

Necrological notice of Dr. Philip Syng Physick / W.E. Horner.

Contributors

Horner, William E. 1793-1853.
American Philosophical Society.
National Library of Medicine (U.S.)

Publication/Creation

Philadelphia : Haswell, Barrington, and Haswell, 1838.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/qndub2rv>

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

MEDICAL CLINIC;

OR,

REPORTS OF MEDICAL CASES:

BY G. ANDRAL,

PROFESSOR OF THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE OF PARIS, MEMBER OF THE ROYAL
ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, ETC., ETC.

Condensed and Translated,

WITH OBSERVATIONS EXTRACTED FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE
MOST DISTINGUISHED MEDICAL AUTHORS:

BY

D. SPILLAN, M.D.

FELLOW OF THE KING AND QUEEN'S COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS IN IRELAND, MEMBER
OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THE FELLOWS AND LICENTIATES
OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS,
AND FORMERLY PHYSICIAN TO THE DUBLIN GENERAL DISPENSARY.

CONTAINING

DISEASES OF THE ENCEPHALON,

WITH EXTRACTS FROM

OLLIVIER'S WORK ON DISEASES OF THE SPINAL CORD AND ITS
MEMBRANES.

PHILADELPHIA:

HASWELL, BARRINGTON, AND HASWELL,
293 MARKET STREET.

1838.

Given to Philosophical Society from Dr John Bell.

1300

24 3
NECROLOGICAL NOTICE

OF

DR. PHILIP SYNG PHYSICK;

DELIVERED BEFORE

The American Philosophical Society,

MAY 4, 1838.

BY

W. E. HORNER, M.D.

PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, ETC., ETC.



PHILADELPHIA :

HASWELL, BARRINGTON, AND HASWELL.

1838.

NECROLOGICAL NOTICE

OF

DR. PHILIP SYNG PHYSICK;

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE AMERICAN PHILADELPHIAN SOCIETY,

MAY 4, 1838.

BY

W. F. HORNER, M.D.

PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, &c.

PHILADELPHIA:

HASWELL, BARRINGTON, AND HASWELL.

1838.

S U M M A R Y.

	PAGE
Preamble,	5
Personal History,	6
Distinction	7
Birth and Parentage	ib.
Governor John Penn	ib.
American Army	ib.
Education	ib.
Study of Medicine	8
Fondness for Mechanical Arts	ib.
Introduction to Anatomy	ib.
Study of Cullen	ib.
Repairs to London	9
John Hunter	ib.
St. George's Hospital	ib.
Graduates	10
Begins Practice	ib.
Yellow-fever of 1793	ib.
Philadelphia Dispensary	11
Pennsylvania Hospital	ib.
Yellow-fever of 1798	ib.
Presentation of Plate	ib.
Inscription	12
Marriage	ib.
Philadelphia Alms House	ib.
American Philosophical Society	ib.
Professor of Surgery	ib.
Resigns Surgery	ib.
Appointed Consulting Surgeon to the Institution for the Blind	ib.
Professor of Anatomy	ib.
President of Medical Society	ib.
President of Phrenological Society	ib.
President of Pennsylvania State Temperance Society	ib.
Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society	ib.
Attacks of Illness	ib.
Infirm Health	13
Death	15
Appearance on Death	ib.

	PAGE
Died probably of Hydrothorax	15
Directions about Body	ib.
Burial	ib.
Professional History	18
Compliment from J. Hunter	ib.
Dissections of Yellow-fever	ib.
Opinions of Yellow-fever	ib.
Improvements in Surgery	19
Physical Qualifications	20
Moral Qualifications	21
Operation on Judge Marshall	ib.
Smallness of Charges	ib.
Intolerance to Opposition	22
Dislike of Insincerity	23
Stature and Appearance	ib.
Dress	ib.
Personal Habits	24
Habits of Teaching	25
Tenacity of Opinion	26
Theological Studies	ib.
Philosophy	27
Retiring Disposition	29
Picture	ib.
Poetry addressed to	30
Testimonies of respect	31

NECROLOGICAL NOTICE
OF
DR. PHILIP SYNG PHYSICK.

THE decision of the Society* having committed to me the difficult task of portraying the attributes and character of one of its most illustrious and gifted members, I now discharge the duty with a consciousness of much inability to do it justice. Great men and great mountains should be seen from a distance, in order to appreciate their exact magnitude and their relation to surrounding objects ; proximity of the eye enables us to view more distinctly the various productions and undulations of surface, but disqualifies to an equal degree from seizing upon those bold comparative features, which give the liveliest interest to narrative of every kind.

The duty of the biographer is moreover intrinsically difficult : on the one hand he has to rescue from oblivion the characteristic thoughts, habits, and actions of the individual he commemorates, and to present such of his traits as may possibly become the incentive and guide to others : on the other hand, to render the picture complete, and thereby to avoid a strain of mere compliment, he has to furnish those incidents and points which reduce the hero and the sage to the mere man ; and in doing so runs the risk of a back ground too sombre or too uniform, for the due reflection of features which he desires to make prominent. Where in addition personal attachment exists, our predisposition to favour great men makes us eulogize their virtues and strong points, and suppress the narrative of weaknesses and peculiarities : yet much of the interest which attaches to

* This Notice was written at the request of the American Philosophical Society, and presented at the meeting of May 4, 1838. As it was a meeting of business, and there were other things to occupy the attention of the Society during the evening, the part actually read on the occasion was the latter half, alluding more particularly to the professional history of Dr. Physick, and therefore having a more direct scientific bearing.

them upon moral and philosophical grounds, depends upon a knowledge of both sides of the question. Among the most striking incidents in the history of Cæsar is his dissoluteness and prodigality in early life, and his infatuation for Cleopatra when he became the head of the Roman Empire : but none among us would be pleased with the historian who, from tenderness to his memory, should suppress the narrative of these events. On the same ground how much would we lose by not knowing that Alexander the Great, on the occasion of a feast, had in a paroxysm of intemperate rage plunged a dagger into the bosom of his most esteemed and veteran general Clitus, and had finally died suddenly in Babylon in a drunken revel.

Neither has the inspired volume spared its great men : it records that to Moses, the chosen servant of God, and the leader of his people, it was said, "Go up into that mountain and die there, thou shalt see from thence the land that I will give to the children of Israel, but thou shalt not enter it ; because you transgressed against me at the waters of contradiction, and did not sanctify me among the children of Israel." Deut. xxxi. 50. The same volume has not failed to narrate distinctly the licentiousness of David, nor the tergiversation of Solomon ; and this candour gives it additional recommendation to the scholar. Why then, it may be asked, with these venerable examples of antiquity before it, should modern biography be a eulogy, instead of an exposition of character ? In the case of the obscure and unimportant individual, whether in high life or in low life, the ephemeral tribute of praise may, in the form of an obituary notice, be all incense ; it does no harm, for we understand it as the effusion of some attached friend, whose grief finds its solace in this expression of it. Such comment is not documentary, and the unmarked life of the individual is soon buried in oblivion. This however is not the case in one of Nature's master-pieces. In the man whose genius has impressed the nation or the period when he lived, perfect candour in all the disquisitions concerning him, is the best tribute to his memory. Men whose minds have a strong tendency in one direction, may in all the scrutinies instituted be found to harmonize their actions according to that cardinal point, but it would be unphilosophical to expect equal force and equal harmony in an opposite direction.

With this preamble I may now proceed to state, that DR. PHILIP S. PHYSICK, whose memory we are about to recal, was distinguished

by a long and triumphant course in Surgery and Medicine ; by a deep and universal conviction on the medical and public mind of this country in favour of his skill ; and by traits of character so prominent and so peculiar, that the chances are very improbable of their being repeated in any other individual. Even if nature should renew her production, the difference of circumstances in which it will be placed, from the immense changes constantly and rapidly occurring in our social state, will prevent the same mode and degree of development.

Born on the 7th of July, 1768, in Third, near Arch Street, Philadelphia ; his father, Mr. Edmund Physick, was a native of England ; and his mother, Miss Syng, the daughter of a celebrated silversmith of this city, who was one of the early friends and companions of Franklin, and whose name appears on the register of the American Philosophical Society as one of its founders. His maternal grandfather appears to have possessed a large share of practical sense and industry ; to have lived much respected ; and to have raised a numerous family, among whom he divided a good estate on his death. His character made a strong impression on Dr. Physick's mind : I have frequently heard it quoted by him, with veneration, as a good example of what a proper course in life will accomplish.

At the breaking out of the Revolutionary War, Mr. Physick, the father, resided with his family in the valley of Chester County, Pennsylvania. Governor John Penn, being deposed by the colony then in arms, was ordered from his estate of Lansdowne, situated a few miles above Philadelphia on the west side of the Schuylkill, and directed into the interior of New Jersey. Mr. Physick, at the request of Governor Penn, took charge of the Lansdowne estate, and resided upon it at a place called the Hat. This arrangement produced a considerable intimacy between the two families. The estate being on the belligerent line, Mr. Physick received a protection from General Howe, then in Philadelphia, and another from General Washington, then at Valley Forge. It was in the winter of this period that Mr. Physick, on visiting Valley Forge, observed that the cannons of the American army were frozen immoveably in the mud ; so that if General Howe had made an attack, they could not have been worked.

The subject of our memoir received his academic education from Robert Proud, in "Friends' Academy," and during the time lived in the family of Mr. John Tod, the father-in-law of the present Mrs. Madison. He then entered the classical department of the

University of Pennsylvania and obtained his knowledge of the languages from Mr. James Davidson, one of the best scholars of his day. No small fondness for these, his earlier studies, remained with him to the end of his life.

Having passed honourably through his college studies, he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts. His father now considered him ready to engage in the study of medicine, and made a movement to that effect. His own predilections, however, were for a different employment: with an original natural fondness for mechanical arts, which he had at an early period exhibited by making himself a pair of shoes; this partiality was strengthened by the example of his maternal grandfather, who had led an independent and happy life as a silversmith. His father was found inflexible, and placed him under the charge of the late Dr. Adam Kuhn, one of the most learned and successful physicians of that period. I may here observe, in passing, that notwithstanding Dr. Physick's subsequently unequalled reputation in surgery, and the immense fortune that he acquired principally by professional employment, he never lost this early inclination for mechanical pursuits. Even within a short time of his death, in reflecting upon the events of his life, such as his anxieties for the health of others, his professional excitements, and the decrepitude and ravages made on his own constitution by disease, he regretted that he had not been indulged in his love for the business of a silversmith: his impression was, that in securing to himself health and tranquil employment, his life would have been much happier, and a very sufficient measure of success would have attended his efforts.

His first introduction to anatomy excited strongly his aversion and disgust to the profession of medicine—it was the boiling of a skeleton in the Medical College in Fifth street, now the Health Office. He returned home, and implored again his father to relax his resolution: it was all in vain. Finding his father thus inexorable, he took up his medical studies in earnest. The book of the highest reputation at that period, and which was handed to him with the strongest commendations from Dr. Kuhn, was Cullen's first Lines of the Practice of Physic. In his sincerity of character, he thought within himself: This book being so much esteemed, and containing so many profound and well ascertained points of knowledge, I cannot do better than learn the whole of it accurately. He therefore went to work and committed it to memory, presenting thereby a solitary example probably in the history of medicine of this task

accomplished; and which appears the more wonderful to us at the present day, from the comparative disuse into which these volumes have fallen.

When twenty years of age, in 1788, his father took him to London, and succeeded in placing him under the direction of Mr. John Hunter, the great surgeon of the day; and now looked upon as the first medical man that the British empire has produced, his posthumous reputation having gone vastly beyond, any that he ever had when alive. Mr. Hunter was no student of the writings of others, but a profound interrogator of nature; he had little or no respect for any other revelations of science, than those made with the dissecting-knife, and under his own observation. The affair being settled that young Mr. Physick was to study under him, the elder Mr. Physick said, "Well, sir, I presume some books will be required for my son, I will thank you to mention them that I may get them." "Here, sir," says Mr. Hunter, "follow me; I will show you the books your son has to study." Mr. Hunter led the way from his study to his dissecting-room, and entering it pointed to several dead bodies, "These are the books," says he, "which your son will learn under my direction; the others are fit for very little." The impression made on the mind of Dr. Physick was durable; he never forgot the remark, especially after committing to memory Cullen's First Lines, as he had done but a short time before in Philadelphia.

Being thus placed in a dissecting-room, he distinguished himself in a short time by his assiduity, and by the neatness and success of his dissections; he became a favourite with Mr. Home, the assistant in the rooms, and also with Mr. Hunter. The confidence and partiality of the latter were exhibited in the year 1790, while he was still a student under him, by Mr. Hunter using great exertions, and successfully, to get him elected house surgeon to St. George's Hospital. Considerable influence was necessary to obtain this post, from the number of competitors for it; and also from the disrelish of the British mind for any American, at so short a period after the Revolutionary War. Having been installed, he was looked upon with jealousy and suspicion. The first call for a trial of his skill being a dislocated shoulder, the other residents of the house assembled around him with distrust and sneers at the American stripling. The adjustments being made, the shoulder was in a moment reduced, which convinced the bystanders, that they had mistaken the object of their feelings.

In the year 1791 he received his diploma from the Royal College of Surgeons in London. After which he visited Edinburgh ; and having spent a winter there, took out the degree of Doctor of Medicine in the University, in 1792.* In the latter part of the same year he returned home, highly instructed in his profession : after having declined offers by his preceptor, Mr. Hunter, of a promising and advantageous kind, for him to settle in London, This course was probably influenced to some degree by his health, which the climate and atmosphere of that metropolis did not suit.

His father secured for him an office in Arch street, near Third, where he began the practice of medicine, as I have often heard him say, with only two shillings and six-pence in his pocket. Being established in his office, his father said to him, " My son, you have cost me much money ; you have now an outfit, learn to take care of yourself." He was for some time very doubtful and uneasy about his success. Many of his hours were spent, by invitation, in a fine library belonging to a Mr. Priestman. He on one occasion said to Mr. Priestman, " I should feel much more happy if I had something like a certain livelihood : if your family and some others would give me, at any rate, twenty dollars a year, each, for acting as their physician, I should be satisfied." Mr. Priestman had a very high opinion of him, and replied immediately, " Well, Doctor, I agree to that : " and being a man of influence he also interested several other families in the same way. The Doctor's anxieties were by this mode allayed, and it may perhaps be considered as the first step of his great business.

The year 1793 brought him distinctly and prominently before the public notice. The premonitory indications of a fatal epidemic being on the approach, were but too faithfully verified, when, on the 19th of August, the celebrated Rush announced to his fellow-citizens that a malignant and mortal fever, had broken out among them. This startling intelligence, whereby the repose of

* His Essay was De Apoplexia, and is dedicated to John Hunter, as a mark of gratitude. Like other productions of the same kind in that school, it is written in Latin ; but whether this version is by himself or not, I do not know, as it is the usage there to employ persons for the purpose. It appears to have been composed rather in compliance with the requisitions of the school, and is far from being an elaborate effort. With some few original cases of his own, the doctrines are taken from the prevailing authorities of the day, as Morgagni, Hoffman, Lancisci, Tissot, Wepfer, Cullen, with an allusion to his preceptor, Dr. Kuhn, having seen the people after eating apples and milk, a common diet then in Philadelphia, seized with apoplexy, which disappeared on their vomiting.

the public mind was disturbed, was received at first with the agitation and excitement created by some unexpected convulsion of nature: by some it was discredited, and strong indignation expressed against its author. The celerity, however, with which the disease invaded the several walks of life left no room for disputation, and all that remained to be done, was to make the best possible arrangements for its visitation. Among the measures of the day recommended by the College of Physicians on the 26th of August, and carried into immediate effect, was the providing of a large and airy hospital in the neighbourhood of the city, for the reception of such poor persons as could not be accommodated with the above advantages in private houses.* The erection of the Bush Hill Hospital was the result of this recommendation, and Dr. Physick, having offered his services, was chosen physician of the same. He left his lodgings in town, entered immediately upon his new duties, and continued in the exercise of them till the disease had passed away. While on this duty, a disposition to insubordination and riot having been exhibited by the inmates of the hospital, he was appointed alderman by Governor Mifflin, so as to meet any emergency with the promptest attention and vigour. An explanation of this civil magistracy may be given, by stating that such was the panic created by the yellow-fever, that no ordinary civil officer could be found hardy enough, to enter the hospital, to enforce order. I have repeatedly heard the doctor say, that when he was sworn in by the mayor (Matthew Clarkson), the latter held off from the precincts of the hospital, and from Dr. Physick, at the greatest distance compatible with hearing, and was happy to be off as soon as possible, when the ceremony was over. He resigned this office at the end of the season, and it returned again to the gentleman who had previously abdicated it, for the express purpose.

In the year 1794 he was appointed a prescribing physician in the Philadelphia Dispensary, and a surgeon to the Pennsylvania Hospital: the public confidence was also exhibited by his practice increasing with no ordinary rapidity.

A recurrence of the yellow-fever as an epidemic, in 1798, led again to a performance of similar duties in the Bush Hill Hospital. The zeal and fidelity with which he went through these, were recognised in the presentation of some elegant pieces of silver plate. Their cost was upwards of one thousand dollars, and they bear the following inscription:—

* Rush's *Inquiries*, vol. iii, p. 83, 3d ed.

"From the Board of Managers of the Marine and City Hospitals to

Philip Syng Physick, M.D.,

This Mark of their respectful Approbation of his Voluntary and Inestimable Services, as Resident Physician at the City Hospital, in the Calamity of 1798."

On Sept. 18th, 1800, he was married to Miss Emlen, the daughter of a gentleman of learning, distinction, and wealth, and who belonged to the very respectable Society of Friends. She died in 1820, leaving four children, now alive—two sons and two daughters.

Sept. 7, 1801, he was appointed a surgeon in the hospital of the Philadelphia Alms House.

In 1802 he was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society.

In 1805, the chair of surgery having been made a distinct one in the University of Pennsylvania, he was elected to it; the success of his operations and lectures in the Pennsylvania Hospital, is considered to have created and established this change.

In July 1819 he resigned his chair of surgery in the University of Pennsylvania, and was appointed to that of anatomy, vacated in the preceding November by the death of his nephew, Dr. Dorsey.

In 1821 he was appointed consulting surgeon to the Institution for the Blind.

In 1822 he was elected president of the Phrenological Society of Philadelphia.

In 1824 he was appointed to the presidency of the Philadelphia Medical Society, which appointment he was continued in until his death, though he never actually took his seat.

In 1834 he was elected president of the Pennsylvania State Temperance Society.

The latest of his appointments was in 1836, when he was elected an honorary fellow of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London and soon after received his diploma; he is said to have been very much pleased with this mark of respect from a city, where his early studies had been conducted.

During his whole life the subject of this notice had occasionally violent illness. In very early infancy, before he could recollect, he suffered from inoculated small-pox so severely that his life was despaired of; the eruption having passed so far down his throat, as to come near strangling him. The marks of this attack were left on his face in pits, which were somewhat visible to the day of his death.

When in St. George's Hospital he had a severe illness, and was attended there by a female nurse with a degree of fidelity, which made a lasting impression on him. Her goodness and disinterestedness were rendered still more striking, by her declining afterwards to receive a compensation, as she considered the duty a part of her obligation to the house.

He had an attack of Yellow-fever in 1793, and another in 1797. The latter went near to destroy him.* He told me that, as he lay ill, he could hear through his windows, which were open, a stout blacksmith, who lived near, inquire daily of his black waiter, "Is your master dead yet?" To which the monotonous response of "No!" was as often given. When the doctor recovered sufficiently to leave the house, he inquired after the blacksmith who had so frequently saluted his ears with this disagreeable question. He found that the blacksmith himself, had in the mean time been one of the victims of the epidemic.

In the winter of 1813-14, when the typhus fever prevailed here, he had a severe and protracted attack of it, from which he narrowly escaped. Drs. Kuhn and Wistar attended him. He came out of this sickness much reduced in flesh, and I think never recovered his volume afterwards.

In early life he was subject to bleeding from the nose. When abroad he had frequent attacks of catarrh; his liability to which is thought to have prevented him from settling in London, a measure which, as I have said, Mr. Hunter countenanced; but at the same time owing to his delicate health advised a return home. This liability continued with him through life—a damp floor, a slight current of air, an easterly wind, exposure to night air—almost any departure from ordinary temperature produced it, and sometimes very violently: he therefore observed a degree of precaution, which to some persons appeared as mere nervousness or affectation. I knew him intimately since the death of his nephew, Dr. Dorsey, in 1819, and may say that he never passed a day without some sensation of pain, feebleness, and derangement in his system—sometimes a catarrh—at other times a headache—sometimes pains in his kidneys with sabulous discharge—sometimes dyspepsia—at other times anasarcaous swelling of the legs—and always a small, feeble, wiry pulse, irregular, and indicative of ossification, or some other change about the left valves of the heart. To these were added frequent exasperations of his

* Dr. Dewees took from him during this attack one hundred and seventy-six ounces of blood.—Rush's Med. Inq. vol. iv, p. 37.

habitual disorders—catarrh and nephritis—amounting to threatening illness, and from which he recovered very slowly.

For several years his debility was so great, that when the business of the day was over he had to lie down for mere animal repose, and his common hour for retiring to bed was 9 o'clock. In his intervals of better health he was up at from 6 to 7 o'clock, A.M.—he then arranged the business of the day, got his breakfast early, and went out at 8 o'clock in summer and at 9 o'clock in winter. He returned home about 1 o'clock, got his dinner, and attended to consultations in his office from 2 to 3 o'clock, P.M. His health permitting he went out again at the latter hour, and continued to make visits till sunset: he very rarely did so after sunset, or in the night, as his liability to catarrh forbade such exposure. His great enjoyment was heat: in the winter he kept his bed-room at from 75 to 80°.

His health latterly became so bad that he was accessible to few persons except his family, I was therefore frequently unable to see him when I called. The impression, indeed, was somewhat general with his former friends, that familiar visits were rather annoying to him, and several withdrew from such attempts. He perceived the solitude that he was in, and made no inconsiderable mistake in attributing it to a spirit of neglect; he once gave me an intimation of this kind, which I did my best to correct by calling more frequently, and at least leaving my card, whatever might be my disappointment in seeing him. It happened to me, and as it turned out for the last time, to see him on Sunday, November 26th, 1837: having called at his house I found him just about starting for a ride in his carriage, and was permitted to approach him as he was putting on his over-coat. He saluted me with a dejected and melancholy grace, "Ah, doctor, how do you do, you see I am almost gone;" his tottering, emaciated frame, and altered visage, but too certainly confirmed the statement. I replied, "I hope not, sir; I hope you will yet live to see many days of usefulness." "Me!" he said, "me useful, with my frame? no, impossible; I must die soon!" I said to this, "I trust that your debility is not so great, but that your knowledge at least may be applied usefully to others." He gave a sardonic and incredulous smile: "Well," says he, "I am glad to see you."

I assisted him to his carriage and took leave, and had got some way off to my cab, when his son Philip came to inform me that his father wished to speak to me. I returned. "Doctor," says he, "you are a friend of mine, I always esteemed you as such; I now take my last leave of you." Extending his hand, which I took, he con-

tinued, "I shall not see you again, I must die soon, my fate is fixed, I can't help it, I am sorry for it." The carriage door was closed, and we parted : the words were prophetic, he saw not me afterwards. I saw his lifeless corpse two hours after his demise, on the morning of the 15th of December, 1837.

His countenance had then a superannuated, painful, haggard expression, wrapped in the dullness and mystery of death. His frame declared his recent sufferings and exhaustion ; the upper parts attenuated to a mere skeleton, the lower extremities and abdomen bloated ready to burst with dropsy, and actually beginning a sphacelated softening and ulceration, here and there. He remained a wreck merely of a divine original. *Hei mihi qualis erat, quantum mutatus.* What a contrast to that luminous and searching eye, to that countenance of thoughtful and profound reflection, to that dignity of demeanor, such as I had formerly known in him ! How humiliating are the decrees of Providence ! How are the chosen ones of this world made to bend to its supremacy ; and to exhibit the feebleness of all the props of wealth, condition, reputation, on which they depended ; and that there is but one Supreme Good in heaven and on earth.

The great surgeon, in his seventieth year, was now no more : he whose words were considered oracular on points of medicine, and who attracted hither numbers of people from the different quarters of the union to enjoy the benefit of his advice, and to erect one more barrier by it between them and the grave, was himself a victim to that death which he had so frequently set at defiance and triumphed over. In it we read one more striking lesson of mortality, and of the certainty with which we are hastening to the same end.

His frequent attacks of illness, and a pretty extensive rumour of his rapidly declining health, had prepared the public mind for his death. He had, indeed, for some time previously abstracted himself so completely from all professional concerns, that a vacuum had already occurred ; and the various adjustments in society taken place, which depended upon the retirement of an individual who had occupied so large a share of the public esteem and confidence. All of his responsible public appointments, excepting that of the presidency of the Medical Society, had been resigned ; and the only connexion which he then held with the University of Pennsylvania, was in the titular honour of Emeritus Professor of Surgery and Anatomy, conferred upon him in 1831, upon his vacating the latter

chair. The solitary duty connected with the appointment was that of signing the diplomas; but even this duty became so irksome to him that for the last two years he had declined it.

In 1816 he had resigned the place of surgeon in the Pennsylvania Hospital, being succeeded by Dr. Dorsey; and some years previously he had yielded his appointments in the Philadelphia Dispensary, and in the Alms House Infirmary.

The immediate cause of his death was probably, from the symptoms, hydrothorax. His breathing was frequently extremely difficult, and as the anasarca state of his legs augmented, this difficulty also increased; to assuage it he spent much of his time day and night, supported on the middle of the floor in an erect position. So protracted an illness, attended with such suffering, impaired also the vigour and clearness of his mind, and exhibited it not unfrequently in strong contrast with its natural traits. He left a paper directing the disposition of his body after death, as follows: a dissection was absolutely prohibited, no one was to touch him but two females who had been his domestics, for the last twenty years. He was not to be taken from his bed for some time, but to be wrapt up in it warmly; the room was to be kept well warmed till putrefaction commenced. He was then to be covered with flannel, and placed in a wooden coffin, painted outside, with a mattress at the bottom; and this coffin was to be placed within a leaden one, and it soldered up closely. A public notice was to be given of the period of his interment, but no invitations issued.

It happened that the warmth of his chamber, acting upon remains predisposed by his disease to a ready putrefaction, soon brought about that evidence of death, and he was accordingly enclosed as he wished; in addition to which there was another coffin, covered with black cloth.

On December 21, 1837, he was inhumed in the burying-ground of Christ Church, corner of Fifth and Arch. The procession started shortly after 9 o'clock, A. M., from his house, South Fourth Street, the body being carried on a bier. It was attended by the Trustees, Professors, and Students of the University—the American Philosophical Society—the Trustees, Professors, and Students of the Jefferson College—the Medical Society—the State Convention on the Constitution, which suspended its sitting for the occasion—his intimate friends and the citizens; making in all a line which reached from his house almost to the ground.

Thus ended on earth the pilgrimage of one who had occupied a

larger and more intense attention of the public, than any other individual who had ever practised surgery in this country ; an individual who, by general acquiescence and unanimous testimony, was hailed as the father of American Surgery ; one who, by his intrepidity, his skill, and his success, made it keep pace on this side of the Atlantic, with the immense progress that it was making on the other ; and who was probably unsurpassed any where in the curative department of his art.

His dust has now returned to that earth from which it was taken, and his spirit is in the presence of the Creator who made it. A life of toil and of uneasiness, of quick and of conscientious sensibility, is at length ended. Five and twenty years ago, I saw him who is now a mass of decomposition, returning from the same place in the afternoon at the interment of Dr. Rush.* He was then in the vigour of manhood and of reputation, the universally acknowledged centre and head of the surgery of this country. An indescribable interval separated him from every body else, and yet attracted every one to him. I remember with perfect distinctness, as he turned off from the ground, his quick and thoughtful step ; his inclination of the head : as either musing on what he had seen, or ruminating on some case of profound interest then under his charge. His appearance such as in his most palmy days—his head highly powdered ; his hair overhanging his ears in a thick long brush on each side, where it was clipped straight below. The head, face, and neck, exhibiting the most finished and statue-like appearance ; and his costume being a paragon of neatness, and of appropriateness, without any undue effort at effect. I never saw him before or since more completely himself. The attack of typhus-fever, which he had the next winter, altered sensibly for the remainder of his life, the face—the forehead never recovered its fulness.

Among the peculiar arrangements attending his death, was a rigid watch being kept for six weeks during the night over the place of his interment, and which was said to be according to his directions, to prevent the body from being disturbed. This humour may be very properly regretted by the admirers of his reputation, as it was calculated to excite obloquy and unjust suspicion against individuals, if not against his profession, by leading the public to infer that no place nor person was too sacred for the anatomist.

* April 9, 1813.

It, with his prohibition against the examination of his body after death, may be considered as among the sentiments incompatible with his career of surgery and anatomy, and which we can only explain by that sensitiveness, we may perhaps say obliquity, produced by long-continued retirement and indisposition.

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY AND CHARACTER.

The earliest commendatory notice of our friend, is found in the Treatise on the Blood by his preceptor John Hunter. The latter, wishing to arrive at some general conclusions on certain phenomena of the blood, as to its coagulability and putrescence under several conditions named, performed experiments on the subject which were rather incomplete and unsatisfactory to himself; to verify however what he had done, he says, "*Many of these experiments were repeated by my desire by Dr. Physick, now of Philadelphia, when he acted as house surgeon to St. George's Hospital, whose accuracy I could depend upon.*"* I have heard the doctor say, but with the modesty which never left him when speaking of himself, that shortly after he entered at Mr. Hunter's, his dissections were performed in such a way that it was admitted, he had pretty good hands. This very reserved testimony of himself I found amplified and confirmed when I was in London in 1821, thirty years after the period alluded to. Mr. Clift, the conservator of the Hunterian Museum, told me that he had been distinguished by his neatness, skill, and perseverance as an anatomist.

In 1793 he, in conjunction with Dr. Cathrall, made several dissections of persons dead of yellow-fever, which proved its inflammatory character, and that its principal violence exploded on the stomach. These observations were not absolutely new, because they had been preceded by similar ones by Dr. Mitchell in his account of the yellow-fever of Virginia in 1737 and 1741, and by corresponding ones in the West Indies. They had, however, an important local influence in correcting the prevailing notions of the disease, by proving that so far from being one of debility it presented the highest possible grade of inflammation; one exactly similar to what is produced by acrid poisons, as arsenic,† introduced into the stomach. The principle was thus established, that the reputed putrid pheno-

* Part I. chap. vii.

† Rush's Inquiries, Vol. iii. p. 173.

mena were merely the expression of the gastric inflammation, and that the proper treatment was precisely the reverse of what had obtained.

To this advance in the therapeutic indications of a disease so fatal and so terrifying, was added one of a most important prophylactic or preventive kind. At a time when it was perilous to the practice, as well as to the reputation for sanity of any physician, to assert that the yellow fever was generated among us and not imported, he had the manliness and dignity to declare openly this obnoxious truth. He also admonished the people, that the true protection from such visitations was not in establishing an empty system of quarantine laws, and thereby interrupting foreign commerce ; but in cleanliness at their own doors and along their own wharves. These were the views taken and enforced at the same time, by the eloquence and fervour of a Rush. To this idea, constantly urged upon public attention, we owe the very complete and effective arrangements for supplying this city with water, by applying, if need be, the whole current of the Schuylkill to the purpose.

To the walks of surgery, however, we must look for the genius of Physick in its most decided and extensive application. It is there that we find it exhibiting a series of triumphs, over cases of disease which had baffled the skill of men only inferior to himself, and it is there that it was so active in inventions, to improve and to palliate established modes of treatment. His management of diseased joints by perfect rest, elevation, and diet, is a happy substitute for the errors generated under the use of the terms *scrofula*—white swelling: and ending either by amputation or in death, sometimes in both. His treatment of the inflammation of the hip-joint in children (*coxalgia*), by a splint, low diet, and frequent purging, exhibits another of those successful innovations upon ordinary practice. His invention of an appropriate treatment and cure for that loathsome disease artificial anus, which invention has been so unceremoniously modified and claimed by a distinguished French surgeon, the late Baron Dupuytren, is a proof of the activity and resources of his professional mind. Another invention still more frequent in its employment, from the greater number of such cases, is the application of the seton to the cure of fractures of bones refusing to unite. Other inventions are found in the treatment of mortification by blisters; of anthrax by caustic alkali; of the ligature of kid skin for arteries, in excisions of the female breast. To him also we owe the original act, if not invention, of pumping out the stomach in cases

of poisoning : also an improvement in the treatment of fractures of the condyles of the os humeri, so as to render the restoration perfect. I might in this way go on to enumerate many other points of excellence about him, but however appropriate it might be to offer a complete exposition of them, the time allotted to a ceremonial of this kind must prohibit a more extensive and complete annunciation. Those who have had an opportunity of witnessing his practice extensively, will at least conclude with me in the saying, *Nihil tetigit, quod non ornavit.*

With this great fertility in invention and ardour in the prosecution of his profession, his original papers are deplorably few, and they are also very short. I doubt whether they exceed much half a dozen in number, and whether thirty or forty pages printed in common type would not contain all. Lecturing for many years on surgery, his chief organ of publicity was his class of students. The Elements of Surgery, published by his nephew, Dr. Dorsey, contain the most perfect account of his opinions and practice up to that period : The Institutes and Practice of Surgery, by Dr. Gibson, the present able and distinguished professor of surgery in the University of Pennsylvania, represents largely his views obtained through private communication and publications. Other individuals have also been, through their writings, the means of his intercourse with the press on particular points ; among them may be mentioned Dr. J. Randolph, his son-in-law ; Drs. Benjamin and Reynell Coates ; and, to some degree, myself. Whether these several sources of information, do not furnish nearly all of an original kind which he himself would have advanced, may remain unsettled as a question ; but my opinion is, that nearly the whole fund is supplied. This however I say with great regret at his reserve as a writer. Lamentations of the same kind have been made in the case of Dessault, for it is almost entirely through his pupils that his reputation is transmitted. I may perhaps be pardoned for the allusion, in saying, that in an instance of unequalled importance, the foundation of Christianity, we have no original document, it is all through disciples.

To the preceding claims to our professional veneration, were united physical qualifications of the most perfect kind. He had a correct, sharp, discriminating eye ; a hand delicate in its touch and movement, and which never trembled or faltered ; an entire composure, and self-possession, the energy of which increased upon an unexpected emergency. He had a forethought of all possible contingencies and demands during a great operation, and therefore had every thing pre-

pared for it; when performed he entered upon a most conscientious discharge of his duty to the patient, and watched him with a vigilance and anxiety which never remitted till his fate was ascertained. If to the foregoing brilliant qualities as an operator, and the loud plaudits which attended their exercise, we add a chastening of feeling, which subdued every sentiment of vanity, and regulated entirely his judgment; and that he had an invincible repugnance, a horror at engaging in dangerous operations through ostentation, and where the probabilities of cure were not largely in favour of the patient: we have in this summary the most perfect example of a surgeon, which this country has ever seen. But as these great points and striking professional land-marks seldom come in clusters, it will probably be long in the course of Providence before there will be a reunion of all the same qualities.

His operation for the stone on Chief Justice Marshall, in 1831, was the last of his great efforts. He anticipated it with much anxiety, but when brought to the point he rallied finely—every thing was as usual in readiness. The unexpected turn given to the operation, by the almost incredible number, probably a thousand small calculi which he met with, and their adhesion to the internal coat of the bladder, did not disconcert him in the slightest degree. He in a little time detected the existing state of things, and they were brought to a successful conclusion, being followed by a complete cure. This operation was the more interesting from the distinction of its two principal personages; the one, the acknowledged head of the legal profession, and the other of the medical: and both sustaining themselves; though in advanced life, by that tone of moral firmness and dignity which had advanced them from inconsiderable beginnings, to the stations which they then occupied.

He was remarkable for the smallness of his charges, and for an indifference to fees; for he frequently gave up large ones when there was no adequate reason for it. A gentleman who was extremely solicitous about his wife's health, and derived satisfaction from consulting Dr. Physick concerning it, on taking leave placed in his hand a roll of bank notes: the doctor put it into his pocket without looking at them. The gentleman departed, the doctor almost undesignedly drew the notes out to examine them, and found that there were two of a hundred dollars each. He sent a messenger in haste after the gentleman, and brought him back. "Do you know, sir, how much you gave me?" "Yes, sir, I gave you two hundred dollars, which I was much gratified to do, believing that my wife will now

get well under your prescription." "Sir, have you two ten dollar notes in your pocket?" "Yes, sir." "Will you let me have them?" "Certainly." "Very well, here are your two hundred dollars; the two tens are quite enough:" and this resolution he persisted in until the gentleman had taken back the two hundred. In the case of Chief Justice Marshall, who was both an opulent and a liberal man, he refused positively a fee, and a sort of commutation was finally made by his consenting to receive a superb piece of plate.

With this indifference to fees, he was however exceedingly exact when money was received, in the appropriations of it to some productive end: his professional labours sometimes produced twenty thousand dollars a year, and his method in this respect finally yielded a sum of more than half a million of dollars.

He was exceedingly scrupulous about receiving money to which there was a doubt of the right. It is the usage of Philadelphia for physicians not to charge the clergy. Dr. Physick had attended the daughter of one, she was rich, and upon her death the executors requested an account, which he made out at two hundred dollars. It was reported to the doctor after this, that one of the executors had observed, that he thought the families of the clergy were exempt from charge. He began to consider on this matter, and finally became so scrupulous that he declined receiving a farthing: and it was only after strong importunity and explanations from the executors, that he could be prevailed upon to take the amount.

He was particularly intolerant to opposition and to disingenuousness on the part of a patient. To a lady whose maternal solicitude was excited to rebel at the repeated bleedings of a child threatened with hydrocephalus, he said, "Madam, I take leave of your child, the responsibility of its life rests with you." She was fain to send afterwards for him on his own terms, and the child recovered. When a very young practitioner he had a gentleman of distinction, Mr. Lardner, under treatment for pleurisy. His frequent bleedings excited some expression of doubt from Mr. L.; the reply was, "Sir, I must have my own way, or none at all; I bid you good day." The gentleman afterwards mentioned his astonishment at such conduct, not thinking that in this decision of character were the germs of the greatest surgeon in America, and one of the first in the world. To a West Indian who was refractory at being tapped for a hydrocele, he said, "Sir, I'll have none of this, down with your pantaloons, I know perfectly what I am about." He operated and cured him.

He expressed the strongest reprobation of the conduct of a gentleman who being under treatment for sore legs, had by feasting and drinking violated the prescribed rules of diet. He felt it as a breach of good faith between the parties. On the contrary, where in a difficult case the patient had concurred fully with him, had scrupulously abided by, and assisted cheerfully in all that was done, when the cure was finished, the esteem which this candour produced made him feel almost as much obliged to the patient as the patient could be to him, and he often spoke of it afterwards with pleasure. My brother-in-law, Mr. Dulles, had a dangerous inflammation of the knee, in which he perseveringly and scrupulously followed every direction and injunction of Dr. Physick, and it was attended with the happiest result: Dr. Physick never forgot it. This was a disease which in his early professional life was considered among the most formidable, under the name of white swelling, and the plan of treatment which he instituted, as I before mentioned, was really an immense step in the practice of medicine.

Dr. Physick was of middling stature, and not inclined to corpulence even at his best periods of health. His bust was a remarkably fine one; he had a well formed head and face, the expression of the latter being thoughtful and pensive, sometimes enlivened in conversation by a smile, but very seldom so, spontaneously. His nose was aquiline and thin; and his eye hazle, well formed, vivid, and searching,—his gaze seemed sometimes to penetrate into the very interior of the body. His eye acquired additional effect from his pallid, fixed, and statue-like face. His ear was large, flat, and unhandsome, being generally concealed by the way in which he wore his hair. His hands were small, delicate, and flexible. He was not well formed in the legs and feet, the latter being rather large and flat. He dressed with great neatness; his clothes being put on with an exact attention to the process, and being from year to year of a uniform cut: blue with metal buttons was the favourite colour for his coat, a light waistcoat, and light grey or drab pantaloons. Every one acquainted with him must remember the neatness and conformity, one day with another, of the bow-knot in his cravat; the cleanliness with which he shaved; his smooth, polished, and semi-transparent visage; the method with which every hair of his eyebrows and head had its place. The hair of the head was combed backwards from his forehead, so as to expose the entire volume of the latter. Many no doubt remember the very admirable and characteristic appearance imparted to his physiognomy and head by the use of hair

powder, and how this almost solitary remnant among the gentlemen of Philadelphia of an ancient fashion, seemed to be in entire harmony with his own individuality of mind and of reputation. There are also perhaps some among us who felt a twinge of regret when, ten or twelve years ago, from sheer modesty and a desire to avoid any peculiarity of dress, he gave up this ornament, so appropriate to himself, and exposed the traces of time by the mixed hues of his locks. The queue, now so utterly exploded, he however continued to the last, but much reduced in magnitude by the successive encroachments of the scissors, and by the losses of age: this only relic of his person it is my fortune to possess.

His personal habits were fixed by an unyielding set and durability. He had passed his life in a certain diurnal movement and rotation, any suspension or deviation of which put him to inconvenience. He must have the bed that he was accustomed to; the same food, dressed in the same way. His delicate health made him seek solitude as a refreshment; he was therefore no diner out; had no habits of conviviality; received no company in a familiar way, except now and then the call of a friend. Though not much of a talker himself, he was susceptible of amusement from lively conversation where he was on familiar terms; otherwise he was very reserved, and sometimes impatient of it. He was particularly irritated at prolixity in a patient, and most frequently would not bear it at all; his common defence against it being a few observations of a catechetical kind, and then a declaration that he had learned enough. He was no traveller, and had no propensity to be such. The wonderful evolution of the social interests of this country, and the vast augmentation of its inhabitants, all took place while he himself was a chief actor; and yet he never seemed to desire to witness with his own eyes, the prodigies which were going on far and near. He went from Philadelphia to London by the straightest route; he went from London to Edinburgh by the straightest route; he returned from Edinburgh to Philadelphia by the straightest route; and he lived and died in Philadelphia, circumscribing his movements to the smallest compass, and only leaving the city on urgent professional calls, excepting that within the last ten or twelve years he spent short periods of time in the summer at a country seat in Maryland, near Port Deposit, for the improvement of his health.

His habits were frugal and economical; he disliked wanton expenditure, and latterly made an exact estimate of the utility of a thing before he bought it.

Doctor Physick's traits as a teacher corresponded with other points in his character. His course of surgery, upon which his reputation was founded in an especial manner, was eminently practical and instructive. He did not pretend to range over the whole field of this science, but limited himself to topics of daily occurrence, or at least such as might be expected in the practice of any medical man. Relying upon his own experience and habits of observation, he had but little to do with the opinions of others; he quoted them rarely, and never in such a way as to leave the point unsettled by an array of opposite authorities. His opinions were for the most part founded upon deep reflection, and were decided in one way or another; he never leaned to one side and inclined to other, so as to neutralise his weight; he either admitted entire want of information, or considered himself in possession of the requisite degree of it. This tone of sentiment pervading his lectures they were most eminently didactic, and were listened to with a thorough conviction of his correctness; indeed such was his authority, that it was held almost as indisputable as a revelation,—to oppose it was to brand one-self with folly.

He was but little of a reader, and therefore had but a very limited acquaintance with medical literature; he decidedly preferred studying every thing for himself in the laboratory of nature, beginning his analysis of the human machine in a dissecting-room, and solving the problem of its disorders and their cure in a hospital. The proposition in every disease he considered as limiting itself, to the positive experience, of what had done good and what had done harm. His consultations always assumed this character.

Dr. Physick's English rearing, gave him strong suspicions and prejudices of the French character; he was with no small difficulty made to believe that there was any thing sensible, good, or truthful in French medicine: and owing to a trivial incident, he detested, what no doubt many of us will be astonished at, to wit, a French cook. He used to say, "Ah, these French cooks; I'll tell you how one of them served me some years ago. I gave an order to him for a dinner to a company; among his nasty dishes, he served me up a Turkey with one wing off, and in such a state that it was difficult to tell what it was: when I give dinners now I take good care not to employ them; and the dishes are dressed in such a way that you know what you eat." Notwithstanding, however, his aversion to every thing French, he saw the value of Dessault's principles of

bandaging, and having made some useful additions, he practised on them during the greater part of his surgical life. But the infusion of an English spirit in all his medical predilections was very apparent: the nursery training even of that period was favourable to it.

We now amuse ourselves with the steadfastness of the British national faith, which makes every true son of the Isle believe that the Thames is the longest and largest river in the world, that Cornwall is the extremity of the earth, and that the people are the most polished, the most enlightened, and the most magnanimous to be found; better observation and travelling have improved our views, but the time is not very distant, when we could swallow the preceding creed with the sincerity and simplicity of John Bull himself.

As his opinions were for the most part formed with deliberation, so they were retained with firmness; and they, like his habits, were durable to an extreme. This we may account for, inasmuch as they were never taken up on capricious grounds, but always upon the most scrupulous examination of proof. He required, too, personal proof, such as would satisfy his understanding, through his eyes, his ears, and his touch. Naturally exact, systematic, and persevering, these traits were fully developed by his education and training; hence his character became finally as unchangeable as the stamp on coin, it had neither voluntary power nor susceptibility of alteration: nothing but a fusion like that of metal could have modified it. Death is to him that fusion, and it is permitted to us to hope that before an All-wise tribunal his virtues will be fully appreciated and accredited, and that his sufferings of body and of mind were only a probation preparatory to a more happy state.

The doctrines of theology occupied much of his attention for twenty years or more before he died; yet it must be admitted that he derived a very doubtful satisfaction from them. Its dogmatic points were always the subjects of inquietude, and never fully received by him; difficulties great and small were constantly present to his imagination. His profession made him the witness of so much human pain and misery, that he did not know how to reconcile it with what was said of the goodness of the Creator. The dispositions infused by nature into the animal kingdom to make its races tear each other to pieces, either from sheer ferocity or for food, touched deeply his sensibilities. He felt pity and compunction for such as contributed to our own food, and took some steps to mitigate their mode of death, by recommending that the larger animals should be killed by dividing the spinal cord immediately

below the occiput, while the smaller might be smothered in some very destructive gas.

The preceding sombre and questionable view of the benevolence of the Deity, no doubt arose from his bad state of health excluding him from every thing like personal enjoyment, or a deliberate survey of the glories and beauties, I may say beatitudes of nature ; and from his mind being therefore never relieved from its achings produced, by his routine of professional duty. Not being given to expressions of sentimentalities, his cold and steady manner was mistaken by some for apathy. He felt however acutely, when not the slightest external indication of it appeared. He was always anxious and excited when preparing for a great operation, and when it was finished, spent sometimes the remainder of the day in bed, in order to recover and tranquilize himself. The death of patients not unfrequently laid him up from the excess of his sensibilities.

It will now be understood how Dr. Physick's unsatisfactory prosecution of religious inquiries was the natural and the logical result of his character. His sensibility to suffering made it incomprehensible to him how the fiat of Omnipotence, which spoke the beasts of the earth into existence and the cattle, but also infused the most hostile and deadly passions into them, should, under such circumstances, declare "*God saw that it was good.*" His exact and methodical habit of inquiry into the evidence of every thing, made him require the same sort of proof for a theological dogma, or a Scripture narrative, that is furnished by a mathematical problem, or an ordinary natural phenomenon ; and he could not be satisfied that if God had really spoken to man, the evidence would not be equally clear. With strong sentiments of piety, he was constantly in a state of anxious vacillation in regard to the Christian faith. Impelled to it on one side by a sense of his helplessness ; of the necessity of a support more than the world could give ; by a feeling of respect for a system so universally diffused, advocated and adopted by men of the greatest virtue and intelligence : on the other side, he was repelled from it by the invincible principles of his own mind. It was an incomprehensible code to him, and so it continued to the last. In former years I have often heard him say when ruminating on this subject, "Death, what can it be ; with all our inquiry it is at last a fearful step in the dark."

Philosophy certainly has its trials. In forming the mind to the interrogation of the visible world : in expanding its powers, and in

assimilating it to beings of unearthly existence, it creates while we are in health and sound, a confidence of ourselves and in our own powers, which makes us believe that we are equal to any possible state of things. But let us turn from this buoyant and exhilarated state, and imagine ourselves in the solitude and pain of a sick chamber, with the conviction that death is advancing with an un-failing and steady step: where is that process of chemical analysis or of logical deduction, which enlightens us in regard to its character, and braces the nerves for the meeting? where is that dissection of the heart, of the brain, or of any other part, which has revealed the grand mystery? All knowledge is emptiness itself, or a misty vision. It is no uncommon thing in the practice of medicine to find a woman, born, living, and dying in obscurity, with little or no education, but yet, directed by her religious sentiments and vows, exhibit a most edifying example of meekness and joy at the prospect of release from a painful existence; believing that she had done her part, and had nothing more to ask for. On the contrary, the man of high powers and cultivation, emblazoned with distinctions, or tumid with philosophy, is found in every way the reverse; he looks upon death as an awful necessity to which he must endeavour to reconcile himself, and finally comes to the decision with a sort of stern compliance at an unavoidable requisition. Death is to him a region of unpromising and unknown characters; the admitted revelations on this subject are to him either conjectures or fables, for his texture of mind renders it unsusceptible of the requisite faith; his belief can never reach that vivifying and enthusiastic point which enables him to say, Death where is thy sting! grave where is thy victory! How strangely does the inside of a great man contrast with the outside;—with the part and the appendages that the world sees, and delusively believes to be the source of un-failing happiness.

Some of the incidents of the doctor's last sickness, marking the decrepitude into which he had fallen, transpired, so as to become the subjects of public conversation: for to him was not granted the boon so eloquently expressed in the message of the Senate to the President of the United States, on the death of General Washington; that "Favoured of Heaven, he departed without exhibiting the weakness of humanity."* Surely to the intelligent no apology can be wanting for the infirmities of age and of illness, and yet it is but too true that the public sensibilities were moved.

* Sparks, vol. i. 565.

Can it be peculiar to our city that she is fastidious about her great men? That she is better pleased when they die like demigods in the midst of their glory? or that she wishes them to be transferred, like Romulus, to the regions of the heavens while still alive and in state? She certainly feels impatient and excited when she hears that they have undergone the common lot of declining humanity; that the pains, the capriciousness, the imbecilities of mind and body of old age, have also come upon them; that the grasshopper has become a burden. Within the cognizance of most of us, were the expressions of satisfaction that a late, most beloved, and venerable bishop was removed before he fell into any remarkable decrepitude of mind: there were persons even when he was on his death bed, but while his fate was yet uncertain, adding almost by their wishes to the preponderance of the scale of death, and this through sheer affection for him.

The aspirants for reputation and for high public estimation, may well pause and reflect on the consequences of their exertions being successful. They may at least take a useful lesson, in seeing by what rigid rules, and with what sensitiveness their conduct is scanned even when they are in their most vigorous action. Philadelphia requires that the ermine of reputation be neither stained, torn, nor abused in any way; that the character itself should correspond with the hypothetical perfection and greatness which are presumed to attend it; and she denies to age its great privilege of returning once more to childhood.

The retiring character of Dr. Physick during his whole life, made him rather shun than court a display of public honours. They were, however, occasionally presented in a way which could not make them otherwise than acceptable. An instance of this occurred during the winter preceding that of his death, when, after an absolute retirement of five years from the duties of teacher, a generation of young men, constituting the medical class, a large majority of whom had never seen him, spontaneously came forward, and as a testimony of their admiration and homage for his talents and acquirements, had an original portrait of him taken, and placed in one of the public lecture rooms. Mr. Inman, the artist employed on the occasion, succeeded in painting an excellent likeness. The ceremony of its presentation to the Medical Department, took place on the 22d February 1837, in the presence of a large concourse in the Anatomical Lecture Room. An appropriate and touching address was delivered on behalf of the class, by Mr. Carter N. Berkeley,

of Virginia, which was replied to by the dean of the medical faculty; after which the professor of chemistry, Dr. Hare, entered into observations, showing how much his own feelings were interested on the occasion, and responded to the sentiments which had been manifested on both sides.

Private tributes of enthusiastic admiration and affection, occasionally found vent in the public papers. One of the most pathetic and meritorious is in the following verses; the authorship of which is, I regret, unknown. It appeared in the American Daily Advertiser a few years ago, and is attributed to a member of congress from a distant state.

ADDRESSED TO P. S. P., M.D.

Hope of the wretched! to thy healing art
In tears of thanks and praise a stranger bends,
And with the transports of a grateful heart,
Hails thee his kindest, dearest, first of friends.

All that he feels, thou knowest not,—nor can know;
Yet mid thy thousands, rescued from the grave,
Bethink thee of one victim—sinking slow,
The best and loveliest, Heaven and thee couldst save.

Her's was a deep, strange malady, that wore
Body and soul, and hope and life away,—
As if the heart, consuming at its core,
Perished in sad and inscrutable decay.

Thou didst restore her! God and thou alone!
And one who watched her couch in mute despair,
And held her life much dearer than his own,
Pours out to Heaven for thee his fervent prayer.

Him thou forgettest—but must remember her—
The pure, the calm, the beautiful, the mild,
Aye! even now, her name thy pulse would stir,
For thou dost love, and sooth, and call her child!

They say thou art cold—unlike to other men;
A snow crowned peak of science, towering high
Above the heart's warm, soft, sequestered glen,
As flashing sunset glories on the sky.

Who say so know thee not—nor can discern
Beneath thy sage, professional disguise,
How deep the feelings he, whom they call stern,
Hides from dull heads, hard hearts, or careless eyes.

His influence on the public mind was seen in other ways. A family who, for some cause had become dissatisfied with their physician, and were deliberating about whom they should employ, were passing the door of Dr. B., and heard Dr. Physick's servant deliver his compliments to Dr. B., but heard no more of the message. The gentleman who was the head of the family, being satisfied that a physician must be meritorious to whom Dr. Physick's compliments were sent, adopted Dr. B. as his family physician, and afterwards gave this explanation of the ground of his confidence.

On his demise, testimonies of respect for his memory were adopted at many distant places, in the form of resolutions from medical bodies. Those of which copies have been received are, The Faculty of the Transylvania University : The Faculty of the Louisville Medical Institute : The Medical Convention of Ohio : The Faculty of the Medical College of Georgia : and the Physicians of St. Louis. It is not a little remarkable in these and other expressions of public opinion, that in the bodies represented (acting as they did without concert or knowledge of each other's proceedings,) the term, "Father of American Surgery," heretofore much in use, has been almost universally adopted ; so that it may now be considered as irrevocably fixed, under that rule of theology which admits as incontrovertible "*quod semper et ubique et ab omnibus.*" We therefore now hail him again in this place under the Title of Father of American Surgery, and let no hand at any future day be so presumptuous, or so arrogant, as to attempt to tear down this honourable inscription to his memory.

Among the local testimonies of respect may be mentioned a Resolution, on the part of the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, directing a Committee to prepare a comprehensive minute concerning him. This task was executed by its chairman, William Meredith, Esq., in a way equally creditable to his head and to his heart ; a spirit from its own innate honour and refinement in touching upon the virtues of others, could not fail to strike on congenial cords. The Medical Faculty passed Resolutions of respect, and adjourned their lectures. The Medical Class appointed Dr. Chapman to deliver a Eulogy. The Medical Society appointed

the son-in-law of Dr. Physick, Dr. J. Randolph, whose name is so favourably inscribed in the annals of surgery, to do the same for them. And it is known to yourselves that the present memoir is the result of respectful sentiments on the part of the American Philosophical Society : of sentiments arising rather from the intercourse of the sick chamber, and the confidence of private life, than from any signal contribution on the part of the subject of it, to the objects of the Society. We can, however, scarcely doubt that, with a larger share of health, and fewer pressing engagements, we should have seen him, like our lamented President, Wistar, exciting, by his frequent presence, the zeal of the Society, and giving a direction to its enterprise. The example and the lessons of his great master, Hunter, had certainly prepared him well for such an exertion of his talents in physiology and comparative anatomy.

In carrying this notice probably beyond the intention of the original resolution, the usage of the Society, and also beyond those bounds to which I could with propriety trust myself, as defining my own competency and your feeling of patience, I have this apology to offer :—The relation subsisting between myself and the individual, whose traits and virtues I have so imperfectly commemorated, was one of ardent affection on my part—of profound veneration—of benefits received, and few, perhaps none returned ;—of a kindness which took me by the hand, at a time when I was youthful and unpatronized ; and by its activity and uniform tenour, infused encouragement, strengthened the imbecility of early professional life, and finally led to whatever may be most valuable in my condition.

THE END.