An oration delivered before the Philadelphia Medical Society, pursuant to appointment : Feb. 15, 1823 / by Hugh L. Hodge.

AN ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Philadelphia Medical Society,

PURSUANT TO APPOINTMENT.

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HONORARY MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY.

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THE author of the following address yields to the request of his friends and of the Medical Society, for its publication, from a hope that the views and principles maintained may be useful to the profession. As it was prepared for an *audience* composed chiefly of young men, candidates for the honours of medicine, and with no idea of its meeting the public eye, it is hoped that due allowance will be made for its style and manner.

ORATION.

Gentlemen of the Philadelphia Medical Society:

Called by an unexpected and partial vote, to deliver your annual address, I appear before you, fully sensible of my incapacity to fulfil your reasonable wishes. The appointment has generally been conferred on my seniors in the profession; men, whose talents, whose observation, and whose experience, have usually qualified them to seize upon the most interesting and important occurrences of the past year, and so to investigate, illustrate, and enforce them, that truth has been elicited, science benefited, and our knowledge rendered more accurate and more extensive.

The season which has elapsed, since we last assembled for this purpose, has presented nothing very new, or very striking. Our profession has advanced steadily in the road of improvement; much has been achieved in overcoming error, and in elucidating the principles of medicine; but this has rather

been the combined effect of many minor agents, than the signal result of any great undertaking to which your attention might now be directed.

Viewing, however, the state of the medical profession in the United States; beholding a very large proportion of its members practising it merely as a trade; as some art which requires no intellectual and no moral endowments and acquirements for its attainment and its practice; perceiving, that the high character, the importance and the dignity of medicine are sacrificed at the shrines of ignorance and avarice; and that candidates for its honours and its emoluments, are multiplying in every direction, without any definite ideas of the great intrinsic, as well as extrinsic difficulties which they have to encounter; and especially, ignorant of the immense responsibility which they assume, as practitioners of our art; it appeared, that I could not better occupy your time, or improve my own, than by attempting to pourtray, however feebly it may be, the *importance* and *dignity* of the science of medicine; at the same time noticing some of its *difficulties* and *duties*.

Such an investigation will have a tendency to exalt the views of the medical student; to encourage in the young practitioner a love of his profession, and an ardent desire to improve it; to the established physician, it may afford fresh incitement to duty, and a delightful satisfaction, that his time, his talents, and his exertions have been devoted to an employment so exalted, so truly ennobling; and in all, it may

possibly serve to repress every selfish, every exclusive feeling, to destroy every action, every thought, derogatory to our characters, as men and as physicians.

To an audience, constituted like the present, it is unnecessary to prove the necessity of our science; no one here will be disposed to deny, that it is as natural to demand relief from pain, as it is to suffer: that we are powerfully prompted to seek for, and to employ remedies, so that no individual, however sceptical he may affect to be, while flourishing in undiminished health and strength, can resist giving practical evidence of his belief in our art, when disease has called him from the pursuit of pleasure, of business, or of knowledge, to the bed of sickness, or to the couch of pain. Were it demanded, additional proofs might be brought from the instinct of animals, from the customs of uncivilized nations, from the adaptation of the productions of the field and the forest to the diseases of man; independent of the various instinctive propensities, by which he avoids all uncomfortable sensations and sedulously labours for what will relieve. While in health, men have, and will exclaim against the unnatural methods, as they are termed, of curing disease; forgetting, or rather ignorant, that each class of remedial agents has been indicated and employed by nature. It is the business of the physician to know this; and while he endeavours to improve, and even to perfect the means thus placed in his power, let him always remem-

ber, that the best lessons may be derived from studying the spontaneous indications of disease, and that the highest and most difficult attainment of his art, is to know when he should abstain from doing.

Believing, then, that all will be prepared to acknowledge, that the science of medicine is founded in nature, and of course, that whether cultivated or not, it will be practised, it becomes necessary to show the importance of improving it with attention, to exemplify its dignified character, and the respect which should be afforded to it, not only by its immediate votaries, but by the world at large. Here, I could wish that the speaker should be forgotten; for, while noticing what is required of a great professional character, much must be detailed to which he has *no* pretensions, and much with which he is but very moderately endowed.

The first circumstance which indicates the dignity of our profession, is the *talents* required for its pursuit. It no doubt has been observed by every one, that in public estimation no mind is too feeble, and no talents too contemptible for the student of medicine; and when a young man can pursue no other liberal profession with advantage or credit, he is devoted to physic with the brightest hopes and the fullest confidence. But, I am safe in declaring that there is no employment which requires *more strength of mind, a more enlarged understanding*, and *more diversified talents*, than the science of medicine. *Here* we are called upon to investigate every

source of knowledge, to separate truth from all the false theories, the partial statements, the distorted facts which have been sanctioned by time and authority: to pursue her amidst the rage of controversy, the superstitions of the ignorant, and the subtilities of the learned; laying aside with the greatest self-denial, all the influences of a warm imagination, all the suggestions of a feeling heart, and all the prejudices of an ill-conducted education: here we must often decide, while the comfort, the happiness and the lives of individuals hang on our decision, and await our answer; at the same time, doubts and difficulties of the most distracting character are congregated around us, while one moment of hesitation seals the ruin of our reputation, the destiny of the patient and the happiness of his friends. What mind is sufficient for these things? Do they not demand one, of the most retentive memory, of the nicest discrimination, and of the quickest apprehension? one capable of embracing, comprehending, and of acting upon the most abstruse, and the most complicated subjects; and above all, a mind in which every feeling and every faculty are under the dominion of the most unerring judgment? This last talent may be considered essential to a physician—by it I mean the power of deciding correctly between truth and error, and of discriminating between circumstances and facts, which, to a common mind, present no shades of difference. To this should be added great strength of mind, by which a physician can rely

confidently on the dictates of his judgment, and can commit all, with a safe, although an anxious conscience to the decisions of futurity.

But, perhaps, I have not mentioned a talent more important to the practitioner of medicine, than to a member of any other profession, without which, he is incapable of improving his art. I allude to what is properly termed genius, or the faculty of inventing or discovering.

In the pulpit and at the bar, there is comparatively little demand for what is new in itself or new in its application. The divine and the barrister have their respective standards, from which they must not wander, and to which their arguments and their judgments must equally bend.—To the law and to the bible, must be their ultimate appeal. In illustrating and enforcing their dictates, various powers of the mind are demanded, while learning, eloquence, and all their graceful attendants afford a powerful and commanding assistance.

But to become merely a learned physician is, and must be, of secondary importance. All the learning and all the knowledge which have been treasured by the observation, and the experience of centuries, cannot make a good practitioner. As a celebrated divine has affirmed, a man must be born a physician; that is, unless he is furnished by nature with an original inventive genius—with a certain faculty of discovering the characteristic traits of disease, and of adapting remedies to its cure, he cannot practise

medicine without dishonour to himself, and without detriment, perhaps destruction, to those committed to his care.

This is not an exaggerated statement. In our science there is no standard; our principles, although many of them good, are not certain—we have no perfect theory to serve as a faithful guide—while on every side there are difficulties and dangers: we have to handle a machine of the most delicate and complicated construction; governed by laws, and subject to derangements, with whose nature we have a very slight acquaintance; derangements, not uniform in different individuals, and similar under apparently similar circumstances, but which are almost universally complicated with each other, and are diversified in every constitution, and in every climate. We must employ medicines without knowing their nature, and whose effects are constantly modified by a thousand unknown causes, and at the same time, we are called upon to act without study, and without preparation. To what can the medical practitioner resort amidst the dangers of his station? Where will he discover the ariadne thread to guide him from this labyrinth, more perplexing and more dreadful than that of the Cretian tyrant? Where, gentlemen, but in the resources of his own genius, improved by knowledge and directed by judgment?

Perhaps I have dwelt too long on this point, but the subject is important; for it is the low opinion entertained of medical talent, which has inundated

our profession with the refuse of schools and colleges; which has degraded it in the eyes of the world; which has given character to every ignorant pretender, to every undaunted, impudent empyric, and brought even the utility of the science into serious question and disrepute.

For a moment, however, glance over the history of medicine; notice those individuals whose names are recorded with honour and reputation—dwell particularly on those who have shone as great luminaries in the medical hemisphere. Examine the characters of Hippocrates, of Aristotle, of Celsus, of Galen, of Van Helmont, of Harvey, of Sydenham, of Boerhaave, of Cullen, of Brown, and of our own pride, the never to be forgotten Rush. Were they perfect? Were they never blinded by prejudice, never led away by imagination, nor their discriminating, and their powerful judgments turned aside by all powerful error? They have left records of the weakness of the human mind, and of its incapacity to cope fully with the difficulties of our exalted science. They have failed: and shall therefore every puny mind, every sickly soul be thrown on our profession and have the lives and happiness of thousands committed to his care?—Truly, with the celebrated philosopher *Vogel*, we may affirm "that there "is no science which requires so penetrating an intel- "lect, so much talent and genius, so much force of "mind, so much acuteness of memory as the science "of medicine."

But the dignity of medicine is also evinced by the *knowledge* which its cultivation demands. Here we enter truly upon a boundless theme. The accomplished physician renders all nature and all art, tributary to his science; he wanders through animate and inanimate being; he examines the productions of the earth; he explores its deepest recesses; he consults the heavenly bodies, and from all, collects important assistance, and is furnished with new ideas which redound to the improvement of his art.

We must, however, descend to particulars; and in doing this, I would wish it to be distinctly understood, that nothing will be mentioned, a knowledge of which, in some degree at least, is not requisite for a physician. This statement is made on the authority of some of the best writers, and is sanctioned by the character and attainments of those great men, who in every age have ornamented our profession and vindicated its reputation from the obloquy of an envious world.

An enlightened medical practitioner should then be furnished with all that diversified information, which is comprehended under the title of a liberal education. This supposes a knowledge of the languages, in which the works of literature and science have been written, especially the Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, all of which are too little cultivated by the modern student. It includes an acquaintance with history, ancient and modern, with politics, with poetry, and all the

branches of the belles lettres. It embraces the severer, but also the more important studies of mathematics, and of natural philosophy in all its branches; including botany, chemistry, mineralogy, and astronomy. It comprises a knowledge of the faculties and operations of the human mind, the connexion of mind and matter with their mutual influence, forming the science of phrenology; of logic, or rules for reasoning correctly; and of moral philosophy, or the methods by which the mental and moral powers may be directed to their proper and laudable objects. To complete the character of a well educated gentleman, some knowledge of law is necessary, not only in a general sense as applied to nations and the rules of their intercourse, but as affecting the transactions of corporate bodies and of individuals. To this should be added an acquaintance with the natural history of animals, especially of the human species; all which should be accompanied, adorned and rendered useful by a thorough acquaintance with men and manners, which can only be obtained by frequent and social intercourse with the cultivated and polished circles of society.

Important and extensive as these studies may appear, they form only a proper introduction to our inexhaustible science. They are, comparatively, of little value, as merely a general knowledge of them can be obtained; for most of the time and labour of the medical student must be devoted to the accurate study of subjects, equally extensive in their nature,

and more difficult in attainment. This general knowledge is, however, essential to his further progress, destitute of which he cannot comprehend the simplest proposition; the structure of the body, its functions, and the theories of disease will, to him, be unintelligible; and, after much fruitless research, he will find himself involved in the darkest labyrinth, with no glimmering light to illuminate his path, and with no guide to direct his wandering and bewildered steps.

Professor Gregory, (in his admirable lectures on the duties and qualifications of a physician,) defines medicine to be "the art of *preserving health*, of *prolonging life*, and of *curing diseases*." This threefold design of the profession should constantly be kept in view by the student and practitioner of medicine; and a very little attention will prove, that these objects cannot be obtained without laborious study and accurate observation. They will imperiously demand a knowledge of the structure of the human body, acquired not from descriptions or plates, however well executed, but by practical and personal investigation, and it should be illustrated by comparative anatomy. The functions of the body, and the *laws* by which they are governed, forming the science of physiology, claim much study; and here no progress can be made without considerable acquaintance with chemistry and natural philosophy. Who can understand the functions of the eye and ear, while ignorant of the laws which govern

the transmission of light and of sound? Who can explain the mechanism of respiration, the effect of muscular action, while unacquainted with the pressure of the atmosphere, and with the mechanical powers? How can the theories of respiration, digestion, secretion and absorption be comprehended by him who has paid no attention to chemistry and its kindred sciences? Next to the healthy functions of the system, pathology, or the diseased condition of these functions, demands a very laborious investigation. For under this term are comprehended, the nature of disease in the abstract, which of course brings under review the various theories which have been promulgated in different ages, and have formed epochs in medical history; the division of diseases, or nosology; their causes, symptoms, prognosis, and the general principles of cure, or therapeutics.

The investigation of the causes of disease calls for a very multifarious knowledge. They exist every where, and to examine them we must have a previous acquaintance with the ordinary and extraordinary condition of the several kingdoms of nature; we must particularly study the state of the atmosphere, when pure and undisturbed, and then calculate the effects of temperature, of winds, of storms, of the various and almost endless contaminations from marsh and human effluvia, and from unknown emanations, even from the bosom of the earth. This includes the difficult subject of epidemics, their nature, laws and history, and the influence of the

heavenly bodies. But the causes of disease arise not only without, but are generated within, from the influence of our dress, manners, customs, our food and drink; by the indulgence of passion, and even by the gratification of our natural desires.

Gentlemen, the subject is endless; for, having made these extensive acquisitions, we are still unfurnished with the materials for curing disease. Here, we must resume our researches; again ransack every department of inanimate, yes, even many parts of animated nature, that we may form our long catalogue of Materia Medica. In doing this, botany, chemistry and mineralogy are again put in requisition, and afford essential assistance. The arrangement and classification of medicines, the principles on which they should be administered, and the circumstances suited to each class, and to each individual of the class, have already been alluded to under the heads of pathology and therapeutics.

Having thus noticed the various departments of preparatory studies, the history of medicine should be attended to, that the important eras of the science, its theories, the causes which have retarded its progress, the mistakes and the errors of its cultivators, the means by which it has advanced, its present state and its future prospects, may be severally presented to the mind, as beacons to indicate danger, or as bright luminaries to enlighten, guide and direct in the toilsome road to usefulness and eminence.

After all this study, all this time and labour, the

important and the essential branches remain unnoticed. The knowledge, the principles, and the materials thus accumulated are to be reduced to practice. By these, and through these alone, can any man be rendered competent to undertake an art for preserving health, for prolonging life, and for curing disease. It is the practical application of medical attainments which forms the continual study of the physician, and which demands so imperiously the enlarged medical genius, without which learning and science are of no avail. In our country, the want of this information in the young physician is a subject of just and severe animadversion. Furnished with theoretical knowledge, and it may be, with the best practical rules, he undertakes the exercise of his profession without having seriously and carefully attended to their clinical application. Dr. Rush has observed, that just principles are, in a great degree, a substitute for experience. This I most willingly and cheerfully subscribe to, and believe that it constitutes one of the best practical proofs of the claims of medicine to a science. But this does not do away the great necessity of clinical observation; for however forcibly and eloquently these principles may be detailed, and however appositely they may be illustrated by a lengthened catalogue of cases, yet, unless these illustrations are not only heard, but seen; unless they have fallen under the actual personal observation of the student, the principles are not his own, they belong only to his teacher. He will not

know how, when, or where to apply them; but will grope in darkness, and be forced to feel his way amidst doubts and anxieties. I speak, gentlemen, from some experience; for notwithstanding my education was directed by a revered preceptor, whose emphatic and unceasing directions were, that I should attend to practice, yet, when called to the duties of the profession, I found myself bewildered and harassed, and in a great measure ignorant how to apply the principles with which my mind was stored. To a feeling heart, this will be a source of continual uneasiness, and to the latest hour of life will form a subject of constant self-reproach; for, as my amiable teacher exclaimed, "What can be more dreadful, than to gain experience at the expense of your patients?"

This is a very brief and imperfect sketch of the knowledge with which a medical practitioner should be furnished, and but moderately vindicates the claim of his science to superior dignity and eminence. Lest, however, any should imagine that the speaker has pourtrayed his subject in too dazzling colours, permit him to state the opinions of some eminent men.

Professor Gregory, in a work already alluded to, observes, "that to excel in medicine requires a *greater compass of learning* than is necessary in any other profession."

Dr. Young, in his Medical Literature, has affirmed "that it *exceeds*, as a science, the *comprehension of the human mind*." Testimony perhaps more dis-

interested is furnished by the celebrated translator of the Iliad, Mr. Pope, who, speaking of physicians in one of his letters, says, "They are in general the most amiable companions and the best friends, as well as *the most learned men* I know."

The rev. Dr. Samuel Parr observes, "that after a long and attentive survey of literary characters, I hold them to be the most enlightened professional persons in the whole circle of human arts and sciences." Blackstone in the introduction to his celebrated commentaries, speaking of physicians reading law, says, it is necessary "to complete the character of general and extensive knowledge which this profession, beyond all others, has remarkably deserved." Higher authority cannot be adduced.

Behold then the elevated station to which our profession is raised by the talents and knowledge of its followers, and consider for one moment how much will be required from us, their successors, to maintain and support her in this commanding situation.

But true dignity does not consist simply in genius and learning. However highly an individual may be gifted by nature, and however sedulously he may have improved himself by laborious study, unless he has rendered his powers and his attainments useful to his species, and unless he is ornamented by a virtuous disposition and by virtuous actions, he may claim an outward respect, he may receive a homage paid to his talents and acquirements, but he never

will or can have the homage of the heart; he never will be sincerely and truly respected.

In this view of the subject, the dignity of medicine shines with renewed splendour. The health, the happiness, and the life of man are its objects, it is entirely devoted to doing good, and summons all its varied powers and its multitudinous resources to promote the well-being of our race. Its utility is evinced more particularly, by the opportunities which it continually affords for the improvement of the faculties of the mind. The study and the practice of the profession cannot be pursued without engrossing the whole attention, and of course, augmenting the strength and energy of the talents thus enlisted in its service. And we have already seen that medicine demands not only the ordinary endowments of mind, but all that superior range of intellectual faculties which designates the man of genius; the cultivation of which, exalts him higher and higher in the scale of existence, and closely allies him to those immortal spirits who dwell beyond his now limited vision, and who enjoy greater powers and opportunities of investigating the works of the all wise Creator.

The utility of medicine is again exemplified by its leading to the practice of virtue. Here I enter upon debatable ground, for it is a common remark, that the continual sight of misery renders the heart callous to the sufferings of others, and gives to the physician an unfeeling disposition. At present, I would

only answer, that this objection is almost universally made by those who have enjoyed good health, and never known from personal experience, the kind and tender sympathies of an enlightened physician; they who have once been confined to the bed of sickness, will absolve us from the charge. But I only wish to maintain at present, that our profession leads to the practice of virtue; the love of it is a distinct question. On this point, I may safely appeal to universal experience, to the records of the healing art, and to the daily and hourly conduct of every accomplished practitioner. To pourtray in their proper colours, the numerous virtues which the healing art brings into continual exercise, is far beyond my powers: it would require a mind peculiarly constituted, a heart gifted with every generous, every disinterested, every noble feeling, and a character who had tested, by a long and laborious life of professional sacrifices, the virtues he described. Think not, gentlemen, that this character exists only in the imagination, and is not to be found among the cultivators of our divine art. Hippocrates, Sydenham, Boerhaave, Fothergill, and a host of other honoured names have exemplified the union of medical science, knowledge and virtue. The practitioners of our own country have maintained this strong claim of medicine to dignity and excellence. Examples must have occurred to every individual. Such a character, it was the pride and happiness of the speaker to call his friend and

preceptor.* A man, endowed by nature with a strong and discriminating mind, enlarged by attentive observation, industrious research and the laborious study of the productions of nature, of art, and of science; whose heart was most sensibly alive to all the sufferings of humanity, was gifted with every generous and virtuous feeling, and adorned by all that is lovely and excellent in our nature. These qualities he brought to the profession of medicine, he cultivated it with enthusiasm and improved it by his practice. In his manners, in his conversation, and in his character, were embodied all the requisites of an accomplished physician. Considering medicine "as an art by which an individual may be a benefactor to the universe, and confer blessings on unborn generations," he devoted his whole soul to its cultivation, he forgot himself and his own interests, and lived for others, sacrificing continually his personal comfort and feelings to the welfare of his patients, the happiness of their friends and the good of mankind. Disinterested benevolence was the distinguishing trait of his character. Not satisfied with fulfilling the ordinary duties of his humane profession, it was his part to "weep with those who wept; to comfort those who mourned," and to imitate the example of his divine master, in "going about, doing good." Thus science and virtue, uniting in his person, gave true

* Dr. Caspar Wistar, late professor of Anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania.

dignity to his character. He was loved, he was revered, and many still survive him to whom he has extended the hand of kindness, and the consolations of sympathy, and who continue sincere mourners over his departed worth:

"He sleeps in dust, and all who knew him mourn,
He, whom each virtue fired, each grace refined,
Friend, teacher, pattern, darling of mankind."

The science of medicine not only improves the intellectual powers, and the benevolent and virtuous dispositions of its cultivators, but it lays claim to still more exalted usefulness. Its natural tendency is to lead the heart of man to the worship, the adoration and love of the great Creator of the universe. In common with all the pursuits of the true philosopher, it discovers the power of the Deity in the works of creation; it beholds his omnipotence and omniscience manifested not only in the stupendous and sublime arrangement of the planetary system, and of the innumerable worlds and systems which roll amidst the immensity of space, but as demonstrated in the wonderful structure and the admirable contrivances of the human body. Our own frames bear in a peculiar manner the impress of a divine hand, and the more laborious and minute the examination, the more convincing and overwhelming will be the conviction that we are indeed "fearfully and wonderfully made."

With the general philosopher, the physician is also constantly called to notice the goodness and the

benignity of the great Creator. He observes, that the laws of nature remain unchangeably the same; that although one generation succeeds another, and nations appear and disappear on the surface of the globe, yet the earth, moon, and stars move with unchanging steadiness in their appointed orbits; and that the same causes under similar circumstances, produce the same effects now as at the beginning of all things. The medical philosopher beholds the same goodness, and (notwithstanding the imperfection of his science) the same certainty manifested in the causes of diseases, in the phenomena they display, and in the relation which the productions of the earth bear to the sustenance of man in health, and to his cure when diseased. Hence he can rely with unshaken and unsuspecting confidence on the constancy of natural laws, and beholds them all harmonizing and tending to his real happiness and welfare.

From these constant and reiterated proofs of the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the Deity, (manifested more impressively to the learned than the unlearned,) the feelings of adoration, gratitude, and submission, are almost irresistibly excited. But the physician has further inducements peculiarly his own. It is his privilege to enter the abodes of want, of disease, of misery; to behold the rich, the wise, and the great, confessing the emptiness of the pursuits of the world, and their insufficiency to afford comfort and consolation amidst the trials of

life and at the approach of death; while he often views the divine power of religion, clothing the poor and the unfortunate with the mantle of peace and of comfort, extending its consolatory influences to the aching heart, and opening to the dep arting spirits of the just, visions of immortal and unmingled happiness. Is there, gentlemen, any profession, any pursuit among the whole circle of human occupations, which addresses itself more powerfully to the understanding, and to the feelings of its disciples, or which presents stronger incitements to religions duty?

[This is the natural tendency of philosophical studies, but more particularly of medicine. I say the natural tendency, as it seems to have been the intention of the great Author of our existence, that his works should lead us to a knowledge of himself. But what is the fact? Are men of science the advocates of religion? Are physicians found leading the way to the temples of God, and in sincerity worshipping their Creator? Or is it true, that the professors of the healing art, have seldom been the professors of religion?—Here and there amidst the almost universal darkness, will be seen a few names shining with a meteoric splendour, increased by

The statement inclosed in brackets was omitted in the delivery of the address, as being a digression from the main design, and rendering it too protracted. It is now inserted from a conviction of its truth, and from a wish that it may at least afford matter for reflection.

contrast with the surrounding gloom. Harvey, Sydenham, Boerhaave, Hoffman, and a few others have redeemed our science from universal reprobation: but it must be acknowledged, that the great mass of medical practitioners and of philosophers in general have not risen from nature's works to nature's God. I well know that this accusation has been repelled by the lovers of science with becoming pride and spirit; but is it not supported by general opinion, by the history of medicine, and I suspect by the observation of every disinterested inquirer? Let every one candidly examine and judge for himself.

But whence is it, that the cultivators of science, which presents the most powerful incitements to religion, should be distinguished for their unbelief? How is this paradox to be reconciled with truth and fact? I feel, gentlemen, that I am wandering beyond the limits of medicine, and encroaching on the territories of the metaphysician and the divine. Let us, however, borrow their assistance on a subject of so much importance, that we may, if possible, discover the shoals and rocks on which others have foundered, and glide safely in the narrow channel to truth and happiness.

The study of medicine and philosophy presents continually, as has been shown, inducements to the cultivation of religion. But this very circumstance, in a great measure, has a counteracting effect: for from the constitution of the human mind, impressions frequently made render the feelings insensi-

ble; the heart is no longer acted on by those circumstances, which at first, thrilled it with horror, or inspired it with love. The anatomist and the soldier often look back with wonder and even with some mortification to those sensations which the sight of death originally produced—now they glory in their insensibility. So, he who has long been habituated to the study of nature, no longer perceives those impressions of the Deity, which might at first have rivetted his attention. He finds that he can refer almost innumerable phenomena to some assignable causes, these again to other causes, and so in succession, through a chain of greater or less extent. When he can no longer advance, he feels that he is restrained by an ignorance of attending circumstances, and from his past attainments, is induced to believe that more can be obtained, and that still another and another link can be added to the chain of causation. His boundless spirit cannot be satisfied, and its pride refuses to acknowledge any bounds to its acquirements, and to bow in humility before the great First Cause. Thus the whole attention of the philosopher is occupied and engrossed by the consideration of secondary, or as they have been termed, "natural causes;" with these he remains satisfied. The natural pride of his heart is thus gratified, and he rejoices in the persuasion, that all his acquirements have originated in himself and been perfected by his own exertions.—Thus reason becomes his God.

But it is contended by no less authority, than the

amiable and pious Gregory, that "to a sound under-"standing, extensive knowledge is the truest teacher "of humility," which he supports by the illustrious and excellent examples of lord Bacon, Mr. Boyle, and sir I. Newton. These names stand as bright exemplars for the imitation of every lover of science; and willingly would I believe, that they were generally imitated, and that their piety and virtue still lived in all their successors.

In a certain sense, knowledge teaches humility. The man of science as he advances in the road of improvement, finds the prospect expanding to his view: as difficulties are removed, and obstacles surmounted, he discovers a wider and still wider field stretching before him; he finds that all the information he obtains, but serves to demonstrate the inexhaustible nature of the object of his researches. His mind is humbled before the magnitude of its undertaking, and mourns over the limitation of its powers; but at the same moment he looks back with pride and contempt on him; who has only entered the road, which he has so successfully penetrated; and looks forward with no little confidence and hope, that by his own exertions all may yet be accomplished. Is not this the natural, and is it not the general effect? for the appeal must be ultimately made to the observation and experience of each individual.

Thus, minds wholly engrossed with the works of nature and with the examination of cause and effect,

generally stop short of the great First Cause. But in many instances, they advance further; they willingly and joyfully acknowledge that the goodness, the wisdom, and the power of a God, are clearly manifested in every thing around and within them, and they love and adore him, as the governor of nature, but here they again halt; they do not avert to him as the moral governor of the world: they perceive not, that as creatures of his power, as dependants on his goodness, they are obligated by every possible tie which can bind a creature to its Creator, to devote to his service and to his pleasure every faculty of their minds, and every power of their bodies. They never avert to the fact, that the pleasure of man is at direct variance with the pleasure of God and are ignorant that he is also an inexorably just being, refusing every method of reconciliation which does not make a full satisfaction to his violated justice.

The nature of true religion and the importance of a revelation of the divine will, being thus unknown to the ardent lover of science, he lives, and he often dies, disbelieving the truth of any other religion than that, manifested even to the savage of the desert by the works of nature.

It is time to return from this digression, but I may be permitted to observe, that whether this accusation be just or not, it should be sufficient for us that it has been seriously and perseveringly urged against the professors of medicine. Hence, it becomes the duty of every student and practitioner of the profes-

sion, to listen to that voice which speaks within and around him, and by his own example, to refute all the charges of infidelity with which science has been reproached.]

The usefulness and the importance of medicine, to its cultivators, appear then in the facilities which it affords for the improvement of the mental powers and in the inducements which it presents to the love and practice of virtue and religion. Respecting the benefits which it confers on the world, neither your time nor my abilities will allow me to enlarge. They are rendered sensible to every one whose mind is not blinded by metaphysical disquisitions, or prejudiced by some partial observations. Behold them in the returning health and strength of him, who has long languished for the first of Heaven's earthly blessings; behold them in the gratitude of that wife, and of those children, whose husband and father has been restored to their embrace and caresses; view them in the public rejoicings, when a friend, a philanthropist or a patriot has been shielded from the arrows of death, and returned in triumph to all his useful and benevolent occupations. Notice our humane profession scattering health, comfort and happiness, where sickness, penury and despair chilled all the sympathies of domestic and social life, and pointed to death as the only relief from intolerable misery. Behold the enduring monuments of its incalculable usefulness, in the extensive and munificent establishments of dispensaries, lazarettoes, hospitals,

and the innumerable societies formed by the virtuous and the benevolent in every clime for the sufferings of man. Observe her, proclaiming to the proud waves of a devastating epidemic, thus far shalt thou come, and no further; binding syphilis, small pox and other devastating pestilences in chains at her chariot wheels, and like the mistress of the world, exhibiting her captives to a grateful and admiring people. Forget not, that she enters the mansions of insanity and restores reason to her deserted throne; that she appears at the bar of the judge to detect guilt and to guard innocence; and that she pours into the wounded and troubled spirit, all the divine consolations which issue from the perénnial fountains of virtue and religion. Where can we find an employment which opens a more extensive field of usefulness for that man whose mind and whose education entitle him to the appellation of an accomplished physician?

Such, gentlemen, is the profession of medicine. Its importance and its dignity are maintained by every thing indicative of the superiority of our nature, by every thing tending to the mental and moral improvement of man, and by all those innumerable blessings which it confers on the world. This being its character, and these its noble objects, is it not deserving of the love and respect of all, especially of those who undertake to wield its mighty powers? And how mistaken, yes, how guilty are they who dare to engage in the practical parts of the profession

without being properly educated, and without being directed by upright and virtuous principles? Those, whom I now have the honour of addressing, have made their election, and it is to be presumed that all are anxious, that the real dignity of the profession should be known and acknowledged by the public; inasmuch as their own standing in society, and the respect and influence awarded to them, will be in a great degree proportionate to the esteem and veneration in which their science is held. How then shall this desirable object be obtained? how shall medicine be enabled to cast away the tattered garments with which public estimation has so long and so shamefully clad her, and to appear in her own bright and glorious costume, the object of just and universal admiration? The answer is easy, let every one of its disciples form a proper estimate of the exalted character of our science and act accordingly. Let no ignoble thought, no selfish feeling, no mean device, no vicious propensity stain the character of a physician; let every sentiment be just, virtuous and exalted, and let every word and action redound to the honour of the profession. Above all, love your profession, and remember that the duties you owe it, are paramount to the duties which you owe yourself: in other words, that medicine is so exalted in its nature and objects, and has the power of being so extensively and so permanently useful, that it becomes the duty of a physician to wave his own personal interest, that he might increase the character of his art

in public estimation. Thus, more good will be achieved. This sentiment is confirmed by the excellent authority of Dr. Rush, who observes, "that it is only by preferring the life of a fellow creature to interest and reputation, that a physician can be in a condition to do his duty." In an accomplished practitioner, self should receive but secondary attention, the good of others should be his primary object. This, it must be acknowledged, is an Herculean labour, and cannot perhaps be fully accomplished. But let it be always remembered, that in proportion as the views of any individual centre in himself, in the same degree the mind becomes contracted, the feelings debased, and the respectability of the character impaired; and on the contrary, that in proportion as any one lives for others, in the same ratio every talent of the mind, every sentiment of the heart, and every laudable propensity is elevated and enlarged. This observation is exemplified in every station of life and in every pursuit. That man, whose mind and whose feelings are occupied and engrossed with the dear objects of domestic life, enjoys more real happiness and better fulfils the true ends of his being, than he who devotes his powers merely to his own interests. Carry your observations through all the connexions which bind man to his fellow man, and notice how much the character both of mind and heart is improved in that individual who, forgetting himself devotes his energies to his friends, to the members of his own profession, to his fellow citizens, to his coun-

trymen and finally to mankind at large. See, how he rises in excellence, as his heart expands with love to others, and ascends, through the various grades of social feeling, from domestic affection to universal philanthropy. In proportion, therefore, as the practitioner of medicine cultivates an attachment to his science, will his views and his actions become more disinterested: the debasing love of money, (the source of so much injury to the reputation of the healing art,) the various little devices and manœuvres which characterize men of little minds and little merit, all the mean resorts of the hypocrite, the sycophant and the slanderer will be banished from his soul; while all the benevolent and dignified propensities of his nature will be cultivated; while true politeness of manners—true dignity of soul—justice, truth, candour, humanity and religion will influence every thought, every word and every action. The dignity of medicine will be practically declared to that public which has been so long blinded and deceived by its unworthy professors, and which has so ungenerously charged their ignorance and vice to the profession itself. These will be exposed in their true colours, and of course, will be hated and despised, while modest merit and retiring virtue will attract deserved attention and receive their just reward.

Love then, this great, this dignified science; cultivate it with enthusiasm by careful observation, and by rational experiments: and remember, that he who assumes the character of a physician, and takes on

himself the responsible duties of medicine, without the proper requisites from nature, from education, and religion, will pass through this life despised by the wise and the good, distributing misery and death around him; and after death his memory will be abhorred, while his soul will appear before the bar of a just and avenging God, covered with the blood of his fellow men. While he who is properly qualified for his labour, and adorned by a virtuous and religious disposition, will live beloved and respected as a benefactor to his cotemporaries, and a blessing to posterity, and will die mourned for by his survivors, but prepared for his great reward in the kingdom of Heaven.

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