

**An eulogium on William P. Dewees, M.D : delivered before the medical students of the University of Pennsylvania, November 5, 1842 / by Hugh L. Hodge.**

### **Contributors**

Hodge, Hugh L. 1796-1873.  
National Library of Medicine (U.S.)

### **Publication/Creation**

Philadelphia : Merrihew & Thompson, printers, 1842.

### **Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/jfnnm32p>

### **License and attribution**

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by the National Library of Medicine (U.S.), through the Medical Heritage Library. The original may be consulted at the National Library of Medicine (U.S.) where the originals may be consulted.

This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.

**wellcome  
collection**

Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

WZ  
100  
D5163H  
1842

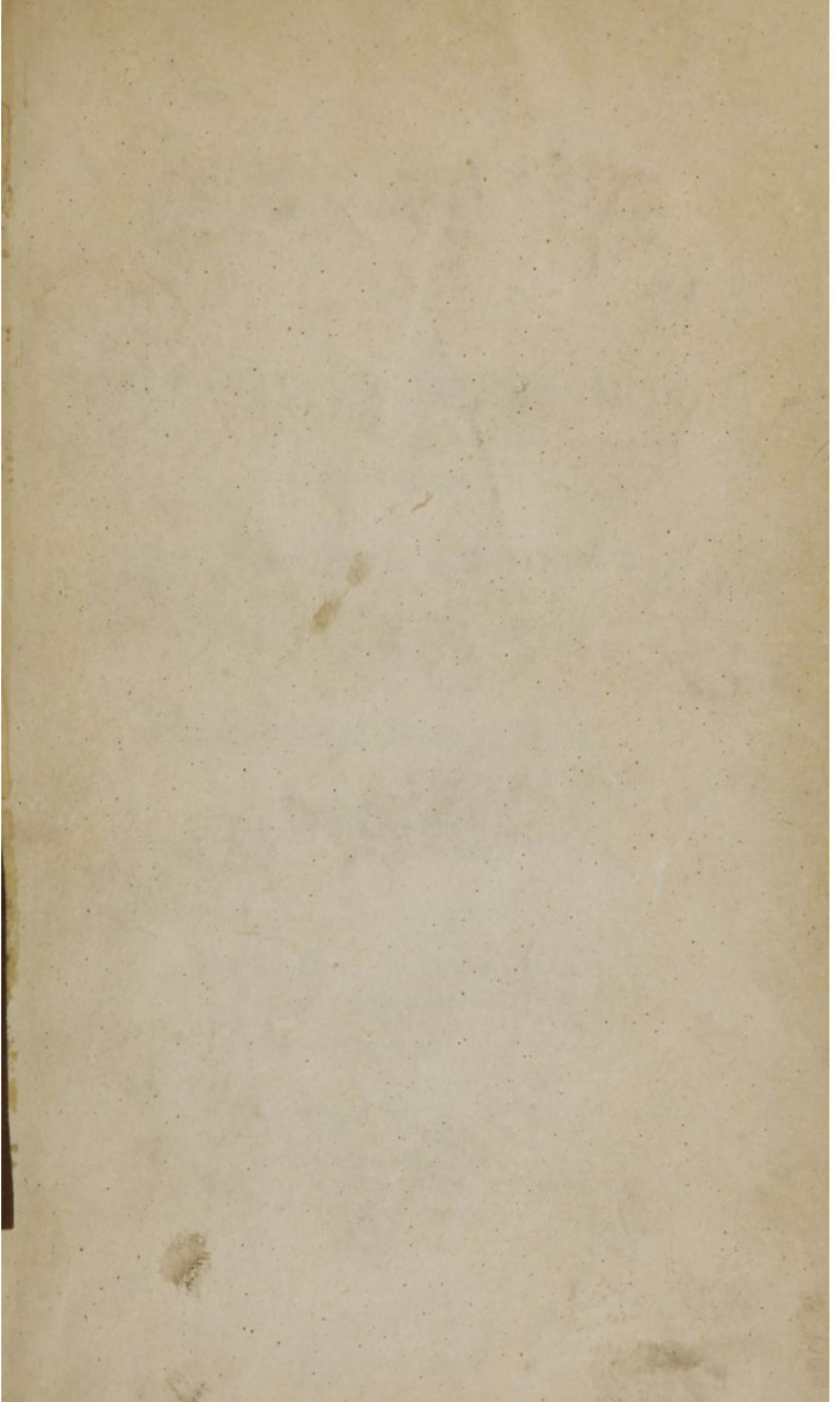


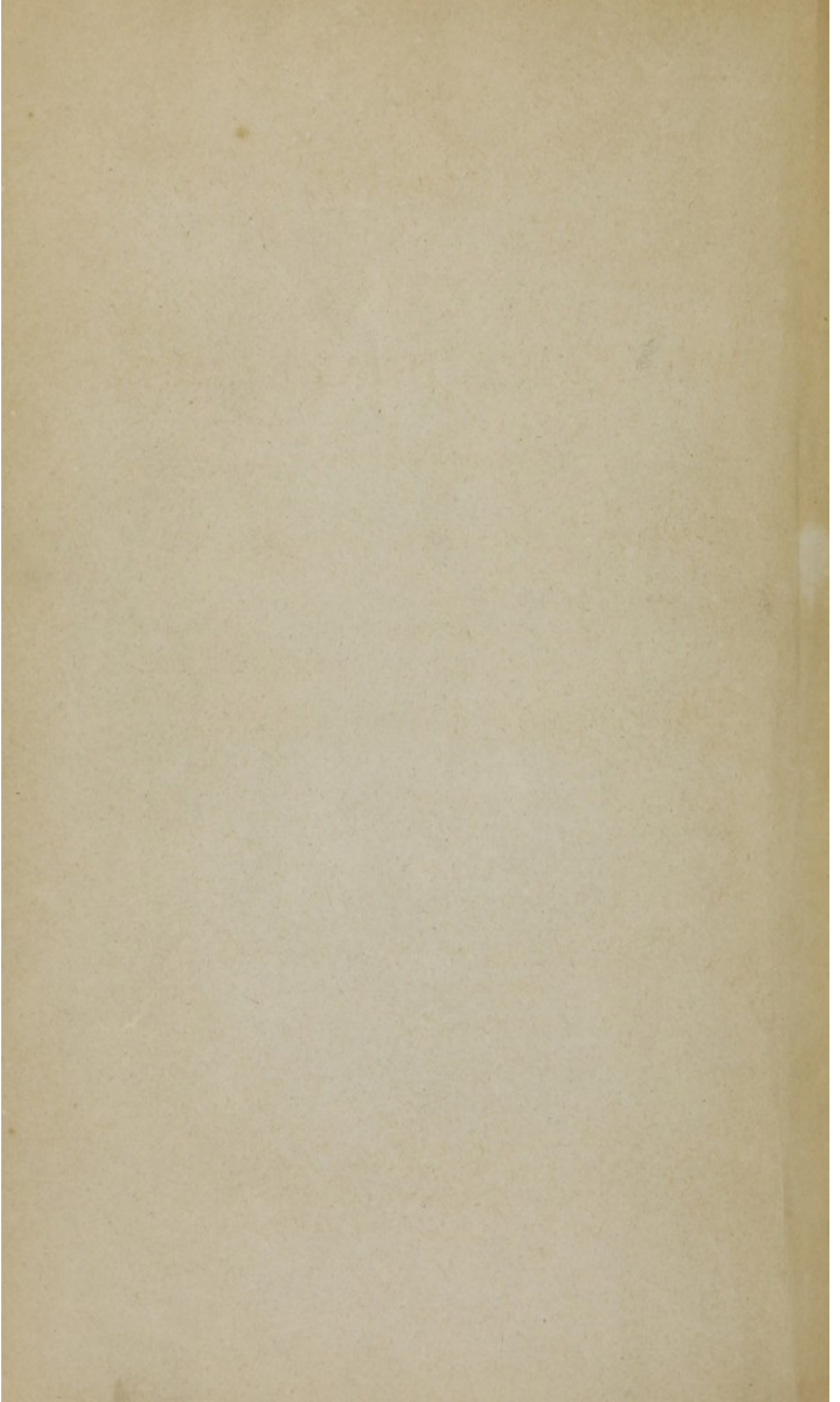
es

50

John Bell, M.D.  
No. 676

Surgeon General's Office  
LIBRARY  
Section, *Diagnos.*  
No. 32593.





A N  
EULOGIUM  
ON  
WILLIAM P. DEWEES, M.D.  
DELIVERED BEFORE  
THE MEDICAL STUDENTS  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

NOVEMBER 5, 1842.

BY HUGH L. HODGE, M. D.

Professor of Obstetrics, &c. &c.

32593

PHILADELPHIA:  
MERRIHEW & THOMPSON, PRINTERS,  
No. 7 CARTER'S ALLEY.

1842.

PHILOGENY

WILLIAM T. DEWEY, M.D.

WZ  
100

D5163H  
1842

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

PHILOGENY

BY ROBERT L. HOOPER, M.D.

PHILOGENY

WILLIAM T. DEWEY, M.D.

1842

## CORRESPONDENCE.

---

*Philadelphia*, Nov. 8, 1842.

DEAR SIR,—The undersigned, a committee appointed by the Medical Class of the University of Pennsylvania, have been constituted the channel for conveying to you their thanks, for the high gratification afforded them, by the appropriate and eloquent eulogy on the life and character of the late Professor DEWEES, delivered by you on Saturday the 5th instant. They would most respectfully solicit a copy of the same for publication ;

And have the honor to be

Your obedient and humble servants,

J. RICHARD JONES,  
GEO. H. BURGIN, Jr.  
S. KEEN ASHTON,  
R. P. HARRIS,  
JOSEPH LEIDY,  
B. HENRY,  
WILLIAM V. KEATING,  
JOHN CURWEN.

To Professor HUGH L. HODGE.

---

*Philadelphia*, Nov. 9th, 1842.

GENTLEMEN,—I have received your communication with much satisfaction. Anxious to gratify the Medical Class, and believing that we all are bound to sustain and diffuse the reputation of one of the illustrious founders of obstetric science in America, I cheer-



fully submit the memoir for publication, regretting only that it is not more worthy of its subject.

With best wishes for each and every member of the Class, believe me

Yours, very respectfully,

HUGH L. HODGE.

To Messrs. J. Richard Jones, Geo. H. Bergin, Jr., S. Keen Ashton, R. P. Harris, Joseph Leidy, B. Henry, Wm. V. Keating, John Curwen, Committee.

## EULOGIUM.

GENTLEMEN OF THE MEDICAL CLASS:—The great—the noble objects of medical science are to prevent, to alleviate, or to cure disease. The more immediate duties of the cultivator of that division of the science termed Obstetrics, consist in alleviating suffering, in facilitating the process of parturition, and in preserving life, amidst the natural or accidental difficulties to which females and their offspring are constantly exposed.

In the arrangements of this school, I have the honor to represent this department, and to inculcate its principles. My first object has always been to impress on the minds of my pupils, the elevated character and the vital importance of Tokolgy; to prove that it is a science—not merely an art; that its study, although most interesting, is, however, exceedingly difficult; that its practice is most anxious, and most responsible, but at the same time productive of all those rewards arising from the exercise of the best and kindest feelings of the human heart—from the delightful consciousness of being instrumental in preserving the inestimable blessings of health and life.

I have endeavoured to sustain these positions by facts drawn from the study of anatomy and physi-

ology, and also from observation at the bed side of human suffering; insisting on the superiority of Obstetrics, as a science, and its inestimable value in ameliorating human suffering and prolonging human existence, and confirming these views by allusions to the terrible consequences, occasionally resulting from the process of parturition where no professional assistance has been rendered, or where ignorant or rash practitioners have had the audacity to interfere in cases which they did not understand, and which they could not relieve.

Considerations of this kind might be repeated to any extent, and, indeed, ought to be familiar to every student and practitioner of medicine. There is no department of medicine, as I have often declared within these walls—and I speak from experience—where more skill in diagnosis, and more adroitness and judgment in execution are demanded than in Obstetrics; and it is high time that the public mind should be illuminated on this subject—that it should be taught that there are necessary and essential dangers incident to the process of parturition under the most favourable circumstances; that these dangers are greatly enhanced by the influences of civilized life, and that hence nothing can be more absurd, and few things more criminal than to trust the process of parturition to the direction of the ignorant nurse, or to the tender mercies of the bold pretender to medical science, whose touch gives agony and whose operations are destruction.

On the present occasion, however, I do not intend to pursue these remarks, but would enforce the claims of our science and its great practical utility,

by presenting for your admiration, and I trust, for your successful imitation, the character of one of the most distinguished individuals that has ever graced the annals of our profession in these United States—I allude to DR. WILLIAM POTTS DEWEES, the late Professor of Midwifery in the University of Pennsylvania; a man whose name is indissolubly associated with the history of our science; who found it struggling in the weakness of infancy, and left it fully established in the strength and privileges of manhood.

As usual, in our republican country—where all the privileges of family and rank are entirely destroyed, and where every man must be the architect of his own fortune and fame—little is known of the parentage and early life of our departed professor.

The family of De-Wees, was originally from Sweden, and appear to have been among the original settlers of the shores of the Delaware Bay and River, before William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, had taken peaceful possession of this favored district under authority of Charles II., King of England. The great grandfather of Dr. Dewees, and probably his grandfather, were among the immigrants from Sweden, and maintained, for a series of years, a respectable and influential character. His grandmother belonged to the family of Farmer, which appears to have been of Irish descent, their ancestors enjoying much wealth, part of which was invested in the purchase of immense tracts of land in this country. His mother was the daughter of Thomas Potts, a highly respectable gentleman belonging to the Society of Friends, and of English

extraction. His family first settled and gave name to Potts-grove, (or Potts-town,) on the river Schuylkill, some thirty miles north-west of Philadelphia.

Doctor Dewees was born on fifth day of May, 1768, at Potts-grove, and being early left fatherless, and with very little property, he had not the advantage of a superior education; at that period, a rare privilege, even for the sons of the wealthy—when the desolations of a revolutionary struggle for liberty and independence visited every portion of our land. It is difficult, however—not to say impossible—to restrain a superior mind even by the chains of poverty and neglect. Young Dewees improved all the means at his command, and must have made some proficiency in the languages, as his knowledge of Latin and French in after life, was sufficient for all necessary purposes. He is represented by those best calculated to judge, as docile, industrious, very affectionate and amiable.

He early determined to study Medicine, and was, for this purpose, placed by his father in the establishment of a Dr. Phyle, a practising apothecary, as was very customary at that period, when the proper distinction between the business of the apothecary and of the physician had not been generally made.

Under the superintendence, for two or three years, of Dr. Phyle, he appears to have acquired his knowledge of Pharmacy, and its collateral sciences—probably but little knowledge of Medicine, theoretical or practical—as he placed himself in the office of Dr. William Smith, to prosecute more especially

his professional studies. During his connection with Dr. Smith, and his residence in Philadelphia, in the years 1787, '8 and '9, he attended lectures in the University of Pennsylvania, as then organized, under the distinguished Professors Drs. John Morgan, William Shippen, Adam Kuhn, and Benjamin Rush,—medical men,—to whom American physicians will always look with admiration and gratitude, as having had the genius to devise, and the boldness and perseverance to execute the first plan for instructing the youth of our country in the mysteries of the healing art, and thus becoming the illustrious founders of the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, and blessings of the greatest magnitude to the American public.

During the infancy of medical instruction in these United States, the degree of Doctor in Medicine was seldom sought after, and still more rarely was it conferred. The subordinate title of Bachelor in Medicine was more usually granted, and even this distinction, as the records of the school demonstrate, was received by very few of the attendants on the medical lectures. In accordance, therefore, with the almost universal custom of the day, Dr. Dewees commenced the practice of his profession without receiving a regular diploma from his preceptors, in the summer of 1789. He was then twenty-one years of age, about the medium height, well proportioned, of a florid complexion, dark hair, rather slender make, and remarkably youthful in his appearance, so that great objections were frequently made to employing a physician apparently so very young

He commenced the arduous duties of our profession about fourteen miles north of Philadelphia, at the village of Abington; where he soon engrossed all the valuable practice, notwithstanding the objections made to his youth and inexperience, and to the deficiencies of his education. His talents, united with great industry and perseverance, his affectionate and amiable disposition, secured the attachment and very soon the confidence of his patients. In this comparatively retired spot, thrown at an early age upon his own resources, with no patronage but his own character and attainments, with no pecuniary assistance, Dr. Dewees, by sedulous attention to business, by careful observation of physiological and pathological phenomena, laid the foundation of his future usefulness and celebrity. He would often, in after life, allude to observations made, or to treatment pursued by him while a youth at Abington, confirmatory of his future theoretical and practical views. He was soon called to a more extensive field of usefulness.

The desolations of a terrible epidemic—the yellow fever—during the summer and autumn of the memorable year 1793, had extended to the practitioners of medicine in this city, as well as to the public generally. Almost universally they remained at the post of danger—few fled from the ravages of that then unknown pestilence, while almost all suffered, in their own persons, the penalty of their humane, self-denying, and disinterested devotion to the suffering community. Under the visitation, many died. The ranks of the profession in our city

being thus diminished, and there being few instructed physicians in the country, a fine opening occurred for those whose education and experience gave promise that their services would be useful. On this occasion a Physick and a James—names associated with all the best interests of this school, and dear to every one interested in the success of medical science in America—appeared on the scene of action, candidates for a practice and a reputation which were subsequently enjoyed in rich abundance. The opportunity was too promising to be neglected by Dr. Dewees. It immediately drew him from his comparative retirement, among the healthy regions and the delightful scenery of Abington. He felt the internal promptings of a spirit that burned for distinction—the stimulus which a consciousness of power excites in the bosom—and without hesitation he forsook his present prosperous career, to embark on a more troubled sea, whose waves had been deeply agitated by the physical causes to which we have alluded, and also by the perhaps still more distressing contentions which existed among the surviving members of the profession, and arose from contrariety of opinions and practice during the recent epidemic. Under these circumstances, Dr. Dewees took up his residence in Philadelphia, in December, 1793, as a candidate, with others, for professional business and reputation.

At this important epoch in the medical history of our city, and of the country, he found the confidence of the public was resting upon a Kuhn, a Shippen, a Rush, a Wistar, and a Griffitts. Un-



fortunately, as already hinted, there was not much cordiality among the leading members of the profession, and the friends of one party were too often supposed *ipso facto* to be inimical to the other. Dr. Rush soon ascertained the talents and abilities of Dewees, and threw his commanding influence into his favour. An intimacy also took place between Physick and Dewees, and as their course was different, the former preferring surgery and the latter obstetrics, they were mutually advantageous in prosecuting their respective plans for professional advancement.

Independently of any collateral assistance which Dr. Dewees might have received from the friendship of Dr. Rush, he enjoyed one of the finest opportunities that could possibly be presented for a medical man to rise to wealth and fame. At that period the science of Obstetrics was hardly known in America. The physicians who occasionally engaged in its practice, had received no instruction, with the exception of a few, who, having visited Europe, brought home a general knowledge of the subject, but who, from the prejudices existing against the employment of male practitioners, had few opportunities and fewer inducements to perfect their knowledge. Hence, Midwifery existed almost universally as an art: the aged and imbecile nurse was almost universally preferred to the physician. Women were generally the practitioners of midwifery, as few imagined any particular instruction necessary for an attendance on labour; at least any beyond that derivable from prolonged experience.

Our science, however, gentlemen, is too essentially connected with the lives and happiness of individuals and families, to remain, for a long time, in such obscurity, when knowledge and science on other subjects were elevating the character and developing the resources of the community. As the arts and luxuries of life increased, the dangers and difficulties of the parturient process increased also.— Experience lamentably demonstrated that the attentions of the nurse, however experienced, were unavailing; yea, that the officious interference of ignorant practitioners in a process so wonderful and so abstruse as that of parturition, was too often productive of the most fatal consequences to the child and its mother, thus destroying the comfort and happiness of families. In such extremities, all notions of false delicacy are thrown to the winds—the cry for help arising from the emergencies of the case is imperative; but, alas, who was prepared to respond to the cry? who to render the necessary assistance? The physician, who, on such emergencies was called, was unprepared to afford relief; his former studies had been imperfect; his experience in midwifery trifling; his observation of severe cases very limited; and you may imagine the embarrassing and horrible condition in which such a practitioner must be placed, when a human being, and that a female, in agony supplicated for relief—when to him every eye was turned—when on him rested every hope of a despairing husband or a broken-hearted mother, and he felt conscious that he ought to be able, but still could not afford the proper as-

sistance. Such was the condition of our community some fifty years ago—such, we are sorry to affirm, is the state of many communities, in various portions of our country, at the present day—where often, very often, the cry for help bursts from the agonized bosom, and there is no suitable response from the instructed obstetrician.

What greater incitement could be offered, to a young medical man, conscious of power, but sensible of his deficiencies, than such a state of things? What more extensive field of usefulness could be presented to a conscientious and philanthropic youth, burning with desire to benefit his race, than to labour for the preservation of mothers and their children during the eventful and agonizing moments of parturition?

The opportunity, thus Providentially occurring, was embraced by the subject of our address. He felt and realized his own deficiencies, but was determined to overcome them; and, in after life, reviewing the difficulties of his situation at that time, the obstacles in his progress, arising from the ignorance and prejudices of the community, the imperfect state of obstetric science, and his own deficient education, he might well adopt the language of the celebrated conqueror of antiquity—“*Veni, Vidi, Vici.*”

To attain the victory—to prepare himself for the elevated station to which he aspired—could only be effected by rendering himself equal to the emergency. He reviewed his observations, made during four years at Abington, at the bedside of his pa-

tients,—he compared these results with the experience of others: he went still further; he commenced again an examination of the foundations of his science, the fundamental principles of obstetrics; and on these he built his stable superstructure, which has, and will last, to his own credit, and to the reputation of our school, our city, and our country. He made himself familiar with the then modern authorities—the Osbornes and Denmans of England, the Levrêts and Baudelocques of France; and hence derived accurate notions of the science and practice of midwifery.

His investigations, when compared with the results of his own experience, excited a partiality for French in preference to English obstetrics. He chose Baudelocque for his teacher; and often declared that he was indebted to this most distinguished French obstetrician, for all that he himself knew of midwifery. The disciple was worthy of his master.

Thus armed for the conflict, with the ignorance and prejudices of the community—with the irregular, the uneducated, or the imperfectly educated practitioners of the art, he was ready for the emergencies that might occur. Such emergencies were not unfrequent; for, unfortunately, difficult cases of delivery were at that period the result, not only of natural causes, but very frequently of the bad and officious practice of ignorant pretenders to the art, who made that labour difficult or laborious, which, without their interference, would have been natural and comparatively easy. On such occa-

sions Dewees was often consulted. He had succeeded in rendering himself a favorite with the midwives by the kindness of his manner, while he maintained the supremacy of his profession in immediately taking the cases exclusively into his own hands, allowing them no further agency than as mere nurses or assistants. Still he did not run counter to their prejudices, or apparently act in opposition to their interests; hence he was frequently sent for, and a large portion of operative midwifery fell into his hands. For him, this was in every way advantageous; his theoretical knowledge became practical—his dexterity in operating, as well as his tact in the difficult art of diagnosis, was perfected; his reputation was diffused through the community, and his practice, of course, became more extensive and profitable. In a short period, therefore, after his establishment in Philadelphia, under the conjoint influences of the causes mentioned, but especially by his own real worth and decision of character, his success was complete, and he felt that he might safely enlarge his responsibilities and assume new duties, while he added to his comforts and happiness.

About this period he married Miss Martha Rogers, daughter of Doctor Rogers, of New England. Miss Rogers was young, lively, animated, and very beautiful, but her course in this world was short as it was splendid. Not many years after her marriage, and when still in all the bloom of youth and beauty, she became the sudden victim of an acute disease, to the destruction, for a time at least, of

that domestic comfort and support to which her husband had aspired, and which is so needful for all, especially for a physician, whose mind and heart are so constantly engrossed with the sufferings of his fellow beings, and whose periods of relaxation are so rare and so imperfect.

The toilsome business of his profession occupied the time and thoughts of Dr. Dewees. He, soon after the period just alluded to, conceived the idea of rendering himself useful, not only as a practitioner, but also, as a teacher of midwifery. From observations already made you are aware, that as the science and practice of obstetrics, were little understood in our country, very few and imperfect attempts had been made to impart even a general knowledge of this most important subject. Dr. William Shippen, one of the founders of the University, has the enviable reputation of being the first teacher of anatomy, of surgery, and also of midwifery, in these United States; his professorship embracing these various subjects. So extensive were the duties incumbent on this celebrated professor, so fundamentally important was the subject of anatomy, and so urgent were the calls for instruction in the elements of surgery, that midwifery was necessarily almost wholly neglected in his course of instruction. A few general directions for the guidance of the practitioner, constituted nearly all the information imparted to the student at the close of the professor's lectures.

(57) As no one could realize more fully than Dr. Dewees the want of more extensive and efficient

instruction on the subject of practical midwifery, we find that he has the high honor of first attempting a full course of lectures on obstetrics, in America. In a small office, he collected a few pupils, and in a familiar manner, indoctrinated them with the principles of our science; toiling year after year in opposition to the prejudices, not only of the community, but even of the profession, who could not perceive that so much effort was necessary for facilitating the natural process of parturition; but *magna est veritas et prevalebit.*

Dr. Dewees who thus commenced a regular course of instruction in this country, had the happiness in future years, to lecture, within the circle of this theatre, to the largest body of students, that has yet been collected in the United States, and, with increased energy, to enforce the claims of his favorite science, whose foundations he was instrumental in laying, and whose completion, if not its perfection, he had the satisfaction of witnessing.

Thus favorably introduced to the citizens of Philadelphia as a practitioner, and to the professional public as a teacher of the science of obstetrics, his practice became extensive, and his income greatly enlarged.

He again determined to seek the advantages and pleasures of domestic life, and in the year 1802 became united to his second wife, Miss Mary Lorrain, daughter of John Lorrain, long a respectable merchant in Philadelphia. In this connection, he was greatly blessed: Mrs. Dewees was preserved in health and strength as the partner of his prosperity and adversity, enjoying with him the innumerable

favours which Providence in the course of a long life, had abundantly bestowed, and sharing with him those painful reverses that occurred in the latter periods of his life. By this marriage, Dr. Dewees became the father of eight children—three daughters and five sons—most of whom survive him.

Thus successful in his public exertions, blessed in his domestic relations, the object of attention to a large circle of friends, with whom he reciprocated those social attentions to which the natural warmth of his feelings and the sincerity of his friendships constantly inclined him, Dr. Dewees pursued the steady course to a still more extensive reputation and usefulness.

The practice and the science of midwifery were daily gaining importance in the judgment of an enlightened community. Their immense value in preserving life, in ameliorating suffering, in preventing continued and destructive disease, were more and more recognized. The necessity, positive and imperious, of employing as practitioners only those who were suitably indoctrinated, became acknowledged. The practice of allowing females to officiate was constantly diminishing; and the public attention became more steadily fixed on a Dewees, and a James, as the proper representatives of obstetric science, as those best calculated to give it practical efficiency. It soon became evident that midwifery would be regarded in a more important light by the Trustees and Professors of the University of Pennsylvania; that the time could not be far distant when it would be detached from its inefficient and



subordinate connection with the anatomical chair,\* and be separately taught in this model school of American medicine.

To be prepared for this event in every respect was now no easy task. Competition had already existed for years with many distinguished individuals, especially with Dr. Thos. C. James, his cotemporary, and who, in addition to the possession of superior talents, an excellent education, great personal attractions and influence, was also a lecturer on the science of obstetrics, having commenced his course of instruction with the late Dr. Church in 1801. New competitors were also appearing; and one, although young in the profession, a graduate of 1801, who had just returned from Europe, yet by the brilliancy of his talents, his popular address, and the influence of his former friends in Virginia, and his social connections in this city, obtained an influence as a practitioner, and soon as a teacher in obstetrics, which threatened to distance all his rivals. I allude to Dr. Chapman, the present distinguished Professor of the Practice of Medicine in this University, who, on the death of Dr. Church, became associated with Dr. James, in 1805, as a lecturer on obstetrics.

Dr. Dewees immediately determined to strengthen his position in public estimation, by attending to the forms, as he had done to the essentials of the profession. He applied, in the spring of 1806, to his Alma Mater for a diploma, that he might be fully entitled to the appellation of Doctor in Medicine, as

\* Surgery had already been severed from Anatomy during the lifetime of Shippen; and was rendered a distinct and coequal Professorship under the direction of the father of American Surgery, Dr. Physick, June 5th, 1805.

he had for years been engrossed with the duties and responsibilities of the profession. On this occasion he wrote an elaborate *Thesis*, on the means of moderating or relieving pain during the process of parturition, in which he assumed the broad ground, that pain was an accidental or morbid symptom of labour,—the result of artificial modes of living and treatment, to be moderated or destroyed by medical means. Whatever opinion may be entertained as to this general proposition, there is little discrepancy of sentiment as to the efficacy of the remedy chiefly relied upon by Dr. Dewees, *i. e.* copious blood-letting; nor as to the fact, that to him, the profession, and through it, females universally, are under the highest obligations for the introduction of this measure into efficient practice. The Professor of Anatomy, Dr. Shippen, declared that “it marked an era in the history of medicine,” and exclaimed “how much misery might I have prevented had I known it forty years ago!”

The anticipated crisis respecting the establishment of midwifery as a distinct professorship, did not occur until the year 1810; so slow is the progress of truth, so difficult to illuminate the minds of men as to their true interests.

For this elevation of obstetrics to its legitimate station, we are much indebted to the late Professor of Anatomy, Dr. Caspar Wistar, who, in January, 1809, soon after he succeeded Dr. Shippen as Professor of Anatomy and Midwifery, urged, in a written communication, the Trustees of the University to have obstetrics separately taught in the school. Another year was suffered to elapse; and it was

not until the 11th of April, 1810, that the resolution passed the board constituting midwifery a distinct Professorship; even then, with the miserable proviso, that an attendance on its lectures should not be essential for graduation.

The struggle for the new chair in the University was very warm, and the claims of opposing candidates, and the influence of their respective friends, rendered the event doubtful. The strong claims of Dr. Dewees, his talents, his industry, his attainments, his dexterity, boldness, decision and judgment as a practitioner, his great success in the practice of his art, and as a teacher of its principles, his popularity, supported by the strongest testimonials from many of the distinguished men in the profession, including Rush and Physick,\* were met by analogous claims of opposing candidates, Dr. James, and Dr. Chapman.

On the 29th June, 1810, the decision was made by the election of Dr. Thomas C. James to the new Professorship, the first in this country.† This disappointment to the long cherished hopes and expectations of Dr. Dewees was certainly great, but involved no loss of character, as the most ample testimony was borne as to his qualifications and character, and the public confidence in his skill was entirely unabated.

\* See Appendix A.

† This appointment was made with the understanding that Dr. Chapman should assist the Professor in his lectures,—receive half of the emoluments, and, on the occurrence of a vacancy in the University, be appointed to fill the vacant chair. All these conditions were fulfilled—and, on the death of Dr. B. Rush, in 1813, when Dr. Benj. S. Barton was appointed his successor, Dr. Chapman received the unanimous vote of the Trustees, as Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy.

It could only be said that his influence with the Board of Trustees proved to be weaker than that of his rivals.

Dr. Dewees, turning his attention from the teaching to the practice of obstetrics, devoted himself, with renewed energy and success, to the active duties of his profession, occasionally allowing himself some relaxation in the pleasures arising from social intercourse, and also from indulging a natural taste for painting and music. For these arts he early manifested a decided inclination; and, although he never allowed himself time to study them in detail, yet for both he entertained the feelings and enthusiasm of an amateur, and was often refreshed by their agency amidst the anxieties of his self-denying and engrossing profession.

So devoted, however, was he to business, that his health, although it had been generally excellent, could not withstand the baneful influences arising from loss of sleep, irregular hours, laborious occupation, and continued mental and moral excitement, to which every practitioner of medicine, especially an obstetrician, is constantly exposed. His breast became delicate, and on several occasions he was threatened with hæmorrhage from his lungs.

This dangerous indication of pulmonary affection, conjoined with a tempting pecuniary investment, presented by his friend, Mr. Phillips, induced Dr. Dewees, in the year 1812, to abandon his station in Philadelphia; to resign, indeed, his profession, with all its honours and tempting prospects, and to invest the proceeds of a life of toil and self-denial in lands at Phillipsburgh, Pa. More acquainted with the human system, with the nature

and treatment of diseases, than with the variety of soils, of grain, of cattle, and their mutual adaptation to each other; more familiar in the adaptation of means to an end in the use of remedial measures, addressed to the human system, than in the varied duties of an agriculturist, it is no wonder that disappointment followed the physician in his speculations, and that a few years sufficed to destroy the property he had been years in accumulating. His health, however, improved, and all fears of pulmonary disease having vanished, he returned in the fall of the year 1817 to the scene of his former prosperity; again a poor man, as regarded pecuniary matters, with a large family dependant on him entirely for support, but rich, in reputation for talents, industry, and success in his profession.

His immediate wants being supplied by the kindness of professional friends, he resumed his private course of instruction to medical students on midwifery, and the practice of his profession. He soon became connected with Drs. Chapman and Horner in conducting that system of private instruction, which for years has been, most advantageously, conducted in our city, under the denomination of the Medical Institute of Philadelphia, founded originally by Dr. Chapman, about the year 1817, and which yet flourishes under an enlarged and efficient organization. To its success Dr. Dewees greatly contributed, from the period mentioned until 1832, when age, and other pressing circumstances, induced him to resign.

As a practitioner his success was again complete; his former patients welcomed his return; and his

increased reputation, supported now by the observations and experience of a long course of active professional duty, soon enabled him to discharge his pecuniary obligations, and to furnish him with the comforts and luxuries of life.

He now resolved to record, for his own reputation, and for the great benefit of the public, the results of his experience and observations on the nature and treatment of diseases, and especially, as regarded his favorite science of obstetrics. Thus obeying the good old-fashioned and common sense rule, first to study; then to practice; and finally, to teach and write; in opposition to the practice of very many who undertake to publish books long before they have an opportunity of verifying their opinions by their practice. He determined, on the advice of some influential friends, to produce a series of works, the result of his own thoughts, founded on his reading and observation.

The first publication was a second edition of his inaugural essay, to which allusion has already been made, as constituting an important era in the treatment of parturient females; in which evacuating and cooling measures were substituted for stimulating drinks and a hot regimen; and blood-letting and other medical measures adopted as a substitute for forcible deliveries in cases of rigidity during the process of labour. The subsequent experience of practitioners has abundantly corroborated the advice of Dr. Dewees as to the advantages of free bleedings in cases of rigidity—advantages not only of a positive character, in favouring relaxation, lessening pain, and hastening the process of

parturition, but, also of a negative character, perhaps still more valuable, in preventing a vast amount of suffering, mental agitation, disease, and also of death. Would that his precepts were still more extensively studied, and more frequently acted on. Would that many, eminent in the profession, would sit at the feet of this Gamaliel, this teacher in medicine, and imbibe some fundamental notions of the importance of medical, and the dangers of surgical measures in cases of tension and rigidity of the soft parts during the process of labour. We should then, no doubt, hear less of some of the terrible cases in midwifery than at present.

The next objects in the way of publication, for Dr. Dewees, was to collect his scattered essays, which, for a series of years, had been occasionally presented in the medical periodicals, and republish them in a distinct volume. This was done in 1823, and we have a valuable work thus embodied from transitory materials.

The character of these essays is generally practical; indeed, all have a bearing on the opinions and duties of a practitioner, although some are of a theoretical and controversial character. In all of them, we find displayed the great good sense, clearness and precision of their author, who seems to improve every subject he touches, and to carry forward the principles and practice of his predecessors to a still greater degree of perfection. These observations are made, not with any design of endorsing all the opinions of Dr. Dewees—for this cannot be done, as, no doubt, many of them are untenable; especially those which are merely speculative, and

those which are connected with the very imperfect physiology of the day—but, with the important object of characterizing the writings of an individual who has accomplished more for obstetrics than any man of our country, and who has elevated himself, by the character of his publications, to a station of high authority in the profession. He is our representative to other nations on the science of obstetrics, and as such is continually quoted by European authorities, as if he constituted one of their own number.\* This is high distinction, and the more worthy of admiration as attained by mere force of character—by talent, industry, and sedulous attention to business, without any assistance from education, wealth, and other accidental influences. It shows, gentlemen, what can be done—what yet may be done. It says to every one, “*go and do likewise*,” for similar opportunities exist at

\* Dr. John Ramsbotham, of London, dedicated the second part of his “Practical Observations on Midwifery,” to Dr. Dewees, in connection with Sir C. Mansfield Clark.

Dr. Edward Rigby, of London, and author of a most excellent work on Obstetrics, which has lately been republished in this country, writes to Dr. Dewees in August, 1834, in the following manner:—“I trust you will pardon the liberty I have taken in writing to you, as well as the motives which have induced me to do so. I have been accustomed, for some years, to hold such frequent intercourse with you in reading your admirable system of Midwifery, and work on children, that I cannot refrain from requesting a more direct intercourse between us.” &c. &c.

The July number of the British and Foreign Medical Review, for 1839, contains the following handsome compliment:—“The Philadelphia school of Midwifery has for many years been looked upon with great respect by the obstetricians on this side of the Atlantic. The high name and professional standing of Dr. Dewees, his great experience, and, above all, his inestimable, compendious system of Midwifery and other valuable publications, have mainly contributed to this result.”



the present day. Every where we want good physicians. In every portion of our country, in every city even, good obstetricians are exceedingly desirable. It is impossible to form any estimation of the vast amount of suffering which might be prevented, merely by elevating, throughout the United States, the practice of obstetrics to its present legitimate station, even without making any further advances to perfection.

By the essays before us, Dr. Dewees has done much in ameliorating suffering and prolonging life, by inculcating good principles, and insisting on a better practice. For example, in one paper he ably sustains the important idea that labour, in the human species, and especially in the upper walks of life, ought not to be so exceedingly painful as it is usually observed; and that, by proper attentions, even under all the disadvantageous influences of civilized life, suffering may be materially lessened.

He also ably and successfully notices Dr. Denman's celebrated aphorisms for the use of the forceps, demonstrating their inconsistency and their dangerous tendencies, especially by restricting too much the use of these invaluable instruments.

He has introduced advantageously into practice, the more extensive and precise use of the ammoniated tincture of guaiacum, in the treatment of some of the varieties of dysmenorrhœa and amenorrhœa. His observations on puerperal convulsions, and particularly, on the essential importance, in these horrible cases, of the free use of the lancet, are invaluable. To him we are indebted for the full establishment of a decided practice in such

cases—a practice so efficient, that puerperal convulsions are no longer one of the *opprobria medicorum*; a death now being almost as rare an event as a recovery was formerly.

(C) The views taken of uterine hæmorrhage, of retroversion and inversion of the uterus, and the criticisms upon the directions given by some high authorities in obstetrics, are almost equally important, and would alone constitute a most powerful claim to the gratitude of all those interested in the health and lives of females. Wolfe

After the publication of these essays, Dr. Dewees commenced the preparation of a series of systematic works, upon which after all, his reputation must eventually depend. The reputation acquired by any one as a practitioner of medicine, as a successful teacher or lecturer, is after all ephemeral. It lives at the utmost, only during the lives of the recipients of favours thus conferred. The wave of another generation carries the fame thus acquired, to a silent oblivion. He who would live in the memories and hearts of men,—or rather,—(as I would present high motives for your exertions),—he who would be useful after his body has been decomposed in the grave, must record the results of a life of observation and labour.

(C) The first systematic work of Dr. Dewees, is probably his best—upon which he bestowed most thought and labour,—viz: His system of Midwifery for the use of students and practitioners. We have already alluded to the state of ignorance which universally existed throughout our country, on the science of obstetrics, towards the close of the last cen-

tury, and of the light which beamed forth when a James, and a Dewees, became practitioners, and afterwards teachers of midwifery. Few or no publications had been made on this subject in America, and few of the foreign works circulated to any extent. Dr. Dewees was among the first to diminish this evil, by republishing in 1807, Heath's translation of Baudelocque; Dr. Chapman, in 1810, published an edition of Mr. Burn's (of Glasgow) principles of Midwifery; and Dr. Bard, of New York, the President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, about the same time issued a compendium of the theory and practice of Midwifery,—designed rather to diffuse among ignorant midwives and practitioners, a knowledge of the rules for practice, as laid down by the best European authorities—rather than to make any attempt to enlarge the boundaries of the science. At this juncture, Dr. Dewees' book opportunely appeared—the first regular systematic work of which our country could boast—although to Dr. Bard the credit belongs, of being the first one to instruct upon a large scale the physicians of our country in the art of midwifery.

To an American, therefore, the appearance of Dewees' work on midwifery, is an important epoch in the history of our science, as being the first regular attempt to think for ourselves on tokology, and to contribute to the onward progress of this important division of medical science. It is the more important from the intrinsic value of the book, which, with all its deficiencies, probably constitutes now, at the expiration of twenty years from its original publication, the best practical book in our profes-

sion,—a book, gentlemen, which every one of you, as obstetricians, and especially as American obstetricians, should undoubtedly obtain and carefully study. It is founded on the French system of obstetrics, especially on that of Baudelocque. It takes a stand decidedly in advance of Denman, Osborne, Burns, and other English authorities in general use in our country at that period, and even of Baudelocque himself, in throwing aside from his excellent system much that was useless, and, it may be said, imaginative. On the mechanism of labour, on the details of natural and preternatural deliveries, and on the scientific rules for the safe conduct of labour, founded on a knowledge of the process of delivery, the system of midwifery by Dr. Dewees, is exceedingly valuable as far as it goes: and it advances farther, than any work of the day. That it should, on these points, be in the rear of the present state of the science, is the necessary result of the onward march of the human intellect, especially in this country, where all restraints from scholastic rules, and the influences of monarchical governments, are happily removed, where the mind, as well as the body, enjoys and profits by a rational liberty. In what may be termed the medical portion of his system, Dr. Dewees may still be considered as one of the first authorities of the day. He is, on all occasions, eminently practical. His directions are clear and decided—his practice, founded on scientific research, and directed by great prudence and judgment, is always efficient—yet never rash. He affords to the suffering female all the relief which science and experience can impart, yet never en

dangers her life or her welfare, or that of her unborn offspring, by interfering improperly in the complicated and wonderful process of delivery. He studied nature : at the bedside, he became conversant with the details of natural delivery ; he discovered what could be accomplished by the efforts of nature, and what could not ; he learnt when the instructed practitioner should quietly wait for the development of the physiological actions of the female system, in silent admiration at the wonderful arrangements of a merciful Creator, and, where, also, the resources of science were demanded in facilitating these actions, or in actually interfering for the safety of the mother or her infant. He was not to be numbered among those, on the one hand, who are the advocates of a " meddlesome midwifery," continually doing mischief through their ignorance and rashness ; nor on the other hand, will you ever find Dr. Dewees among those inefficient practitioners, who will never do good through fear of doing evil ; who are so afraid of the abuse of artificial resources, they will never use them ; who will allow, with the utmost indifference, the agonies of parturition to continue hour after hour, day after day, endangering the safety of the tissues, functions, and life of a delicate female, involving the welfare of her infant also, for fear of assuming responsibility ; for fear he should be regarded by the timid or jealous ones as fond of interfering with nature's processes, as anxious to employ medical or surgical measures upon all occasions. Read his system of midwifery, and you will discover how prudence and judgment are united with boldness and deci-

sion ; how the practitioner is represented as the servant of nature, ready, at the instant, to facilitate all her efforts for a safe and rapid termination of inexpressible sufferings ; always on the alert to detect any deviation from the proper course of delivery—on the alert to afford the required assistance, whether by medical or surgical measures. You will find him estimating rightly the value of human life, whether infantile or maternal, sympathizing with human suffering, and anxious, on all occasions, to alleviate, shorten, or destroy the pains and anxieties, mental as well as corporeal, of the process of parturition.

That the work is not perfect, is to say that it is a human production ; that it is not embellished by fine writing, and that occasionally it is diffuse, indefinite, and illogical, is the misfortune not the fault of the author. On the contrary, these very defects show the obstacles he had to overcome, and contribute to indicate more fully the native talent, the good sense, the great industry, and the practical efficiency of our *American Baudelocque*, whose name is inscribed upon the roll of fame, as one of the first of obstetric authorities—our representative in the general republic of science, on the subject of obstetrics. Nine editions of the system of midwifery have appeared, and no doubt a long period will elapse before subsequent authorities will be preferred to one, now so eminent at home and abroad.

Having contributed so much for the welfare of mothers, by his work on midwifery, he has contri-

buted greatly to the suitable management of infants by his next systematic work, "A Treatise on the Physical and Medical Treatment of Children," published in 1825, and which has now passed through seven editions.

As its predecessor, this work is in advance of the doctrines and practice of the day; and for all practical purposes, irrespective of certain pathological views and scientific details, may still be regarded as unrivalled, notwithstanding the numerous publications on the management of infants and children with which the press has been loaded.

Dr. Dewees investigates the influence of the mother on her child, especially during pregnancy and lactation; he displays the importance of the physical management of infants, during the first weeks and months of life, as well as subsequently, and enters his decided protest against the prejudices and malpractices of ignorant and unskilful attendants, and points out, with his usual minuteness and discrimination, the modes of preserving health and life, of preventing and of curing the diseases of this helpless, but suffering portion of the community. To him we are greatly indebted, simply for fixing attention on the physical management of children, independently of the high value of his directions; for, prior to this period, the profession in this country left the details almost exclusively in the hands of nurses and midwives, with all their tormenting ignorance and officiousness.

In 1826, only one year after the publication of the work on children, appeared an elaborate volume, "A Treatise on the Diseases of Females," another

standard work in our medical literature. Such a publication was much wanted, and was readily received by the community, as well as by the profession, as high authority. It circulated, as well as its predecessor, very rapidly in every part of our land; and it became, what it still is, the book for reference in all questions of practice, on the important, delicate, and difficult subjects which it embraces.

We cannot particularize, but would remark, in passing, that it bears the general character of the works of the author, as being dictated by great decision and judgment, the result of much reading, but especially of careful and minute clinical observation. Hence, as a necessary consequence, from such an observer and practitioner, it adds materially to our knowledge of complaints exceedingly difficult to investigate, gives a precision and an efficiency to practical rules which were every how desirable, and has thus greatly ameliorated the sufferings of females, and procured much health and happiness to this afflicted, but too much neglected portion of the community. On the subject of prolapsus and retroversion of the uterus, it may, in addition, be remarked, that to no one individual are females so much indebted, in our country, as to Dr. Dewees, for fixing professional attention on the prevalence of these complaints, their importance, their distressing character, their proper treatment, by means of pessaries, and especially for his improvement in the form of these instruments, and in the material of which they are composed; recommending the glass or metallic instruments in preference



to the perishing materials previously employed, and which, from this cause chiefly, were the source of so much irritation, as to bring these invaluable assistants into great disrepute.

The last of the systematic works issued by our professor was on the practice of medicine, in the year 1830. Encouraged by the success of his former appeals to public, as well as professional attention, and anxious that those individuals who were remote from medical advice on the frontiers of our country, should have some means at command to assist in the management of their complaints, Dr. Dewees was induced to prepare a digest of his experience on the various diseases of the human system, with a view to popular as well as professional patronage. He in part succeeded, as no one can deny the excellency of the practice usually inculcated by Dr. Dewees. Still, the book has no pretensions to a scientific arrangement or treatment of diseases; and being prepared hastily, and with reference to popular use, does not partake largely of the confidence of the profession.

While thus much engaged, during a period of more than seven years, in making large and valuable additions to our medical literature, the attention of Dr. Dewees was in no degree diverted from his practice. How he accomplished so much is wonderful; how a man, engaged night and day in the general practice of his profession, and especially in the harassing duties of obstetrics, could so rapidly and efficiently labour with his pen, can only be explained by allowing him a happy combination of

physical, as well as mental powers; as rare as it is desirable. His mind, indeed, never seemed to be fatigued; always on the alert, it would, even after great physical exertion, after the loss of rest and sleep, revert from one subject of thought and anxiety to another, and, at any moment, be directed from the anxious contemplation of a dangerous case of disease or of labour, to the quiet, but engrossing business of an author, with its memory, acuteness, judgment, and every other faculty, ready for active exercise.

Another explanation is, that Dr. Dewees well knew the value of moments of time, and could well improve them. He never suffered them to be lost, and could, as he has often affirmed to the speaker, carry on a train of thought, or an argument, for a few moments, and then, after hours of interruption, resume the current of his thoughts, and immediately prosecute his writing.

During this portion of the life of Dr. Dewees, various changes, by death and otherwise, had occurred in the University of Pennsylvania, to which we need not allude at the present time, excepting to state, that the health of Dr. Thomas C. James, the Professor of Midwifery, had visibly declined, so that he stood in need of assistance in carrying on the course of lectures. This had been partially rendered, as regarded the anatomical portion of the lectures, for some years, by Dr. Horner, but in 1825, it was resolved by the trustees, at the request of Dr. James, that an adjunct should be appointed to the chair, and on the 15th day of November, 1825,

Dr. Dewees was unanimously elected to this station, during the existence of the then incumbent.

Dr. Dewees, on his entrance into the University, was fifty-seven years of age, in full possession of his mental and corporeal faculties. His figure had spread considerably,—so that he could be termed portly,—while he maintained a comparatively youthful appearance, from his florid complexion and dark hair, still without the silvery gloss of age. The duties of the professorship gradually devolved more and more upon him as Dr. James declined in health, and were discharged in a manner very acceptable to the students. Of course, there was no great display of eloquence or erudition in his lectures, but he was always clear, decided, precise, and minute in his directions; speaking in rather a conversational style, with the promptitude and confidence of a man who had formed his own opinions by his own observations, and illustrating all that he taught by a rich fund of cases and anecdotes, drawn, in a great measure, from what he had himself witnessed. Such a teacher could not be otherwise than interesting, and, from the whole character of his mind, with its endowments, natural and acquired, you may readily conclude, he must have been exceedingly valuable. His popularity was great, and his usefulness became thus greatly extended; his pupils distributing his fame, as well as his valuable instructions, through the extent of our country.

For several successive years Dr. Dewees reaped, in every way, the harvest resulting from his long and persevering efforts in the cause of medical and obstetric science. His income from his practice, his books,

and his professorship was ample for his present and prospective wants ; he was admired, beloved, and trusted in the community in which he moved ; he enjoyed an enviable reputation in America and Europe, and was continually receiving testimonials, in various ways, of the estimation in which his character and works were held. He had been, for a long series of years, a member of the American Philosophical Society, and was continually receiving certificates or diplomas from medical and other scientific bodies in the United States, in the Canadas, and in Europe, with the gratifying intelligence, that they considered themselves honoured by adding his name to the list of their members ; while private letters from distinguished physicians confirmed, and rendered still more gratifying, these public manifestations of regard and confidence. In the domestic and social circles, his prosperity was equally great, and his warm heart was continually engaged, as far as more important business would permit, in reciprocating convivial enjoyments with his friends and fellow-labourers, within and without the profession ; while, notwithstanding the lapse of years, his health and strength continued vigorous and active.

These Providential blessings were continued without interruption until February, 1834, when a comparatively trivial accident, a contusion of his ankle, became the turning point of his prosperity—the commencement of a series of trials which continued to the close of life. Owing, probably, to the confinement to the house, in consequence of his accident, his system became gradually plethoric, and

he suffered from the want of his accustomed enjoyment of air and exercise. In the month of April, he suddenly became apoplectic; but owing to the timely assistance of his friends, Drs. Hays and Chapman, the dangerous symptoms were arrested, but his corporeal faculties were decidedly impaired. Cessation from business, travelling and recreation, were so far successful, that in the fall of 1834 he was able to return to his practice, and received from the Trustees of the University, the unanimous appointment of Professor of Midwifery; Dr. James, from his great infirmities, having resigned this office, which he had the honour to occupy for twenty-four years.

With some of his former vivacity, Dr. Dewees was enabled to discharge the duties of his professorship during the ensuing winter. The exertion was, however, too great. In the spring, his health was more impaired, and, notwithstanding, every attention from his medical friends, and the influence of a change of air and travel, the autumn of 1835 found him weakened in mind and body. He made an attempt to deliver the winter's course of lectures, but it was apparent to himself, as well as to others, it was altogether futile; and on the 10th of November he resigned his professorship in the University of Pennsylvania.

This mournful event, to his colleagues, to the students assembled to receive the results of his long tried observations, to the University, and to the public, was not suffered to pass unnoticed. Flattering resolutions, expressive at the same time of their sympathy and regrets, were passed respectively

by the Board of Trustees, by the Medical Faculty, and by the assembled students.\* The latter were characterized by the warmth of feeling so interesting in young men; by the expression of their high respect and confidence in his talents and attainments, in his honour and rectitude of purpose; of their gratitude for the favours received at his hands, and especially for the invaluable services he had rendered them and the medical public, by his lectures and his works, his oral and written instructions. Anxious to honour their afflicted teacher, to bear testimony to the sincerity of their declarations, and, at the same time, to evince to posterity the gratitude and affection which his talents, industry, and virtue had excited in his pupils, they resolved to present to the retiring Professor a magnificent silver vase, with the following inscription:

PRESENTED TO  
 WILLIAM P. DEWEES, M. D.,  
 Late Professor in the  
 UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,  
 BY THE  
 Medical Class of that Institution,  
 As a testimonial of their respect for his exalted worth and talents.  
 PHILADELPHIA, NOVEMBER, 1835.  
 “*Semper honos, nomenque tuum, laudesque manebunt.*”

Thursday, the 25th November, 1835, was the day appointed to make the presentation. The scene was most interesting, and could never be forgotten by those who were witnesses and actors on the mournful occasion. To behold this room, the

\* See Appendix, B.

arena of his former efforts to instruct and edify, crowded to excess by physicians and students, anxious to pay their last respects to one so respected and beloved—to behold the venerable professor, famous, in both worlds, for his contributions for the alleviation of human misery, himself the sufferer, unable to sustain himself without assistance, seated in the centre of that beloved circle of students, to whom he was anxious to impart instruction, but to whom he was about to bid a long, a last farewell—to witness the great man, the bold, decided, energetic practitioner, bowed down under the influence of physical feeling, and the overpowering moral sentiments by which his bosom was agitated—to hear the chosen representative of affectionate pupils proclaim his talents, his virtues, his attainments, and to testify, by words and actions, their gratitude and affection—to discover that the deserved recipient of all these attentions was so overwhelmed by conflicting feelings, by the remembrance of the past, the solemnities of the present, and the prospects of the future, that words failed him to express his gratitude, that another individual, his long tried friend and colleague, Dr. Chapman, had to pour forth the acknowledgements of his grateful heart, for such sincere and lasting testimonials from his beloved disciples, all constituted a scene so impressive, that the voice of eloquence alone could do it justice. It was a scene for the painter, or for the poet. It was one of those delightful manifestations of the best feelings of the human soul, rarely, it is true, to be witnessed, but the more impressive from its rarity in this world, where selfish feeling too ge-

nerally predominates, and stifles the warm aspirations of a generous and noble nature.

This hour may be considered the last of the professional life of Dr. Wm. P. Dewees. He retired from the scene of his labours to embark for Havana, in the Island of Cuba, in search of health and strength. The experiment was not wholly in vain. He recovered sufficiently to attend to some of the lighter duties of a practitioner in medicine, which he discharged chiefly at Mobile, in Alabama, where he spent most of his time for more than four years, receiving marks of confidence and attention from his professional brethren of the south—most of them his former pupils.

In 1840, he left Mobile for Philadelphia, where he arrived, after spending some months in New Orleans, on the 22d day of May, 1840, but he was an altered man; his physical frame had dwindled away under the influence of disease, and, although his mind retained much of its original acuteness, he appeared as the representative of the past, rather than a member of the present generation.

Our cold weather proved unfavourable to his strength and health, causing congestions of his vital organs, and producing so much distress and suffering, that he was anxious to be released from a world in which he felt that he had finished his work. Such, however, was the strength of his constitution, that this solemn event did not occur until the 20th of May, 1841, when his anxious spirit was released from its earthly and suffering tabernacle.

On the news of his death, a special meeting was called by the Philadelphia Medical Society, an



resolutions passed expressive of their deep regret at the decease of their fellow member and late Vice President—of their high sense of the beneficial influences exerted by his talents, attainments and professional character—and of their desire, that he who now addresses you, should prepare a memoir of their late admired professor.\*

His funeral was attended on the 22d of May, exactly one year after his return to Philadelphia, by his former colleagues, the professors in the University, by the members of the Medical Society, by the physicians and students then resident in the city, as well as by many of his former friends and patients, who were anxious to pay their respects to the memory of their friend and physician.

*“ Sic transit gloria mundi.”*

Such, gentlemen, is a cursory notice of the life and labours of our departed professor. On review, we must all be impressed with the belief, that nothing but a powerful intellect could have raised him from the state of ignorance and poverty in which he was found by Dr. William Smith, in the year 1786, to the station he occupied in 1834, as the first obstetric teacher and writer in these United States. As already remarked, the character of his mind was that of strength, rather than of brilliancy, or even originality; his judgment was unrivalled, and his memory most retentive. He laid hold, with a giant's grasp, of the information within his reach, made it his own, and almost invariably, by careful experiment and observation, rendered this information more complete, and carried the opinions and

\* See Appendix C.

practice of others nearer to perfection. He was truly a man of genius; and thus, as we have seen, contributed greatly to elevate his favorite science to its proper grade in public estimation. He was a man of strong and decided opinions on all those subjects, to which his attention was turned. Here he spoke positively, and acted with boldness and decision. He never failed in an object for want of nerve or decision of purpose. Fortunately, his judgment was so correct, that on practical subjects he was comparatively seldom mistaken; and hence his boldness and energy were productive of great good, rather than evil. Those who were his contemporaries, and had the best opportunity of judging, universally bear testimony to his excellency as a practitioner, whatever may have been their estimate of his theoretical opinions. Indeed, it was almost impossible, that he could have attained to great superiority in the theoretical department of our profession, which demands, even for the purpose of making short progress, a fund of scientific information, and of literary and classical cultivation, with which few are favored.

In the practice of obstetrics, the boldness and decision of Dr. Dewees was of vast importance. There was no rashness in his efforts, because he took the essential precaution of studying the science of midwifery, before he ventured on the difficult points of practice. He imbibed the best principles from the best teacher—Baudelocque of France,—and thus furnished, he had no want of confidence in himself, or his art, in any emergency. He never drew back and allowed his fellow beings to perish, when the

means of relief were at command, for fear of danger or responsibility. All that could be done was done, and well done; and I have the authority of my now venerable colleague, Dr. Chapman, the fellow labourer of his friend, Dr. Dewees, for declaring, that no man was a better or more successful obstetric operator than Dr. Dewees, especially in the use of the forceps. The consequence has been, that not only did our predecessor accomplish a vast amount of good himself by means of operative midwifery, but he has, by his example and his instructions, vindicated this branch of the profession from the reproaches of the timid or ignorant practitioners, who were so terrified by the horrible consequences of mismanaged labours, as to dread the employment of artificial measures, even in cases of acknowledged difficulty. The daughters of America, in this respect owe, and will always owe, an immense debt of gratitude to their true friend—Dr. William P. Dewees.

But, gentlemen, you will hereafter find, that something more than mere talent and force of character is demanded to insure success as practitioners of medicine, particularly for those whose attention is devoted to the sufferings and diseases of the more delicate portion of the human family. The qualities of the heart must be superadded to talent and wisdom. In this respect, Dr. Dewees was not deficient; although not remarkable for polish of manner or refinement of character, he had warm affections, became deeply interested in his patients, sympathized with their sufferings, and, by the kindness of his manner and the earnestness of his attentions, im-

pressed them with the belief, that all the energies of his character, and all the resources of his profession were devoted to their relief. He was peculiarly happy in his conversation with his patients: having a cheerful, pleasant disposition, and an abundant supply of pleasant information, he beguiled the hours of suffering, and rendered his presence acceptable as a consoling friend, as well as an efficient physician. He was, therefore, greatly beloved by those who depended on him for relief.

Following him, as I have done, in his practice in this city, it has been a gratifying circumstance to listen to the praises of one who, while he occupied the elevated position which we have described, would bend to the voice of suffering humanity, and pour consolation and peace into the hearts of those who were looking to him for deliverance from corporeal sufferings. He was an amiable man, although endowed with strong feelings and a quick disposition, which would occasionally be manifested, like the lightning's flash, he never bore enmity, and soon returned to the enjoyment of the kindlier feelings of his nature. ))

He was a man of taste, as well as of genius. As already remarked, he was an amateur, but not a proficient, in music and painting. The walls of his house were covered by the productions of the masters of the art of painting, which cost him large pecuniary sacrifices: while to music, he devoted much of his leisure, and was refreshed by its agency amid the severe duties of his profession. He was among the founders of the Musical Fund Society, and its

*Trullinger*

first President, which office he resigned in May, 1838, after his removal from Philadelphia.\*

As a friend and companion, he was always acceptable. Fond of the pleasures derived from social intercourse, he partook of them frequently, considering his pressing avocations, and always contributed greatly to the gratification of his associates, by his cheerfulness, his vivacity, his fund of anecdote, and by the strength of his thoughts and expressions.

In all his intercourse with society he was candid, honourable, and high minded; although at one period of his life his character was traduced, yet we have the testimony of his early friend and associate, Dr. P. S. Physick, for declaring "that investigation has proved every injurious report to have proceeded from envy, or to have been founded in slander,"—"that he was a man of strict probity and great benevolence."†

In all the domestic relations of life, the warm affections of his spirit were continually manifested; he contributed much of his substance to the support of helpless or unfortunate relatives; he was hospitable, and with an open hand ready to relieve the wants of his friends. As a husband, he was considerate, devoted, and affectionate: as a father, most indulgent: as a brother and friend, kind and attentive. Amidst all the reverses of life, (and few individuals have passed more rapidly and more frequently from one extreme to another,) he always maintained the amiableness of his character, and

\* See Appendix, D.

† See Appendix, A.

his active devotion to business, and laboured, even to his last hours, through pain, weakness, and great infirmities, to supply the wants of a dependant family.))

*Enough*

That such a man should be beloved and respected is no wonder; that he should obtain influence, acquire reputation and wealth, and become a most valuable member of society, seems to us as a necessary consequence; that he should be a happy man is an inference not so readily made; so many circumstances, natural and accidental, being required to afford genuine happiness.

We have, however, reason to believe that Dewees passed through life with as much enjoyment as is usually compatible with its changes and trials; deriving his consolations from intellectual employments, from his success as a practitioner, as a teacher, as a writer in medicine; from the indulgence of his affectionate feelings to his family and friends, and by the delightful consciousness that his efforts were efficient in alleviating human misery, in prolonging life, and in affording happiness to many, very many, suffering under the consequences of sickness and disappointment. He was rewarded also, by the grateful attachment of obligated patients. He was, however, during the long period of his active life, a stranger to those higher sources of gratification and happiness which arise from the communion of the soul of man with God, its Creator.

When, however, towards the closing period of his life he became afflicted; when his health was

destroyed—when his loved daughter was suddenly torn from his embrace—when his property disappeared—when an old age of poverty and many infirmities, with a dependant family, was in prospect, it was then he felt, that all his intellectual treasures, his reputation, his successes, his honours, his friendships, were unproductive of happiness and consolation. He then recalled the counsels of a mother, given in infancy and childhood; he listened to the voice of a religious friend, the Rev. Dr. Bethune, who stood high in his confidence, and had for him a strong and grateful affection; he turned to the pages of inspiration, and there found, if we may credit his own declarations, the comfort he needed. To use the language of Dr. Bethune,\* in answer to inquiries addressed to him on this interesting subject—“It is a great satisfaction to know that the name of Dewees may be added to the long catalogue of eminent men who have given their testimony to the truth and superior importance of religion”—“that he gave the most convincing evidence of his personal reliance upon the grace of God in Christ his Saviour.” “Sad, (continues Dr. Bethune,) sad would be our memory of his many amiable qualities, his distinguished and useful career, if the light of a better immortality fell not upon his honoured grave.”

“*Utinam sit ita nobisque.*”

Such was the career—such, gentlemen, the character of Dr. Dewees; how worthy of imitation—

\* See Appendix, E.

how identified with the progress of obstetric science—how has he thrown a halo around this department of the profession, and around this University, with which his talents and labours have been so intimately associated. May our mutual aspirations be to follow his example; to improve our time, our opportunities; to advance our science still nearer perfection; to become the worthy successors of a teacher so distinguished and so beloved.





## APPENDIX.

### A.

*June 5th, 1810.*

I have long known Dr. Dewees as a practitioner and teacher of midwifery, and have a high opinion of his talents and knowledge in that branch of medicine. Many of his pupils have expressed to me great satisfaction in the instruction they have derived from his lectures. From his great experience and uncommon application to the study of his profession, he has added very much to its usefulness and reputation. Of one of his practical discoveries, the late Dr. Shippen said, "it marked an era in the history of medicine," and added: "How much misery might I have prevented had I known it forty years ago." This discovery has been taken notice of in a treatise upon midwifery lately published by Mr. Burns in Scotland, which has been republished in Philadelphia, but without that mark of respect to Dr. Dewees.

BENJAMIN RUSH.

---

*Philadelphia, April 2d, 1810.*

DEAR SIR,—Having been informed that the Trustees of the University are about to establish a professorship of midwifery, and knowing that Dr. William P. Dewees will be one of the candidates for that chair, I take the liberty of addressing you on the subject in order that I may express to you my opinion of the competency of that gentleman for that situation.

My acquaintance with Dr. Dewees commenced in early life, and for the last fifteen years we have been in habits of great intimacy: from this intercourse I have been able to form what I consider an impartial estimate of his capacity and attainments. In the various departments of medical science, the acquirements of Dr. Dewees are very respectable. As a practical physician, I know few, if any, who are his superiors. In the obstetric branch, to which he has more particularly devoted his attention, his labours have for many years been unremitting; his opportunities of experience, almost beyond example, great, and his success in practice such as to satisfy every expectation. By one of his discoveries he has greatly lessened the pains and dangers of parturition in difficult cases, and in several instances he has improved his profession by the introduction of methods of treatment which were before either unknown or improperly used.

Lectures on midwifery have in this country generally constituted a part of an extensive course devoted to other subjects, but Dr. Dewees, so far as I know, is the first who prepared and delivered lectures exclusively on its principles and practice.

The character of Dr. Dewees, like that of many others who have risen to eminence in the medical profession, has been traduced ; but investigation has proved every injurious report to have proceeded from envy, or to have been founded in slander. After having examined his character with much attention, I am happy in being able to assure you that he is a man of strict probity, of great benevolence, and, in my opinion, most amply qualified for the situation he is about to solicit.

With great respect, I remain  
Your faithful servant,  
P. S. PHYSICK.

MOSES LEVY, Esq.

---

*April 3d, 1810.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Understanding the question is likely to be brought forward this evening relative to the appointment of a Chair of Midwifery, I should think myself negligent, were I to omit stating to you the opinion I entertain of the merits of Dr. Dewees, as connected with both the practical and theoretical parts of this branch of a medical education. Having originally intended to devote myself to this particular branch, I paid that attention to the subject, which living for a time in one of the London Lying-in Hospitals afforded ; besides which, I did not neglect that information, which I could acquire from lectures. I am not, therefore, incompetent, I trust, to give an opinion, (not on the respective merits of the candidates, all of whom I think well of, but) of the individual capacity of Dr. Dewees to fill the chair, if such a one be considered necessary. His long and well approved abilities in this line, together with numerous highly deserving communications in the Medical Museum on branches of this particular department, are sufficient evidences of his merits ; and I have no hesitation in warmly recommending him to the notice of the Trustees.

I am sir, very respectfully,  
Your friend and humble servant,  
JOHN REDMAN COXE.

H. BINNEY, Esq.

---

B.

*University of Pennsylvania, Nov. 10th, 1835.*

DEAR SIR,—Your resignation of the Professorship of Midwifery and of the diseases of women and children, was laid before the Trustees this evening, and accepted. The Board, in accepting your resignation, have instructed me to convey to you their sympathy in the cause which has, in your opinion, rendered it necessary. Allow me to express how cordially I concur in feeling with them.

With great respect and regard,  
I am, my dear sir, your friend and servant,  
JAMES C. BIDDLE, Secretary

To WILLIAM P. DEWEES, M. D.

*November 21st, 1835.*

The Medical Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, having heard of the resignation of Professor Dewees, of the Chair of Midwifery, do resolve,

That, entertaining a just sense of his great talents, of the value of his services to the school, and of the loss they have sustained in a beloved colleague, whose whole connection with them has been marked by the purest honor and the most liberal dispositions, have received the intelligence of this event with the deepest sorrow, alleviated only by the pleasing expectation of the speedy restoration of his health, and of the renewal of his usefulness.

Resolved, That a committee of the Faculty be appointed to communicate the preceding resolution to Dr. Dewees, and that Dr. Chapman and Dr. Gibson be that committee.

At a meeting of the Medical Class, held in the University of Pennsylvania, on the evening of the 11th November, 1835, Mr. C. W. Wormeley was called to the chair, and Mr. J. B. Butler appointed secretary.

The meeting being thus organized, on motion, it was

Resolved, that a committee of six be appointed to draft a preamble and resolutions expressive of the feelings of deep regret which so universally prevail in the class at the retirement of Professor Dewees from the chair of obstetrics, &c. in this University.

Whereupon the following gentlemen were appointed a committee in behalf of the class:—Messrs. Benj. Tappan, junr. of Ohio; F. C. Stewart, of Virginia; J. A. Weidman, of Pennsylvania; Thos. Means, of South Carolina; Wm. P. Johnson, of Georgia; Alex. Van Rensselaer, of New York. And, on motion, the Chairman was added to the committee.

In pursuance with the first resolution, the committee, on the 13th, reported the following preamble and resolutions:

It is with deep regret that we have been informed of the resignation of Dr. Dewees, by which he has separated himself from the Institution with whose interests and reputation he was so intimately associated, and in which he has so successfully laboured, for many years, as a public teacher. Few of the profession better deserve the name of philosopher, have contributed more to advance the science to which he has devoted a long and useful life, and have laboured, with greater zeal, to maintain the dignity and honour of the profession. As a practitioner, his highest eulogy and richest boon is the cordial gratitude of thousands who have experienced relief at his hands. As a teacher, he has used the most unabated exertions for the improvement of those who have placed themselves under his care to receive instruction, and, though to most of them he is personally a stranger, his talents, urbanity and many social virtues have gained him the respect and esteem of all.

Therefore resolved, 1st, that by his resignation this Institution has sustained a loss that can with difficulty be repaired.

2d. That entertaining for him the highest respect, and deeply sympathizing with his numerous friends in the visitation of Providence, by which he has been rendered incapable of attending to his arduous duties as Professor, we tender to him our warmest thanks for his kind and polite deportment to his

pupils, and for his exertions to fit them for the many difficulties which they may encounter in subsequent life.

3d. That whilst we lament his inability to pursue his duties, we rejoice that his wisdom and capacity have proved so valuable an acquisition to the profession, and have reaped for him laurels that will never fade, but will remain monuments of his eminence and ability.

4th. That a committee be appointed to select and present to our venerated Ex-Professor a silver vase, as a testimonial of the sincerity of the preceding resolutions, and as an evidence to posterity of the gratitude and affection which his talents, industry and virtue have excited in his pupils.

C. W. WORMELEY, Chairman.

J. BRACKEN BUTLER, Secretary.

### C.

*Philadelphia, May 21st, 1841.*

DEAR SIR,—At a special meeting of the Medical Society, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

1. Resolved, That this Society has heard, with deep regret, of the decease of their late much respected fellow member and former Vice President, Dr. Wm. P. Dewees.

2. Resolved, That Dr. Dewees, by his talents, labor and honorable course through life, contributed materially to the advancement of our science, and to the elevation of professional character.

3d. Resolved, That in testimony of our respect for the deceased, the Society will, in a body, attend his funeral.

4. Resolved, That a committee be appointed to express the feelings of the members to the family of Dr. Dewees, and to communicate to them a copy of the above resolutions.

5. Resolved, That Dr. H. L. Hodge be requested to prepare and read before the Society a memoir of Dr. Dewees.

The chairman, Dr. B. H. Coates, appointed Drs. Hodge, Hays and Huston to carry the fourth resolution into effect.

With great respect, I remain,

Your obedient servant,

SAMUEL L. HOLLINGSWORTH, Jr., Rec. Sec.

Dr. HUGH L. HODGE.

### D.

*Philadelphia, May 1st, 1838.*

MY DEAR SIR,—At the annual meeting of the Musical Fund Society, held this evening, and numerous attended, it was unanimously

Resolved, That the thanks of the Society be presented to Dr. William P. Dewees, for his long and faithful services as President of the institution; and that they deeply regret that his removal from Philadelphia should deprive

them of the honour and benefit of retaining him at their head ; and that he be assured of their warm attachment, and their sincere wishes for his health and happiness.

It has fallen to my lot, as your successor in office, to communicate to you the above resolution, which was adopted with a degree of kind feeling very gratifying to your friends. I am proud to have been thought worthy to take your place in the Society, but I need not say how much better I should have been pleased if your continuance among us had enabled me to retain the secondary position which I occupied under you for so many years.

Most sincerely and affectionately,

Your friend,

R. M. PATTERSON.

To Dr. WM. P. DEWEES.

---

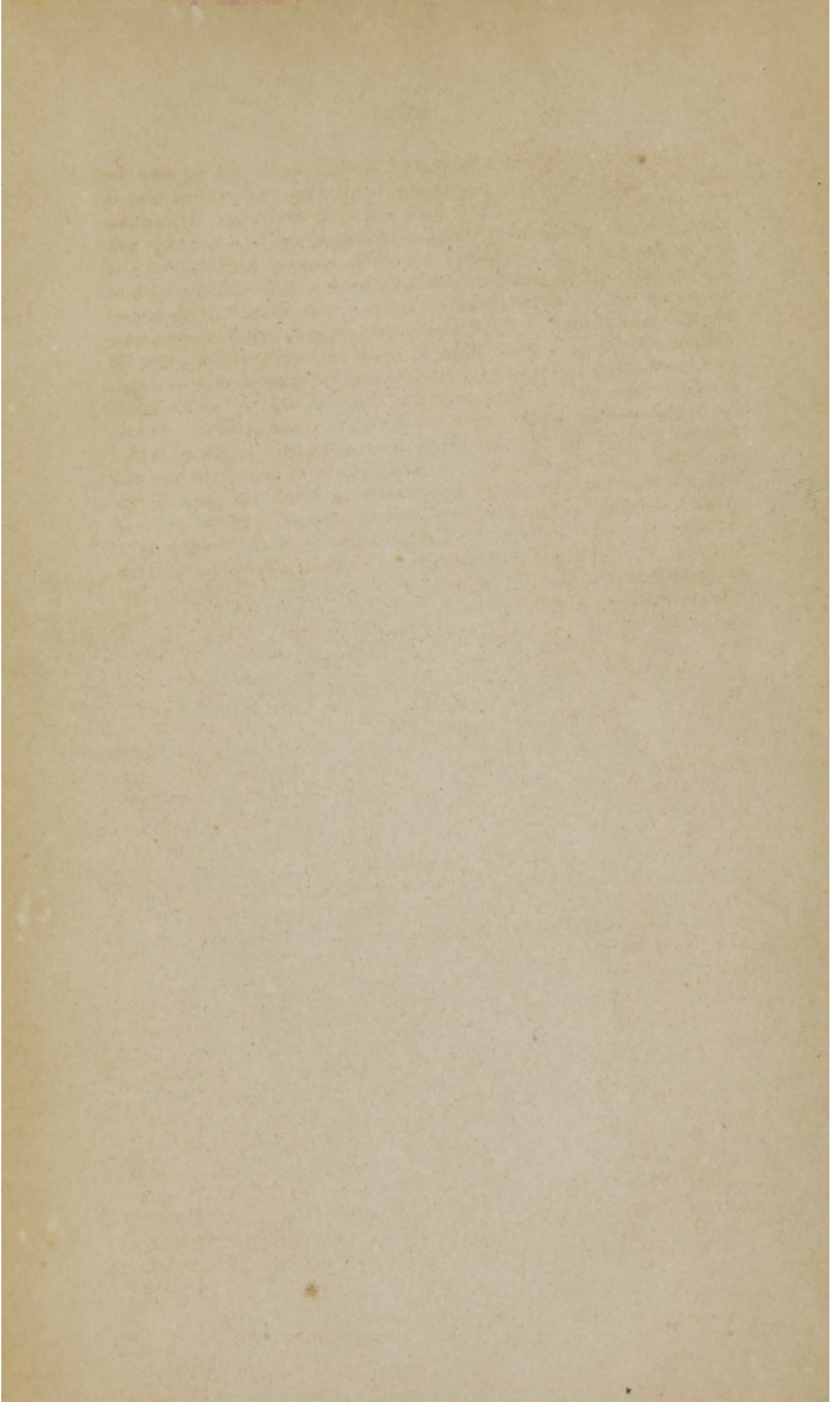
E.

THE REV. DR. BETHUNE'S REMARKS.

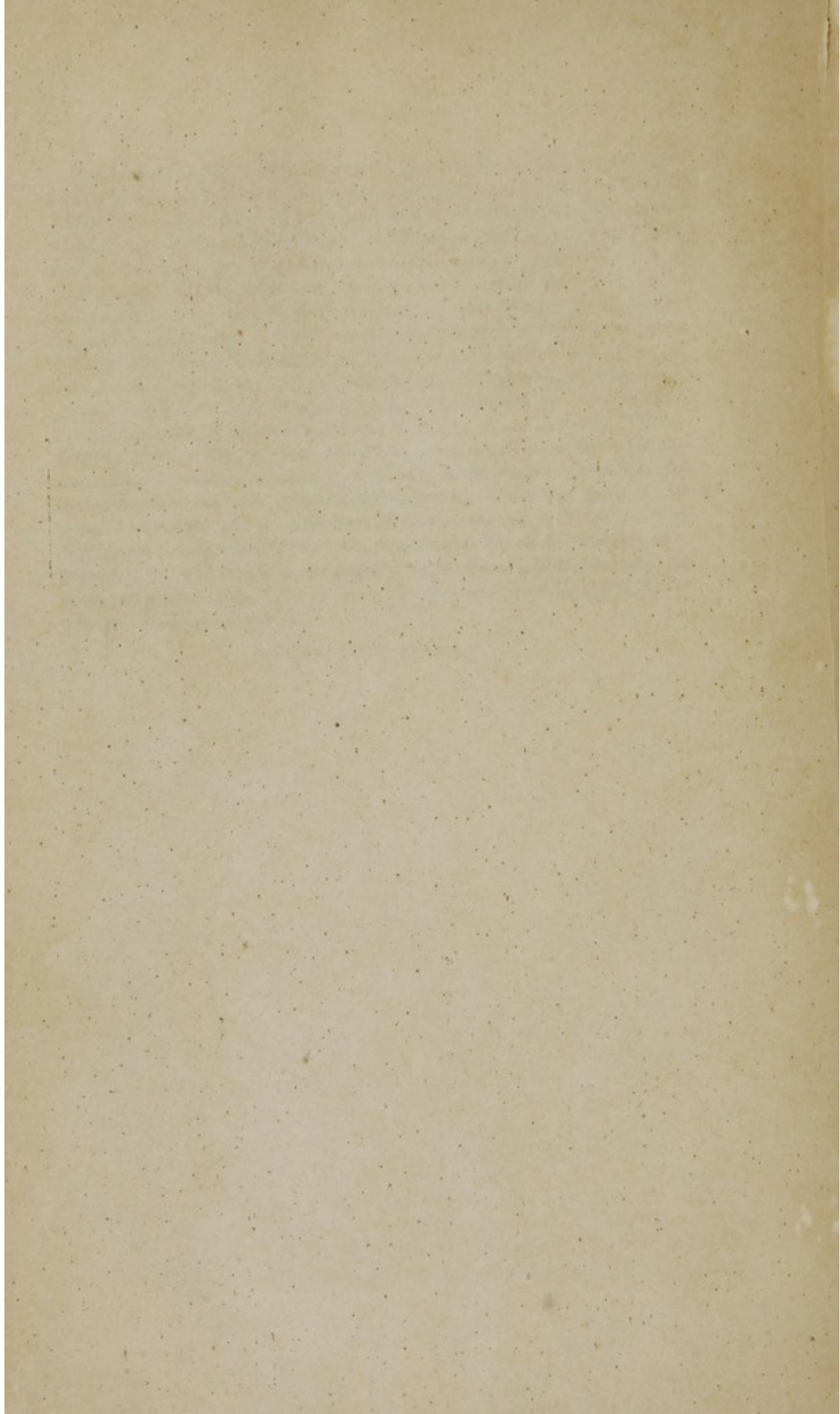
It is a great satisfaction to know that the name of DEWEES may be added to the long catalogue of eminent men, who have given their testimony to the truth and supreme importance of religion. Intensely occupied as he was, during the busy years of his active life, with the anxieties of an extensive, arduous and successful practice, cherishing at the same time an elegant fondness for the graceful arts of design and music, courted by a large society which he adorned, and, in turn, generously hospitable to a fault, with all the appliances to the indulgence of such inclinations, the claims of Christianity upon his heart were then too little regarded, and there appeared some reason for the fear that he was not only indifferent but skeptical. In his declining days, however, he loved repeatedly to declare, that the religious impressions made upon him by early education, especially the earnest counsel of his mother, were never effaced from his memory, and that his better judgment steadfastly resisted all theories opposed to the truth of spiritual religion, while often in his professional observations and general notice of events, the idea of God, his wisdom, his sovereign providence, our responsibility to him, the fitness and necessity of an atoning redemption for our acceptance with him, were driven home upon his convictions with resistless force. The loss of a beloved child, in circumstances of peculiar affliction, supplied an occasion and argument for deeper thought on this most vital subject. A long, sympathising and urgent letter then addressed to him by a religious friend, who stood high in his confidence, and had for him a very strong and grateful affection, he read again and again during long days of a sorrow that refused to be comforted from any earthly source, with deep interest and an open acknowledgment of the truth it contained. Stanley Faber's admirable treatise on the difficulties of infidelity attracted his attention a little while after, and he pronounced its demonstration, that Christianity is the only sufficient scheme of religion, to be complete. From that time, religious books were frequently seen in his hands and appeared to have his serious regard.

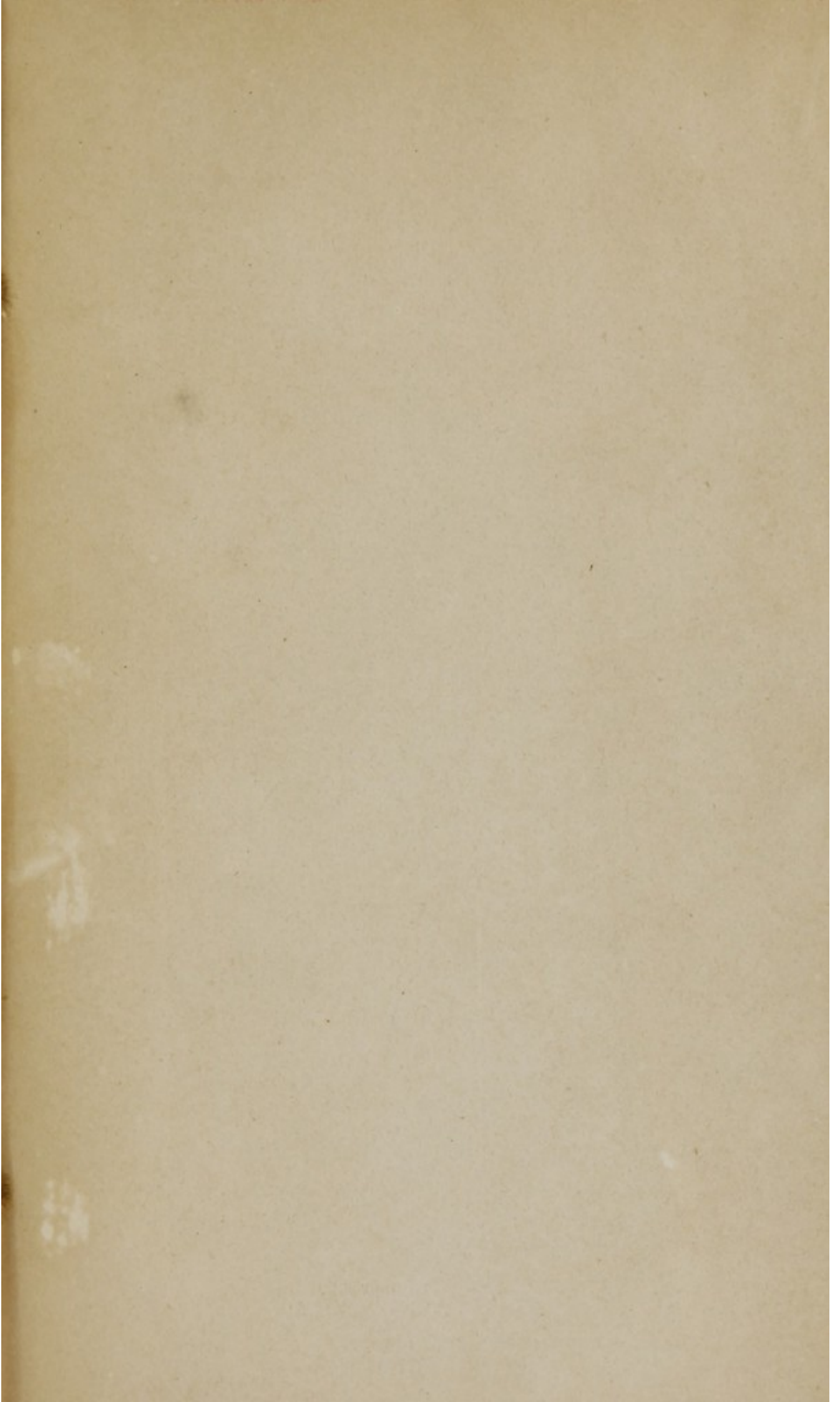
But it was not until within the year of his final illness that he gave the most convincing evidence of his personal reliance upon the grace of God in Christ his Saviour. Then he welcomed, with lively satisfaction, the frequent visits of the friend alluded to before, and of others who would speak with him in reference to his immortal welfare. He loved to hear the voice of prayer ascending from the side of his chair, and especially delighted to hear the gospels read in their eloquent simplicity, or with Bishop Summer's clear and edifying comments. There were seasons when the mysteries connected with the deep things of God tried his faith, but he learned to put away all such doubt, and to receive with a child-like trust the promises of Jesus as addressed to his own soul, while he deeply regretted that he had postponed the comfort and duty of such confidence in God to so late an hour. In this faith, we trust, he died, leaving behind him, as a legacy to us, far more precious than his recorded experience of medical truth, another proof that the best strength of mind and scientific skill is poor to sustain the spirit in the prospect of eternity and the difficulties of death compared with the grace of that kingdom, into which if any man would enter he must "become as a little child." Sad would be our memory of his many amiable qualities, his distinguished and most useful career, if the light of a better immortality fell not upon his honored grave.

*"Utinam sit ita nobisque!"*









NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE



NLM 01068694 7