The legitimate goal of professional ambition : an address, introductory to the course of lectures in the medical department of the St. Louis University : delivered in O'Fallon Hall, October 31st, 1853 / by Wm. M. McPheeters.

THE LEGITIMATE GOAL OF PROFESSIONAL AMBITION.

AN ADDRESS,

INTRODUCTORY TO THE COURSE OF LECTURES

IN THE

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

OF THE

ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY.

BY

WM. M. McPHEETERS, M. D.,

PROFESSOR OF MATERIA MEDICA AND THERAPEUTICS.

DELIVERED IN O'FALLON HALL,

OCTOBER 31st, 1853.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

At a meeting of the Medical Class of the St. Louis University, held in O'Fallon Hall, J. B. Holman was called to the chair. The object of the meeting was stated to be for the purpose of requesting a copy of Prof. McPheeter's Introductory Address for publication. The following Gentlemen were appointed a Committee for said purpose: J. T. Crow, P. E. Noel, C. C. Forbes, Thos. J. Booker, and Montrose A. Pallen.

St. Louis, Nov. 1st, 1853.

PROF. McPHEETERS.

Dear Sir,

At a meeting of the Class, held in the Lecture Room of the College, we the undersigned were appointed as a Committee, to solicit of you the manuscript of your Indroductory for publication.

We also take this opportunity of expressing the esteem of the Class in general.

Yours truly,

J. T. Crow,
Perry E. Noel,
Chas. C. Forbes,
Thos. J. Booker,
Montrose A. Pallen,
} Committee.

St. Louis, Nov. 2d, 1853.

Gentlemen,

Your note of the 1st inst., requesting, on behalf of the Class, my Introductory Lecture for publication, has just been received, and in compliance with the wish thus expressed, I herewith transmit to you the manuscript for the purpose indicated.

Accept for yourselves, Gentlemen, and for the Class which you represent, my best wishes, and believe me

Very Truly

Your Obedient Servant,

Wm. M. McPHEETERS.

To Messrs. J. T. CROW,
P. E. NOEL,
C. C. FORBES,
THOS. J. BOOKER, and
MONTROSE A. PALLEN.

Gentlemen of the Medical Class.

We have assembled this evening in conformity with our annual custom, publicly to commence the duties of a new session, and I am charged by my colleagues with the pleasing task of delivering to you the accustomed salutatory on this interesting occasion.

Before me are collected a company of free born American youth, gathered from all parts of this widely extended and fertile valley of the west; many of whom are about to enter for the first time upon the arduous, yet untried duties of a scientific and demonstrative course of instruction; while others, whose familiar faces we rejoice again to behold, assure us that although acquainted with—they are not dismayed by the difficulties which lie before them; but on the contrary are determined to persevere until they obtain the reward which science promises, and will surely confer on her faithful votaries.

While therefore, extending to you all, as I most cordially do, a hearty welcome to these halls of learning, I propose to employ the present occasion, in calmly and dispassionately considering—from this elevated "stand point"—*what is the legitimate goal of your professional ambition, and in pointing out the means by which that goal can most surely be attained.*

In the outset of the professional career, it is to be presumed that there are but few, if any, who do not desire to attain eminence in their profession, and the great reason why so many fail in realizing this most natural desire—why amid the multitudes who annually enter our profession—so few comparatively, ever leave their mark behind them, or succeed in enrolling their names among the canonized benefactors of mankind, is not that they do not desire to succeed, or because success in the highest and broadest acceptation of the term is absolutely beyond their reach, but simply from the fact, that they set out without having first counted the cost of success, without having any fixed purposes, or definite ends in view, towards the accomplishment of which all their energies are steadily directed. Or it may be, that adopting the necessarian philosophy which teaches that—

> "There's a divinity that shapes our ends
> Rough hew them how we will,"

they are content to trust to blind chance, or fortuitous circumstance to

give direction to their future course, instead of assuming to be the architects of their own fortunes—subjecting alone to the will of the sovereign disposer of all events.

If the simple love of distinction, or the bare desire for eminence were all that is required—if a few fitful efforts would suffice in lieu of the persevering toil and industry, at which alone success can be purchased, then indeed, "in the vocabulary of youth there would be no such word as fail." But who does not know that such is not the case? Who has not learned from experience that *labor* is inseparably connected with all that is truly great or desirable in life?—For, "*strive to enter in*," is as clearly and distinctly inscribed over the door which leads to the temple of science, as over that straight and narrow gate, which leadeth unto everlasting life.

But, while something *more* than the simple love of distinction is necessary to success, yet it must be admitted that this desire constitutes an essential element in the attainment of success and is by no means to be disregarded. Indeed, the love of eminence, the desire to be distinguished among our fellow men, is a principle so deeply implanted in the human heart, that its exercise seems almost as natural as the involuntary act of respiration by which our bodily organization is sustained. It is nature's stimulus to noble enterprises and heroic deeds. It touches the secret strings which set in motion the whole mental machinery—rouses every latent energy of the mind—breathes fresh life into the drooping frame, and imparts the spirit necessary to the accomplishment of the task proposed.

Men are not content merely to drag out the "three score years and ten," allotted to them by their creator, but they pant for immortality, and desire that their names shall live, that their memories shall be revered for ages after their bodies shall have crumbled into dust, and become mingled again with their mother earth. This longing after immortality, has ever been the great *moral lever*, which has moved the mind of man and enabled it to achieve all those mighty intellectual results which have so tended to dignify and elevate the human species, and enabled man to claim a kindred with Divinity itself.

It was this anticipation which crowned the joy of Harvey when by the combined agency of reason and experiment he had succeeded in demonstrating the route of the circulation. This hope, which animated the mind of Newton amid those philosophical researches which ultimately developed the immutable law of gravitation, and pointed out that *force* by which all matter, from the minutest microscopic atom to the innumerable systems of worlds lying far beyond the range of human vision, are all bound together in one harmonious and stupendous whole. This, which lead Herschell to penetrate the far off, and almost illimitable regions of space, and add a new world to our system. This, it was

which breathed into the minds of Homer and of Milton the inspirations of genius, which burst forth in strains of harmonious song, such as earth never heard before.—This same desire has ever animated the bosoms of Patriots, Heroes and Philosophers, and will in all time to come, continue to be the parent of every useful discovery.

In thus connecting the hope of immortality, and the gratification of our ambitious desires, with exertions tending to ameliorate the condition of mankind, and elevate his moral nature, the Divine author of our being has acted, as indeed in all his dealings with man, with wise reference to the good of his creatures. And he who would annihilate this feeling in the human breast, would forever arrest the car of mental improvement, and degrade man to the level of a brute, having no higher aim than the gratification of his present apetites.

Nor is there anything in itself wrong, in indulging this instinct of our nature, interwoven as it is with our own advancement, and with humanity's dearest interests. In fact, its very existence is evidence of mental superiority, for as Dr. Johnson remarks: "Men's ambition is generally proportioned to their capacity. Providence seldom sends any into the world with an inclination to attempt great things, who have not abilities likewise to perform them." Who is there, who has not, at some period or other of his life, felt his bosom glow with delight, and his heart beat high with anticipation, as contemplating the deeds of the mighty dead, his youthful imagination has reached forward to the period when happily his own name may become identified with events, which, through the long vista of time, will be looked upon with the same fulness of admiration and delight with which we are now wont to contemplate the fields of Marathon and of Leuctra.

It was with the hope of cultivating this very feeling, that the ancient Spartans annually assembled their youth around the grave of Leonidas, that, in contemplating his noble and heroic deeds, their young minds might be inspired with the same holy patriotism which led him to sacrifice his life for the good of his country. And, acting upon the same principle in all subsequent ages, and by every nation, like heroic deeds have been celebrated with like pageantry. Neither has the effect of such celebrations been lost on mankind, nor are any wholy exempt from their influence.

Even at this very moment, it may be, that there exists in the mind of some one of you—a secret purpose—the germ of some future discovery in science which will not only cause the name of its author to be embalmed in perpetual remembrance, but induce unborn thousands to rise up and call him blessed.

While, however, the love of distinction, when kept within due bounds, and exercised towards proper objects, is both, desirable and commendable, yet is not alone sufficient to insure success, but in order that it may be rendered available to useful purposes, in order to prevent

him who would indulge in it "not wisely but too well," from becoming the sport of every passion, the play of every wild emotion, it must be associated with a fixedness of purpose, and a steady determination not to give over until the desired goal be fully attained.

He whose ambition it is to scale the giddy hights of professional eminence—and who with the constancy of a fixed star—

> "Which maketh not haste, which laketh not rest,
> But ever fulfilling its God-bidden hest"—

moves steadily on towards the accomplishment of this end, will assuredly receive the reward of his labors, and be crowned with triumphant success—whilst he who in his eager but capricious aspirations to be great, spurns the monotonous round of daily drudgery, will as surely make ship-wreck of all his hopes of distinction.

Assuming it therefore to be indispensably necessary for all who would navigate successfully the broad and difficult ocean of professional life, that they set out with fixed and definite plans, which must not only be well matured but also kept steadily in view—the question naturally arises, what these plans should be—or in other words—what is the goal of professional ambition ?

This question might be briefly and satisfactorily answered by simply announcing the fact that in the "Republic of Medicine," it is the proud prerogative of every one, no matter how humble he may be, to aspire to the highest rank in the profession—and that nothing short of this should ever be the deliberate aim of any one.

But, while this is true, it is important that we understand what it is that constitutes true professional success, as well as to point out the means by which it may be attained.

In what then does true success consist? Does is depend on the number of one's patients, the amount of his fees, or the extent of his notoriety? By no means, for these may all be multiplied without merit.

In almost every community there may be found those who without education, without medical knowledge, and with nothing to recommend them save their impudent pretension, gain practice, acquire notoriety, and grow rich, by appealing to the weakness and credulity of the public. This is the tribute which fools pay to ignorance and quackery, rather than the reward of true merit.

It is said of Mr. Cline, the celebrated English surgeon, that, at the age of forty, he was under the necessity of borrowing money to meet his daily wants. And yet, at the very time Mr. Cline had succeeded in mastering the principles of surgery, and in storing his mind with varied and useful learning. Without reputation, without money, and with bu few patients he had even then succeeded in obtaining an enviable success in his profession—a success which was not rendered more brilliant

by the hundreds of thousands of dollars which he afterwards acquired. The difficulty was, the world had not then succeeded in finding it out.

Neither is success in any wise to be estimated according to the measure of popular applause, or the appreciation the multitude may place on genius, or talent, or learning.—No standart is more unreal than this, for the whole history of the *world* proves that popular favor is uncertain and of all things most capricious. It was the same unstable multitude that condemned Socrates to drink the fatal Hemlock, which, a short time afterwards, disinterred and deified the sage and the philosopher.

The world too, could find no higher, or more congenial employment for the most gifted genius of the 18th century than that of *guaging liquors*.—Yet Robert Burns succeeded in enrolling his name conspicious among the proudest of Scottland's immortal bards—succeeded in touching the heart of every lover of song, and of genuine poetry from his day down to the present time, while the memory of thousands of his cotemporaries, who doubtless looked upon him as having failed in all the grand objects of life, has perished in everlasting oblivion.

If popularity with the millions be the criterion of success, then indeed, may the two great luminaries of our own political horizon, whose obscurity by death has so recently cast a dark pall over this fair land—be said to have *failed*, for, notwithstanding their distinguished and life-long services, they were denied the highest honors of the Republic, and were compelled to yield precedence to men incomparably their inferiors. Yet it is hardly necessary to repeat what the world knows by heart, and what every true American is proud to admid, that Webster and Clay succeeded in weaving for themselves chaplets of immortal fame—succeeded not only in identifying their own peerless names with the history of a nations renown, but in adding fresh luster to their country's glory.

The annals of our own profession, too, abound with instances illustrative of the same melancholly truth—in which the faithful and successful students of nature, the acknowledged benefactors of mankind, of whom the world was not worthy, have failed to receive even a moiety of that favor which is often so profusely lavished on the unscrupulous mountebank. I do not mean by this to intimate that they failed of their reward, but only to show that the approbation of the multitude constituted no part of that reward.

True, there is a success, which to the increase of practice addeth also fame and riches, and this, too, as the reward of real merit, but it is equally true that in *no one* of these, nor in all of them combined, does that success of which I speak consist.

The question then arises, what constitutes true success? I answer, that *it consists in being thoroughly qualified for, and in faithfully and*

conscienciously discharging those high and responsible duties which must necessarily devolve on those who are called to minister at the altar of human health. It consists in mitigating human suffering, multiplying human enjoyments and prolonging the period of human life. These are to be the grand objects of your lives, the ends towards which all your exertions are to be steadily directed, and their proper performance constitutes the sum of true professional success.

Having premised thus much as to the nature of success, as well as to the dignity and importance of the work upon which you are about to enter, we come now to the practical enquiry—How can that success be best secured?

My reply is :

1st. IN ORDER TO SUCCEED, THE PHYSICIAN MUST BE THOROUGLY EDUCATED, AND WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SPIRIT AND WANTS OF THE PRESENT AGE.

Each successive age has its own peculiarities and wants. Activity is preeminently the characteristic of this age, and its educational wants may be said to embrace a union of the thorough and profound with the practical.

The metaphysical absurdities, the dreamy speculations, and the unreal theories of by-gone ages, meet with but little favor from modern utilitarianism which subjects every thing to the simple, but severe test of "*cui bono.*"

This matter of fact tendency, while it has its decided advantages, is subject also to many and serious disadvantages when carried to extremes. It is not my purpose, however, now to enter upon the discussion of the one or the other of these, but taking things as we find them, it is obviously the duty of the aspirant for professionl honors to be prepared, both by education and habit, to meet the requirements of the age in which he lives, whatever they may be.

The best and surest way of effecting this desirable end has long occupied the attention of medical philosophers, and is still a fruitful theme with multitudes of would-be medical reformers at the present day. But, notwithstanding all that has been said and written on this subject, no better method has yet been devised, nor indeed can be devised, than the judicious combining of private instruction with attendance on medical lectures. And without wishing the slightest degree to detract from the value of private instruction, I hesitate not to assert that it is on the latter that we are chiefly to rely.

There can be no doubt of the fact, I think, that the mode of imparting instructions by means of lectures, is of all others the most speedy and efficient, and such would seem to be the unanimous opinion of the profession if we are to judge from the crowds which annually assemble in the great medical centres, both of our own country and of Europe, for this very purpose.

The division of labor, which assigns to each department a separate instructor—the ample means of illustration, and the facilities for demonstrating, usually possessed by well organized medical institutions, present advantages far greater than can possibly be obtained from any other source. In no other way, too, than this, is the student enabled to avail himself so effectually of the labor and researches of others, and make them his own; for in a single lecture of an hour in length, are often presented, in a clear and condensed form, the results of days, and even weeks of patient study and close reading.

These remarks are true of all departments of medical study, but more especially do they apply to those branches which, in a special manner, require to be demonstrated in order to be thoroughly comprehended.

If there be any point, in reference to medical education, settled beyond all controversy, it is that the demonstrations of the laboratory, the dissecting room, and above all at the bed side of the patient, are essential to a thorough medical education. These, and especially the two last mentioned, can be had nowhere so well as in large cities, and in connection with Medical Colleges.

But, Gentlemen, the object of education is not merely, nor even mainly to impart information, or to store the memory with *facts*; however important this may be—its highest aim is to *discipline* the mind, to inculcate habits of industry, and to train the student to think and investigate for himself, and that system of instruction is the best, which most thoroughly accomplishes these objects.

It has been well remarked that "there is scarcely any circle of human learning, upon the boundaries of which, the scientific physician does not necessarily infringe in some point or other of his extensive orbit." With such a boundless field before him, it is obvious that the education of the physician must be the work, not merely of a few years, but of a life time.

But reference has been made to an education in conformity with the spirit and wants of the present age, by which is meant that the whole mental training of the student should partake of that activity and energy, which are so characteristic of our times, and which are ever manifesting themselves in boldness and independence of thought, and originality of conception.

That the spirit of free enquiry should be liberally shared by the members of the medical profession, is not at all to be wondered at, as they have contributed more largely, perhaps, than any other class of men, to bring about the desirable result.

The study of medicine itself, has a decided tendency to unfetter the human mind, and cause it to throw off the shackles by which indolence and sloth seek to bind it to a fixed belief in the fashionable doctrines

of the day—and leave it free to soar untrammeled in the regions of truth.

It was the study of medicine that first lead Lock, the greatest of metaphysicians, into the paths of that philosophy which taught him how, by a single gigantic effort, "to rectify prejudice, to undermine established errors, to excite a fearless spirit of enquiry, and yet, to confine it within the boundaries nature has set to the human faculties."

It is indeed the glory of our profession, that although it is enriched by the experience of the past and gladly receives the contributions of all, while not only every age as it rolls by, adds new and invaluable truths to its already accumulated stock, and almost every year is marked as an epoch in its history, by the discovery of some new and important principle—yet it knows no authority so binding, has no theories so firmly established, nor any laws so universal, that any one of you may not set them aside, if by your own incursions into the arcanum of nature, you can bring forth facts sufficient to justify you in so doing.

The fear of being charged with presumption need deter no one from arraigning the opinions, and calling in question the conclusions of even the most renowned and hoary-headed among the fathers of the profession, provided always the appeal be sustained by well observed facts and sound arguments.

In other professions reason and justice are sometimes made to yield to bare authority—and a single erroneous decision is subsequently cited as precident for others of a like character; and thus *error* is made to propogate error indefinitely. Not so, however, in medicine; here the first lesson which the tyro is taught, is, that he must learn to think and observe for himself, that the cynosure of his professional exertions must be the spirit of the inductive philosophy—and above all, that the great volume of nature—the source whence all true knowledge is derived—lies open to all, and is equally accessible to him, to be read and interpreted, as to those who have gone before.

The every day duties of the physician, too, require that he should become truly the "interpreter and servant of nature, not her diviner and tormenter"—for scarcely any two diseases which he is called on to treat—even those bearing the same name—present precisely the same characteristics, but exhibit an infinite variety of phases, requiring on his part a constant exercise of judgment and discression, as well as a perpetual modification of the plans of treatment laid down in the books. So that he is necessarily compelled to cultivate the "power of serious, patient, constant, honest observation, which is at once a gift and a habit," as well as "that instinct for seeking and finding, and that knack of being able to apply knowledge instantly and aright in practice, which must forever constitute the cardinal virtues of the great physician, the very pith and marrow of his worth."

2d. He who would cultivate medicine successfully, must

HAVE AN ARDENT AND ABIDING ATTACHMENT FOR HIS PROFESSION, AND SO LONG AS HE LIVES SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE A STUDENT.

Love for one's calling is so necessary in all the branches of human exertion, that wherever it is found to exist in any considerable degree, it is uniformly regarded as the sure harbinger of success. Our own profession certainly forms no exception to this universal rule, the converse of which is as true as the rule itself.

It is not to be expected that he who practices physic *merely as a trade*, or with no higher aim than the sordid desire of gaining a livelihood, will ever rise above the level of the empyric,—for as has been well remarked—"while medicine is among the noblest of professions, it is the meanest of all trades."

As well might we expect the miserable reptile which crawls in the dust, and polutes the very earth with his slime, to follow the eagle in his lofty flight, as that he who can degrade so glorious a calling as ours to the selfish purposes of mammon, should appreciate the self cacrificing spirit of the faithful and devoted student of nature, who cultivates sciences for its own sake, as well as for the humane purpose of doing good to his fellow-men—and who, cheered by the Divine declaration, "in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these little ones, ye have done it unto me"—quietly and unostentatiously pursues his labors of love—looking to the approbation of his own concience for his remuneration, rather than to the mere recompence of pecuniary reward.

The study of nature in any of her departments is eminently calculated to enlist the affections and to impart true happiness, and in no other department are these desiderata more surely attained than in the investigations of the laws which govern the animal economy. With these laws the physician is necessarily obliged to become familiar, and it is both natural and desirable that he should acquire a fondness for tracing them through all their intricate windings, and obscure mazes, up to their full and perfect development in the production of life.

An ardent and abiding attachmnt to his profession is moreover necesary, in order to smooth the rugged path way along which the physician is sometimes called to travel, and he who feels conscious that he does not possess and is not likely to acquire it, need hardly hope for success, for the chaplet which adorns the scholar's brow—gathered as it must be from the boundless field of science, and woven by the hand of industry and toil, will surely never grace his temples.

Nothing but an enthusiastic devotion to the cause of science, such as is here referred to, would even have induced Orfila—the immortal founder of the science of toxicology, to expose his own valuable life, by testing the effects of poisons in his own person. Yet the disposition thereby manifested, to shrink from no task however difficult, to avoid no risk however perilous, in order to arrive at truth, was

the real secret of Orfila's eminent success and of his world-wide reputation.

Inspired, too, by the same humane feeling, we behold the eminent physician and philanthropist Chervin forsaking his home and his country, and tracking that terrible scourge—the Yellow fever from continent to continent, from Island to Island, and from hovel to hovel, that he might study its pathology, and become familiar with its treatment, and in order to demonstrate its *non-contagiousness*, even submitting to the loathsome task of swallowing the black Vomit.

This is the true spirit of devotion which should ever animate the physician, for nothing short will lead him to snuff the tainted air of the dead house, to incur the dangers of inoculation in post mortem examinations, or to inhale an atmosphere reeking with the foul breath of contagion, in order that he may acquire such a knowledge of diseases as will enable him to ward off its fatal consequences from his patients.

Animated by such a holy ardour in his calling the true physician will naturally seek by all the means in his power to acquire an intimate knowledge of disease, both by the right use of his own powers of observations, and by a thorough familiarity with the recorded experience of others.

Such is the wonderful progress of knowledge at the present day, and so intimate the relation which every discovery in science bears to our profession, that, in order to keep himself properly posted up, the physician must be a student; and as he cannot command days, or even hours of leisure, he must see to it that he makes proper use of his spare moments, "the gold dust of time."

"If thou hast aught to do—
If thou wouldst win thyself a name—be great,
Or good, or wise, or powerful—then seize
The golden moments as they pass.
To-day!
The living moments of to-day are thine!
Nor thou, nor angels know what lies behind."—

Ignorance in other pursuits of life is culpable, in medicine it is absolutely criminal. It is not a valid plea, when the patient is made to suffer for want of information on the part of his medical attendant—That 'the Doctor did the best he knew how." It is his duty to know what to do, as well as how and when to do it—provided such knowledge is vouchsafe to man, and while living in the willful neglect of this duty he cannot justify himself, either at the bar of conscience, or of God.

3d. ALTHOUGH NOT ABSOLUTELY INDISPENSABLE, IT IS HIGLY DESIRABLE, THAT IN THE BEGINNING OF HIS CAREER, THE PHYSISIAN SHOULD HAVE— IN ADDITION TO AN ARDENT LOVE FOR HIS PROFESSION —THE STIMULUS OF NECESSITY—POVERTY.

A celebrated English jurist, on being interrogated by a young riend as to the requisits for success at the bar, is said to have replied

—"Parts and poverty." In this laconic answer there is deep philosophy, as well as a profound knowledge of human nature. True, there is no necessary connection between poverty and professional success. On the contrary it is natural to suppose, that the freedom from anxiety in reference to pecuniary affairs, as well as the many and great advantages which wealth affords for the acquisition of knowledge, would place its fortunate possessor in the most favorable position for the attainment of high professional rank. Experience, however, has abundantly proved that such is not the case, and has demonstrated the fact, that although ardently desired, wealth uniformly serves as an incubus to the aspirant for professional honors. The reason of this is obvious, by removing one of the main springs of human action—*necessity*, it tends to engender indolence, and indolence is fatal to mental energy.

It is worthy of remark, that of those who have become eminent in any of the learned professions, or among those who are now making their mark upon the age, *few, very few indeed* commenced life with a fortune. Let any one who will undertake the examination, and they cannot but be struck with the fact, that with here and there an honorable exception, the world is *very little* indebted to the sons of the wealthy, while it owes *much, very much* to the sons of poverty, who from necessity are compelled to labor for their daily bread, at the same time they contend for those higher honors, which like the prizes of the Olympic games, are bestowed only as the reward of personal exertions. Indeed the very efforts put forth in order to supply the wants of the body, serve also to strengthen the mind and fit it for intellectual achievements—while opulence on the other hand by anticipating these minor wants supercedes the necessity of exertion, thereby enervating both mind and body, and producing as a necessary consequence a race of physical and intellectual drones.—

> "Labor is good for a man bracing up his energies for conquest,
> And without it life is dull, the man perceives himself useless.
> The thought of duty sweetens toil, and travail is a pleasure,
> And time spent in *doing* hath a comfort that is not for the idle;
> The hardship is transmuted into joy, by the dear alchemy of mercy.

4th. FORSAKING ALL OTHER PURSUITS, THE PHYSICIAN MUST MAKE HIS PROFESSION THE GRAND OBJECT OF HIS LIFE.

Medicine, Gentleman, is a jealous calling, it brooks no divided affection, and half way devotion, and bestows its honors only on such as continue to be its constant votaries.

Allusion has already been made to the necessity of fixedness of purpose, but even this, however desirable, will not suffice, unless it be accompanied by a steadiness of pursuit which turns neither to the right hand nor to the left, and which will not be decoyed into other

pursuits however attractive soever they may seem. A constancy which

"Like the Pontic sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels returning ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont."

Nothing short of an entire consecration of all his time and talents will enable the physician to acquire that exuberance of knowedge, and plenitute of facts which he must possess in order to become really eminent.

This is the point in which so many fail, and for lack of this spirit of devotion come short of success. Especially is this true in our own country—for in this free and happy land, where alone the rights of man are understood and respected—where the classic form of living freedom is seen every where unsubdued by the minions of despotic power, and where every avenue to promotion, every high road to distinction is open alike to the humblest citizen, and to the proudest and wealthiest born, the physician is peculiarly liable to be led off from his profession into the seductive path of politics —than which nothing can be more fatal to his advancement in science. For when once the taste has become so perverted as to prefer the excitement of the hustings to the calm deliberations of the study, there is an end to all progress in medicine.

The physician who embarks in political life may acquire notoriety as a politician, but, preeminence in his profession he certainly will *never* attain.

To master the science of politics, not less than the science of medicine is the work of a life time, and it is folly to dream of success in both.

He, therefore, who fixes his polar star in the political horizon, may as well bid farewell to all hopes of professional eminence.

The same incompatibility also, exists between medicine and other pursuits, whether of business or of pleasure, so that he who would become great in his profession must make *it* the grand object of his life.

FINALLY. HE WHO WOULD ADORN HIS PROFESSION AND WOULD BECOME A BLESSING TO MANKIND, MUST BE AN UPRIGHT, CONSCIENTIOUS AND TRUELY CHRISTIAN MAN.

It is admitted on all hands that a profession charged with so lofty and benign a ministration as ours, and where responsibilities are of so delicate and weighty a character", must necessarily demand "eminent qualifications both of the head and heart."

Indeed the well being of the community demands that the physician should be a man of spotless purity of character —for, in the language of an other—"He enters into the privacy of families, and even to the most remote chamber: he beholds the human character, disrobed, by

the rude hand of mental and corporeal suffering, of all the coloring and drapery thrown around it by the forms of society, and thus becomes the depository of facts which involve the happiness of individuals and of society."

Rightly to fulfill so important and delicate a trust, it is in every way desirable that both the learning and morality of the physician should be fortified and "adorned with the luster which genuine piety alone can impart".

The charge has often been made that the study of medicine tends to foster infidelity; but this is so obviously a calumny on our noble profession, and one which has been so repeatedly and indignantly repelled, that it is scarcely necessary now to reiterate the denial. "Medicine' says Dr. Gregory, "of all professions should be the least suspected of leading to impiety. An intimate acquaintance with the works of nature elevates the mind to the most sublime contemplations of the Supreme Being, and at the same time dilates the heart with the most pleasing prospects of Providence. The difficulties that must necessarily attend all deep inquiries into a subject so disproportionated to the human faculties, should not be expected to surprise a physician, who in his daily practice is involved in perplexity and darkness, even in subjects exposed to the examination of his senses."

However much the smatterer in science may pride himself on his scepticism and expect thereby to cheat the world into the belief that he is profound above his fellows, yet there is something paradoxical, if not absurd in the very idea that there is or can be any real discrepancy between true science and Christianity, since the same Divine Author who established the laws of the one, also laid down the doctrines and requirements of the other.

Galen is said to have been converted from Atheism by the sight of a human skeleton. To his splendid and versatile mind, accustomed as it was to profound investigation, as well as to reason from cause to effect, there was evidence enough of design, in these bare bones, to lead him to a knowledge of that supreme Architect who formed and arranged them with such wonderful adaptation to the ends they are designed to fulfill.

But what shall we say of the obduracy of that scepticism which can stand out against the accumulated evidence afforded by this same skeleton when robed in its mantle of flesh, when nourished and vivified by the scarlet streams of life, when quickened into motion by a thousand nerves which like so many electric wires convey to every part the affections and dicta of that mysterious organ of the mind occupying, what has been poetically yet truly termed —

"The dome of thought and palace of the soul"—

and when all the various organs of this fearfully and wonderfully wrought frame are regularly performing their respective and important functions with the harmony of the spheres? Surely if —

"An undevout Astronomer is mad"— so in like manner is an undevout Physician.

Whilst, however, the study of Medicine, as in fact the study of all the other sciences, so far from leading to infidelity, tends rather to direct the mind up to The Great First Cause, and to beget the disposition to submit with profound deference to his will as revaled in the laws which he has impressed on matter; yet it must be acknwledged

that the course pursued by medical writers, has had the effect — whether designedly or not—to exclude God, from all participations in the affairs of our profession, and especially from any agency in the cure of disease, and the reparation of injuries. And in his stead a cloudy image entitled "nature", has been raised in the mind to which high attributes of power, wisdom and goodness are ascribed." This obscure something called nature which even the atheist readily acknowledges is really the only Divinity known in Medicine. Thus as Dr. Daler emarks, "the student of Medicine is often called on to bring his gifts, and deposite them like the Athenian on the altar of an unknown god."

This pernicious tendency has doubtless been encouraged, in no inconsiderable degree, by the doctrine of "separate entitics," so long entertained by the shools, but which is now, I rejoice to say, rapidly passing away—according to which a number of imaginary minor divinities, are called into existence, for the purpose of presiding over the various functions of the body—like so many independent co-existing sovereigns, each charged with a separate administration—as for instance, the "*vital principle*," the "*vis medicatrix nature*", et id omne genus. But how much more natural, how much more in accordance with reason, to say nothing of revelation, is it to conclude, that in Medicine, as in the rest of the universe there is but one living and true God; and that these so called "distinct entitics" are in reality but the properties with which he was pleased originally to endow the matter of which man is crea'ed.

What I ask is the necessity of invoking other aid than that of Jehova to preside over the animal economy? Is man so mighty a being as to require other powers than those of the God-head to govern his frame? Surely He who numbers the stars, and holds the earth in the hollow of His hand, is able also to regulate and control the creature which He has formed.

It is high time that this apparent discrepancy between medicine and sound theology should be done away with, and the Almighty admitted to his rightful participation in the affairs of our profession.

I entreat you therefore, Gentlemen, as you love your profession, that you strive to bring about this desirable result, by submitting to the claims of religion and by listening to the voice of reason, as well as to "the words which the lips of wisdom utter,"—for they are:—

Perfect and much to be desired, and giving joy with riches,
No lovely thing on earth can picture all their beauty,
They be chance pearls, flung among the rocks by the sullen water of oblivion,
Which Deligence loveth to gather and hang round the neck of memory;
They be white-winged seeds of happiness, wafted from the islands of the blessed.
Which thought carefully tendeth, in the kindly garden of the heart;
They be sproutings of an harvest for eternity; bursting through the tilth of time,
Green promises of the golden wheat, that yealdeth angels' food;
They be drops of the crystal dew, which the wings of the seraphs scatter,
When on some brighter sabbath, their plumes quiver mirth with delight. * * *
They be grains of the diamond sand, the radiant flour of heaven
Rising in sunny dust behind the chariot of God';
They be flashes of the day sprung from on high, shed from the windows of the skies;
They be streams of the living waters, fresh from the fountains of Intelligence:
Such and so precious, are the words which the lips of Wisdom utter.