely, or what is worse, addictedness to indirection to obtain practice ;—5th, the indulgence in dissipated habits.

For the intellectual powers to advance rapidly in the acquisition of knowledge the mind must with pleasurable excitement exert its energies. Joy is expansive ; it opens and dilates the capacity of thought to receive with warmth, and retain with tenacious grasp the truths presented. The delight of prosecuting inquiries into the hidden stores of knowledge treasured up in nature, lifts the soul in communion with the skies, and makes it a participant of the riches of the Universal Mind. "The works of God are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered," and it is the glory of his intelligent creature, man, to seek out the secret things of the Supreme Mind, and with animated joy revel amidst the bright displays of creative wisdom.

The mind, alive to the delights of knowledge, exults in overcoming difficulties in the pursuit of truth. Spurning the impediments which clog the advancement of the faculties in the career of discovery, the mind passes onward from one point of inquiry to another, till in its rapid progress over the field of science, it triumphs over every obstacle, and gathers trophies of victory from every quarter.

Deprived of the pleasures of knowledge but small advancement is made in science. If, therefore, a physician is discontented with his profession, if he looks upon the science, and the practice of medicine with aversion, he can never win any renown by following it, nor will he ever reflect any glory upon his profession by this melancholy, and constrained adherence to it as an avocation.

Averting his intense regards from his profession, and only practicing it as a means of subsistence, the discontented physician with painful reluctance enters upon the discharge of its duties. Forever complaining, as he drags his unwilling feet to the dwellings of his patients, he can never with proper interest enter upon the investigation of a difficult case of sickness.—With rapid examination he satisfies himself of the nature and seat of the malady, and then with unseemly haste decides upon his course of treatment. Glad to escape from the sick room he resorts to any thing, and every thing, to save him from too close

a familiarity with the hated matters pertaining to the science and art of curing disease.

Renouncing all pretensions to improvement he is never seen with a medical book in hand, except, perhaps, to get a recipe in order to save himself from a severe requisition on his thinking powers, so indisposed to exert themselves in prescribing for the sick. As to a medical periodical, he avoids the expense incurred in its subscription, and thus evinces a due respect for economy.

With such a specimen of the profession of medicine before them, and with his reiterated utterance of contemptuous language towards the practice of medicine sounding in their ears, the public are apt to conclude that the doctor and his physic are both alike contemptible. For they deduce an inference from the premises, which is an obviously just corollary from such data. They pause not to investigate the truthfulness of the exhibition, or the justness of the exhibitor's language, but rest satisfied that the physician knows best the meanness of his own profession, and that if such be the nature of the calling, the character of those who pursue it must be assimilated to its meanness and degradation.

To the mind of the discontented physician the medical profession is a mass of unmitigated vexations. Its responsibilities oppress ; its cares harass ; its trials irritate. Restless as Euripus, whose ebbs and flows were an enigma to the ancient philosophers, the mind of the dissatisfied practitioner of medicine is never at peace. Perturbed as he is in spirit ; fretted with the present, and uncheered by the prospect of the future, he determines to abandon such a miserable mode of life ;—to turn away in disgust from such a thankless, hopeless, thriftless pursuit, and take up with any thing that promises redemption from such purgatorial ills—as never before poor flesh was heir to, till he became a doctor of physic. And now the law invites, and he at once enters upon its glorious uncertainties as a sure requital for the pains and penalties inflicted upon him by medicine. Or he addicts himself to the alluring gains of merchandise, and in notes protested, and in the adverse vicissitudes of trade, realizes a blooming Eden to his ardent wishes. Or it may be he becomes an adventurer in the lottery of matrimony, and fondly hopes to find a fortune encumbered with a wife, that may save him from the torments of practicing the profession, choosing rather to endure domestic troubles, than to be exposed to foreign invasion.

Tossed about by various adventures, battered and bankrupted by other pursuits, perhaps, he may be forced back upon his deserted and abandoned profession, and with grateful feelings seek its chances for a respectable livelihood. Or if he does not abandon the profession he may in the recklessness of his

impatient discontent, seek success in the dark and crooked ways of quackery; and by some patent pill, or ointment, or by the arrogant assumption of some method of curing disease altogether variant from the practice of the regular profession, attempt to win the credulous to a high admiration of his superior skill.—The doggerel lines of the witty Butler are well adapted to express his logic.

“Doubtless the pleasure is as great
Of being cheated, as to cheat.”

And out of pure philanthropy, as it would appear from their oft repeated announcement, the empirical pretenders in physic, from the attenuated dosing of the homœopathist up to artillery attacks of the steamers, do their best to prove that the pleasure of cheating the credulous can only be surpassed by the luxury which the public enjoy of being cheated. The people enjoying the luxury, thus most humanely offered them, with infinite relish, these empirical knight errants in gentle pity to the popular demand, supply the good people abundantly with delusions, nostrums, homœopathy, botanicals, and steam, with lobelia and red pepper thrown in at a venture.

Tired, jaded, disgusted, and irritated, the poor malecontent in medicine, often with feelings too honorable to allow him to dabble in quackery, seeks relief in the syren fascination of the intoxicating cup. Friends remonstrate, importune, admonish;—reputation bleeds; health fails; heaven frowns; the grave yawns at his feet—all—all in vain. The soul embruted by the blighting habit, sinks from its noble career of virtue; the darkness and desolation of moral evil enclose it; the chills of the second death gather round the heart—and now he who so lately stood fairest among the intelligent graduates of his Alma Mater—the cherished object of parental love, the stay of their declining years, gladdening their eye with his manly form and filling their hearts with his filial piety—is a victim of drunkenness. Unmanly, fretful impatience for the delays, incident to his profession, of acquiring practice, and a dissatisfied, fiery temper, have urged his footsteps to the precipice, over which he is hanging, hair suspended; ready to plunge into the fathomless gulph of endless night!

Far better for such a one that he had never made medicine his choice, far better if he had been obliged to spend his days in the drudgery of physical toil; that his ambition had never prompted him to tread the ways of peril, which the profession has presented to his unfortified, irresolute, discontented mind.

The correctives of professional discontent are;—1st, a diligent study of the science of medicine;—2nd, a determined will to become eminently useful in the profession;—3rd, an earnest interest in the progress of medicine;—4th, the cultivation of a benevolent regard for the sick;—5th, a dignified self respect;—

6th, a high conception of the moral and intellectual excellence of the profession; and a firm belief in the guardian care of Heaven. A perfunctory, hurried study of a branch of physical science so difficult and complex as medicine, is calculated to produce either great distrust, or great presumption. Whilst shallow draughts intoxicate the brain of the bold and arrogant man, and render him hasty in the formation of his opinion, eager and impetuous in the application of his superficial acquisitions, and intolerant in the declaration and maintainance of his views, yet in the modest and ingenuous, slight and superficial acquirements generate distrust and dissatisfaction. Frequent meditation of the same truths in those diversified relations which these truths bear to each other; a thorough indoctrination of the mind in the principles of medical science; an intimate habituation of the thoughts with every form of morbid action, with a ready suggestive faculty of bringing forward the appropriate remedy for each form and modification of diseased condition to which the body may be subject, can not be attained by any very quick process of examination, nor made available at the bedside, by any but elaborate and prolonged inquiries.

There lies the human form, divested of its moving, animating spirit, which so lately diffused its quickening agency over its every movement. That composite workmanship of the Divine Architect, must be made to reveal its mysteries to the eye of the inquisitive student. Its folded textures must be unravelled, its tortuous tubes are to be minutely traced, its delicate fibres made plain, and its many organs familiarized to the eye and touch; their aspect, shape, position and magnitude accurately investigated. The well instructed anatomist delights in his knowledge of the organism of man. This knowledge is a power of great and varied uses to him. It is the basis of all his professional researches. Chemistry stretches wide the door of her laboratory, and invitingly spreads her stores before the eye. Action and reaction; attraction and repulsion; elementary and compound bodies; atoms and gases; caloric and electricity; with its galvanic and magnetic modes of excitation, are in pleasing variety brought forward, and made to act their varied parts in unfolding the wonders of this noble branch of science. Enamoured of the beauties, and deeply persuaded of the advantages of chemical knowledge, the student sedulously applies his faculties to the inquiries offered to his awakened curiosity.

Mastering, to some considerable extent, these two branches of medical science, and having expatiated with eager and pleasurable excitement of mind on the fertile tracts of investigation thus opened before him, he now turns with quickened attention to the more practical subjects of his professional knowledge. With the Theory and Practice of Medicine, of Surgery, and of Obstetrics, he, with assiduous toil, strives to

be made familiar. And with the therapeutical indications, and the means of their fulfilment, which *Materia Medica* presents, he cannot remain ignorant: assured, as he is, of the essential importance of this species of knowledge to his success as a practitioner. After a conscientious devotement of his best powers to these pursuits for several years, and having successfully wooed and won medicine, the solemn engagement is ratified and sealed by a crowning act of union, performed in the presence of many witnesses, when he stands up in the dignified attitude of a legally pronounced doctor of medicine. Having thus with patience, and toil, and self-denial of the gaities of life, courted this mistress of his choice, and having received the blandishment of her favor, and been united to her in solemn covenant, think you he is going in boyish impatience to relinquish the bride of his youth? Can he put her aside for a stranger, and forego forever all the sweet joys of her loved society?

Another corrective of professional discontent is derived from a determined purpose to make ourselves useful to the community among whom we dwell. The friendship of the public is to be sought most successfully by the physician in the way of his vigorous, punctual attention to the duties of his avocation. By kindness, faithfulness, and assiduity in the discharge of his professional obligations he will win upon the good will and secure the abiding patronage of the community. The meteors of quackery may flash and glare a while on the horizon, beguiling the unwary and credulous for a time, but the sober light emitted by the calm demeanor, and upright walk of the regular physician will shine on, and diffuse its cheering lustre when the false fires of imposture have gone out in endless night. Perhaps other exhalations, bred of ignorance and presumption, may spring from the fat soil of human credulity, but as meteors of the night they shall endure but for a while, and then vanish away. By securing the satisfaction of others towards his course of life, a man will be reconciled to himself. By making ourselves useful we will realize our relative consideration in society, attract honor to the profession, and at the same time fix upon ourselves the best regards of those around us. The reflex action of virtue is never lost.

By participating in the good wishes, and generous approval of our fellow-citizens, our own contentment will be promoted, and by devoting our lives to virtuous industry, the good wishes and generous approval of society will accompany us through all the vicissitudes of our earthly condition. Another corrective of discontent in the profession is an earnest interest in the progress of medical science. It is mournful to reflect how many physicians are totally indifferent to the advancement of the science of medicine. From year to year they, in reference

to the progress of medicine, listlessly live on, acquiring by its practice abundant means of purchasing those productions of the medical press, in which are given the most recent improvements in the art of curing disease ; thus setting at naught the precious fruits of the labors of the numerous cultivators of the science, living in all parts of the civilized world. Shame to their dereliction of professional duty ! Shame to their mercenary spirits ! What ! despise the glorious achievements made by our profession in the wide field of investigation spread out before it in the causes, preventives, and modes of cure of human maladies ; forego all the intellectual advantages and moral satisfactions, derived from growth in the knowledge of this most useful and human branch of inquiry ? Let them tread their narrow path of selfishness ;—let them seek their highest bliss in accumulating pelf ; let them rejoice in their career of cupidity ;—but let them know that they live not up to the high requisitions of professional morality ; that they are recreants to the high trust deposited in their hands, and are striking examples of perverted and abused opportunities of vindicating the honor and dignity of the profession from the assaults of those who accuse its members of vain pretensions to knowledge, and of a sordid desire for gain.

The cultivation of a benevolent regard for the sick is another mode of counteracting the tendency toward professional discontent. By an enlistment of the kind sympathies of our nature there springs a strong incentive to the cultivation of an enlightened judgment of diseases, and of their appropriate methods of cure. Entering into the sufferings of our fellow beings we shall take a deep concern in every thing which ministers to their restoration to health. As special instruments of good to them in the capacity of medical attendants, we are to interpret the obscurities of morbid action, release nature from her embarrassments, and illumine the dreariness of the sick chamber with hopes and promises of succor. It is not as mere mercenary, servile attendants that we enter upon the solemn duties of our high calling. Not as paid servants of the patient's behest that we stand by his couch of suffering, during the exigency and helplessness of his prostrate body,—for amid the uncertainties of life a liberal remuneration to the physician, *after his attendance*, is to be set down as among the foremost,—but as possessed of kindness, and directed by duty, we obey the calls of the sick, and employ all the resources of our art for their rescue. Entertaining such a philanthropic intention, and often reaping from the happy termination of the cases of disease committed to our care, the purest satisfaction that earth can bestow, the consciousness of doing good, we will not be easily driven into petulency, or seduced into contemptuous expressions towards the profession.

Misanthropic feelings cannot gain mastery, where the attestations of good will to man are multiplied at every step of the medical practitioner's course. The irradiations of joy beaming in many a household, and the gladdening smiles of welcome in many a countenance will dispel the despondency which threatens to enshroud the mind, before it settles in heavy sadness upon the spirits.

A dignified self-respect will co-operate effectively in preventing professional discontent. A just self-respect is made up of four elements,—a firm conviction of duty,—repose of mind or self-command—calm reliance on that which is right and just,—and an unalterable courage in the maintenance of truth. Clear and comprehensive views of our responsibilities ought to be assiduously cultivated. We ought to be intimately conversant with the duties of our calling, and revolve in our most familiar thoughts the high claims of the medical profession on our time, our talents, our industry, and our patience. No medical man can be possessed of a just self-respect who does not entertain accurate views and feelings of the many, varied, solemn responsibilities and duties of the medical profession. On this point, perhaps, there is too slight a reference made by many young men, when they commence the practice of medicine. But as years mature their judgment, and the trials of life deepen their moral sensibilities, a more elevated conception of the responsibilities attached to the profession occupies and fills their thoughts. Equanimity of mind, as opposed to a perturbed, anxious state of the feelings, must accompany our convictions of duty, in order to secure a proper self-respect. A restless, disordered, vacillating soul can never possess abiding self-respect. To-day firmly convinced of his duty, his mind, in a sustained tone of feeling, will pursue it; to-morrow finds him discontented, fluctuating, unprepared, and though convinced of his right, perhaps, the wrong pursues. Or he has not moral intrepidity enough to carry out, in action, his assured conviction of duty, and he remains in a stationary attitude waiting for relief from some new developments of Providence to get him out of his dilemma.

Firm, calm reliance on that which is right and just must be present to aid in the formation of a just self-respect. To see our way clear, and to maintain a repose, a steadiness of mind in the conceptions we entertain of duty, should be united with a persistent trust in the correctness and excellence of the plan adopted. And, as a crowning element, that will vivify and strengthen the other elements of a proper self-respect, courage must be added. Destitute of a determined, courageous, persevering power, no high order of excellence can be attained. Having this power, with an enlightened judgment, an equable tenor of feelings, and a resolute reliance on the justness of our

course, great things may be hoped for, and great things will be accomplished.

Now, a fretful, querulous physician,—who is forever lamenting his miserable lot, and filling the air with petulant expressions of regret that he ever adopted the medical profession as his active pursuit, fails essentially in self-respect. And the particular reason of this failure is detectible either in a deficiency of an enlightened conception of duty or a want of due equipoise of mind not to be driven from its moorings by every wind that may ruffle the surface of life, or a destitution of trustful dependence on the ways of duty, or of a courageous consistency that will enable him to keep onward in the path chosen.

No physician can overrate the science and art of administering relief to the numberless infirmities and woes which disturb and torment our nature, in the multiform attacks of disease. To soothe pain, or mitigate the lighter forms of bodily infirmity, would be a task of some magnitude, requiring much study of the causes, progress and means of melioration of these inferior ills. But to stand as a determined opposer of death; to search into his most concealed processes of destruction; to range through the realms of creation for adequate weapons by which to repel the onsets of the king of terrors, and to tax to the uttermost, all the capabilities of art, in advance of nature, oppressed by disease, require prolonged and profound researches, that can not be prosecuted aright, without educated faculties, trained to analysis by a severe logic, and intent on a full comprehension of the matters submitted to inquiry, through a love of truth. To venerate the science in its commanding delegation of usefulness among mankind, we should never lose sight of the numerous favors it dispenses in its practical applications. From the transient torment of a neuralgia, that requires the rectification of some disordered function for its removal, through the burning agonies of a fever, to the outbreaks of some fiery disorder which covers the body with a loathsome incrustation, up to the more awful forms of morbid action, displayed in the convulsions of the body, or the horrible delusions of an insane mind, medicine, with unsleeping eye, unrelaxing purpose and vigilant kindness, watches over, and ministers to the wants and distresses of mankind. All the superior powers of intellection, all the most graceful attributes of the heart, and all the endearing traits of refined deportment are called into requisition by the science and practice of medicine. The physician, if he be endowed with the appropriate and fitting characteristics of his vocation, must be a man of education, a gentleman, and a philanthropist. Furnished with a rich fund of knowledge, and alive to the beauties of literature, he often indulges his taste, and replenishes his mind at the fountains of ancient and modern learning. But, however fond of such excursions into the regions of general

knowledge, his chief and most gratifying inquiries are directed towards his own beloved science of medicine. With the keenest relish he luxuriates amid the truths of medicine, fondly and longingly dwells on its new revelations, and with enraptured eye, gazes on the noble edifice, reared by the labors of centuries. O! who that has a mind capable of receiving truth, or a heart susceptible of transport, or a philanthropy that burns with zeal for the good of the race, will forego, after having once sought and found instruction and delight in the study of medicine, the multiplied and exhaustless stores treasured up in the bosom of his favorite science. Attached to the profession by such ties, no ordinary causes of dissatisfaction will alienate us from its interests, or detach our sedulous efforts from the promotion of its dignity and usefulness. In comparison of its excellence with other pursuits, we are persuaded that it reposes on the best and firmest foundations. It is bred and nursed by education; baptized and consecrated by the blessings of humanity, and in its march of victory over disease, it is cheered by the voice of praise from gentle infancy, as it draws the sweet breath of peace in its mother's arms; and by the kind accents of woman's gratitude; whilst man responds in loftier panegyric to the beneficent science which, in the hour of emergency, snatches him from a premature grave.

Amidst the hourly mutations of our dependent being; amidst the rebukes and disasters of calamity; amidst the desertion of friends, and the persecution of enemies, there is a sure resting place on high, where our hope and trust are garnered up beyond the reach of change, unalterably fixed amid the shocks of time.

The high intellectual endowments of the gifted and accomplished physician should never be sullied by the polluting admixture of infidel pride. Whilst we can not too highly appreciate our profession, it is a very easy matter to esteem our own attainments and importance too highly. To chastise this foolish error of self-consequence, nothing will avail so much as a recognition of our own circumscribed intelligence, as compared to the boundless wisdom of God, and of our entire insufficiency to accomplish any good purpose without his divine sanction. Were there any direct bearing in medical inquiries to generate scepticism, the profession would stand a scoff and scorn to all pure and noble minds. It would have the brand of reprobation affixed to it, and the divine anger would, ere this, have made it a blasted and desolate thing. But the science and practice of medicine are eminently conducive to the formation of correct conceptions of the wisdom, power and goodness of God, of the helplessness and frailty of man, and of the glory and attractiveness of the Christian faith. Thanks to the goodness of the Supreme Father who has made us partakers of the intellectual and moral benefits which flow from this science! As men devoted

to the highest ends of our earthly being, the promotion of human happiness and the advancement of ourselves in knowledge and virtue, let us ever look upward for his smiles to irradiate the dark clouds that may from time to time frown upon our path, and to feed our fainting spirits with the hallowed joys of his blessed presence. Then may we go on from step to step with renewed vigor ;—trampling on, or plucking up the thorns which infest our way ; rising from hill top to hill top, till seated on the highest summit, we hear the harmless thunders roll beneath our feet, and lift up our brow to catch the beams of an everlasting day.

Gentlemen: You are assembled here from various parts of our common country, to be taught the principles, and to be enlightened in the practice of medicine.

Penetrated with a just sense of the excellence of Medical Science, you will, I trust, not flag in your efforts to acquit yourselves well in the sphere you are called to fill this winter. Let not the seductions of pleasure lure ;—nor the lethargy of indolence depress you ; but by patient industry, determined pursuit, and undeviating progress, let no discontent be felt by us, whilst we, by our faithful and diligent attention to our respective chairs, will strive that no dissatisfaction shall be experienced by you. And, gentlemen, when you go hence, and assume the responsible office of administering to the sick, cherish a lively satisfaction for what you have already accomplished in the study of medicine, and be excited to an unreserved dedication of your time and talents, to higher degrees of knowledge in your profession. And if at any time your resolution fails, and your aspirations sink, meditate on what we have this morning told you, and by all the ennobling motives derived from the excellence of the science, and the humane purposes of its institution, reanimate your zeal, to persevere in a career of honor and usefulness.

And if still your hearts fail you, if despite of these influences and inducements, you still loiter and reluctate in the path you have chosen, then seek the enlivening presence of one who will pour fresh joy into your cup of life. Lead to the nuptial bower a gentle spirit, who shall cheer you when sad ; inspirit you when dull ; and aid you in all your worthy enterprizes. Guarded and honored by woman's love, what can not man attain in all virtuous efforts, in all high achievements of glory.

In the clear heaven of her delightful eye,
An angel guard of loves and graces lie ;
Around her knees, domestic duties meet,
And fire-side pleasures gambol at her feet.