

Charge to the graduating class of the Philadelphia College of Medicine : at the semi-annual commencement, February 28th, 1857 / by B. Howard Rand.

Contributors

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Rand (B.H.)
CHARGE

TO THE

GRADUATING CLASS

OF THE

Philadelphia College of Medicine,

AT THE

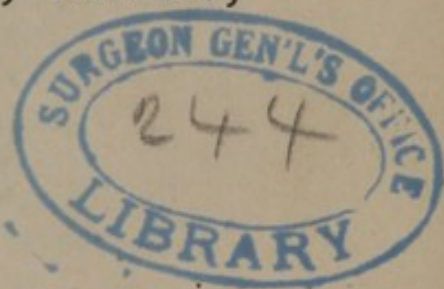
SEMI-ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT,

FEBRUARY 28th, 1857,

BY

B. HOWARD RAND, M. D.,

PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY.



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PUBLISHED BY THE GRADUATING CLASS.  
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PHILADELPHIA:

BROWN'S STEAM POWER BOOK AND JOB PRINTING OFFICE. LEDGER BUILDINGS.

1857.

CHARGE

GRADUATING CLASS

Columbia College of Physicians

NEW-YORK

1851

E. HOWARD RAND, M.D.



LIBRARY OF THE GRADUATING CLASS

PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE

CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, {
February 26th, 1857. }

At a meeting of the Graduating Class of the Philadelphia College of Medicine, held at the College Edifice, February 26th, 1857, on the occasion of the close of the winter course, C. E. Iddings, of Maryland, was called to the chair, and J. L. Whitaker, of New York, was appointed Secretary. On motion it was

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to request of Prof. Rand a copy of his Valedictory Address for publication.

J. L. WHITAKER, *Secretary*.

DR. B. H. RAND,

Dear Sir:—The undersigned were, in accordance with the foregoing, appointed a committee, and in making our request, permit us to express the high esteem entertained for you by the committee and class.

Very truly yours,

C. E. IDDINGS, Maryland,
GEORGE R. WELLS, New York,
SAMUEL PAGE, California,
F. E. RENDON, Ecuador,
W. M. WALSH, Massachusetts,
P. SCHURK, Iowa,
WM. B. HATCHER, Virginia,
JONATHAN L. WHITAKER, New York,
J. W. PITTINOS, Pennsylvania,
J. H. BURGIN, Pennsylvania,
G. L. VERDIER, South Carolina,
R. B. DE HAY, South Carolina,
WILLIAM SHARP, California,
MICHAEL BRADLEY, Pennsylvania,

106 SOUTH NINTH STREET. {
February, 26th, 1857. }

Gentlemen:—I most cheerfully comply with the wishes of the Graduating Class, so kindly expressed through you. A copy of my hastily prepared address is herewith submitted, Very truly yours,

B. HOWARD RAND.

To Messrs IDDINGS, WELLS, PITTINOS, WHITAKER and others, Committee.

664 KERRA BERRY

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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN GRADUATES:—

To me has been entrusted, by my colleagues, the grateful task of congratulating you upon the position which you this day assume.

This day, the present hour, must ever be remembered by you; when years have rolled over your heads; when the voices of those who have, through so many hours, labored with you as teachers, may be silenced; when memory gives but a misty outline of the past, still will this hall, with its brilliant assemblage, its impressive ceremonies, with the faces of your Professors, and of your classmates, as now assembled together for the last time, stand out in bright relief, a picture never to fade while memory lives.

You have toiled up the steep and rugged ascent in a path whose thorns were many, and whose flowers were but few, and now stand, viewing on the one hand the difficulties and dangers you have surmounted, and, on the other, the untried field of future labor, dim with the mist which hides from all, I trust, a glorious future.

We who have watched and labored with you now cordially welcome you into the Fraternity of Medicine, the noblest of human pursuits.

In entering upon the duties of your profession, gentlemen, you must remember that no longer is the path in which you are to tread, marked out for you as heretofore; until now, your only care has been *how* to do; in the future, you will be compelled to solve a problem of far greater difficulty—you must decide *what* to do, and then *how* to do it. You must exercise your judgment, your self-reliance, as well as your industry and your perseverance.

Let your aim be high. If you seek an high position, you

will at least attain mediocrity ; if content to seek but mediocrity, even that will be denied you. Begin your professional career with the determination that, if alive, you will in ten years occupy a certain position, and never swerve from that path ; success will be almost certain. If, however, you start with an undefined purpose, you will waste the best years of your life in unworthy objects, and in frequent changes of scenes of effort. Many a man of talent, of energy and of industry has thus failed. As the witty and accomplished Holmes has expressed it :

“ Be firm, one constant element in luck,
 Is genuine, solid, old Teutonic pluck ! ”
 “ Stick to your aim, the mongrel’s hold may slip,
 But only crowbars loose the bulldog’s grip,
 Small as he looks, the jaw that never yields,
 Drags down the bellowing monarch of the fields. ”

But an elevated aim and the utmost steadiness of purpose avail little to the idle man. The history of all distinguished men shows that they owed their success rather to their industry, than to any especial talent, or force of circumstance.

Since the primæval curse, labor has been the price of success ; yet may we say that this curse has lost its bitterness, for in action alone can man find the source of that equable flow of contentment and happiness which all seek. No one can fail to be miserable who is not actively employed—and work is itself the greatest relief to the man surrounded by troubles and anxieties ; the pre-occupied mind admits not of those forebodings or regrets which make up so much of the misery of mankind.

By industry, is not meant alone attention to your patients ; this is, of course, expected. An inattentive physician, one who postpones his visits to a more convenient season, is a curse to his patients, who had better be left to the *vis medicatrix nature*, than submitted to treatment hurriedly begun and carelessly followed up.

You have other duties than even these to perform. Medicine is eminently a progressive science, and joins in the gigantic strides with which all human knowledge is at this day marching

onward. Chemistry, Physics, the Natural Sciences, all contribute to its riches; thousands of investigators are at work, and the results of their labors are poured freely forth for the benefit of mankind.

Statistics show us that at the present day, of all cases in the hospitals, but eighty die where a century ago one hundred perished; that is, one-fifth of those who formerly died now recover.

If we add to this the known increase in the average duration of human existence, due principally to sanitary regulations and a better knowledge of the laws of life, we have a picture which no medical man can regard without pride. He can look forward with the confident assurance that each year will make our Art more truly a Science, and diminish in the same ratio suffering and death among mankind.

I trust that all of you will become laborers in the great field of medical research, not living merely for the performance of your daily duties, but to add to our stores of learning. Every one can do something; let none imagine a fact too trifling to observe and record. The simple deflection of the magnetic needle by an electric current, observed by *Ørsted*, has given us the electric telegraph, that wonderful, yet characteristic agent, of this nineteenth century.

But, whether investigators or not, gentlemen, your duty to your patients *demand*s that you should, at least, be made acquainted with the progress of medical learning, the result of the labors of others.

The profession of medicine is one of the most fearful responsibility; on your word rests the limb—nay, the life of a fellow being. The time must soon come when this responsibility must be firmly met by you. Act! Should the result prove unfortunate from an error in judgment—it is but the lot of man to err; but, should it be from ignorance on your part that that limb or that life is sacrificed, you are criminal, and your conduct admits of no excuse.

You may render life a burden to your unfortunate patient; or,

by the death of that patient, strike down the cherished hopes of years—crushing hearts that once were happy, and sending the iron into the soul, there to rankle and embitter existence itself, leaving, for years, a heavy cloud hovering over the life where all before was sunshine.

May it never be your lot to suffer the remorse which the consciousness of such ignorance must bring, after the unfortunate issue of a case. The world may never know it, but your own heart will judge you, and your self-condemnation must and will be bitter.

A nice sense of honor is an essential to the Physician; without it he becomes a charlatan.

Our profession, gentlemen, has temptations of no ordinary kind. It often happens that accidental circumstances throw a medical man in contact with those who are under the care of a professional brother, and it is easy to undermine confidence in him by words, looks or gestures, for the community is ever credulous on the subject of health.

Such conduct may win a patient, but not the respect of that patient, much less of the profession or of the community. Success obtained by dishonorable conduct must be temporary, and even supposing it permanent, the self-abasement necessary to such acts lowers a man in his own eyes, and he envies him who trusts to his abilities and to time, and whose prosperity, though perhaps tardy, is unsullied by the recollection of such deeds.

When called in the absence or sickness of another, or in consultation, the honorable physician will seek to avoid injuring him by the slightest evidence of want of confidence in his skill or attention. Much less will he, taking advantage of the engagements, sickness or perchance domestic affliction of a brother practitioner, keep in his hands the accidental case in order to retain the fee and derive such other advantage as he may.

I would lay it down as a rule, that no physician called in by accident, or in consultation, should ever become the attending physician of that family, while the one with whom he was associated, or represented, was in the same locality.

The Code of Ethics, of which each one of you has this day received a copy, should be your guide. He who acts up to its precepts, must be a better man, and while often suffering temporary loss by carefully guarding against unprofessional acts, will, in the end, win success, and, what is far better, an unspotted name and the respect of the profession and the world.

The relations of a physician with his patients are of so intimate a character, that he should ever regard all pertaining to them, as confided to his honor.

“Some recent writer has remarked, says Cruveilhier :—‘That the influence lost by the poet and the divine, has been gained by the bar.’ Still more true would be the remark applied to our own profession.

“What are the interests of property compared with those of life? The physician is the most intimate confidant of families; before his approach falls the veil of the sanctuary of private life; to him is laid bare the suffering soul, so often the cause of bodily ills, and into whose wounds he so well knows how to pour the balm of consolation.

“Daily doth the physician, by his kind advice, reconcile the estranged and calm the angry. Daily doth he aid, with his name, his protection, and even with his purse, his unfortunate patients—for, gentlemen, our patients become our friends friends dearest when most unhappy.

“What prudence, what reserve, what delicacy, what discretion is imposed by our profession upon us! Admitted to the domestic circle, you must hold as a sacred trust whatever of confidence is imparted to you; your tongue must never utter what your eyes have seen or ears heard; and, should your generous care be repaid by gross ingratitude, let the ingrate sleep calmly—his secret is buried in your heart. Remember, gentlemen, that no human consideration may sanction the violation of professional confidence—stronger than threats or promises—let your conscience as a physician, protesting against all revelation, reply, simply, “my duty forbids!”

The profession you have chosen, gentlemen, is one which, of

all human pursuits, presents us with the widest variations of pleasure and pain, of advantage and disadvantage. The young practitioner has to endure much—long months and years, of hope deferred, sneers—perhaps poverty—and unrequited labor; and when, at last, practice becomes remunerative, unremitting toil. To the physician there is literally no rest, no Sunday, or holiday; whether at meals, or enjoying his hardly earned repose; in the social circle or the pursuit of science, the call of the sick must be obeyed, and that on the instant. In all seasons, often wearied and sick, must he plod onwards. Should he leave, for a few days' recreation, the cost is to be counted not by the actual expense of his journey but by the often far heavier loss of the practice he has left. He has to deal with those who from suffering are weak, irritable, petulant and exacting. Often is he summoned unnecessarily at unseasonable hours; much of his daily labor must be of a repulsive, nay, dangerous character. The anxieties of the profession, the fearful contest with disease, when the rustling of the wings of the death angel may be heard as you contend with him for the mastery, and often, too often, unjust blame, for results which no human power could control, or base ingratitude, after weeks of unremitting attention and care;—these, all these, are the physician's lot. He will see the mere trader, or the bloated quack, roll in wealth, while he may with difficulty meet his expenditures.

But, gentlemen, the picture is not all dark. Its lights contrast the more strikingly with its depth of shadow. Although the income derivable from the practice of Medicine may not be large, yet are you exempt from the risks of a mercantile pursuit, and while health remains, may rely upon the steadiness of that income. You are also exempt from the temptations to dishonest dealing, the almost inevitable lowering of moral honesty which the active competition of trade is so apt to produce. The motto, *recte si possis, si non, quocunque modo*, as old as Horace, still rules many.

If, indeed, your days are passed among the sick, the dying and the bereaved, you have still often the unutterable satisfac-

tion of seeing a fellow creature snatched from death by your instrumentality, as if you had plucked him drowning from the water, and can exultingly exclaim, *adsum, adsum me fecisse*. If your labors are sometimes repaid by ingratitude, remember that we are but men, and no one can expect to be rewarded here for his good deeds; if, after weeks of such anxiety as no other heart can know, of unwearied assiduity, you find all in vain, and your labor rewarded by the too common remark, "if some other had been present, or further means used, the result would have been different," the injustice is keenly felt. But, gentlemen, remember that such a remark is wrung oftentimes from a heart writhing in agony at its bereavement, where the brain is not itself, tortured by an anguish to which human life gives no parallel. But if ingratitude and unjust reproach sometimes reward your labors, much oftener will you be repaid by unbounded thanks, kindness and devoted friendship, on the part of your patients. If blamed for accidents, praise will be often awarded for results of which you can as little claim the credit.

It would seem that the field of labor of the devoted men of the medical profession, arduous as are its toils, and heroic as often are its self-denials and sacrifices, is one into which fame does not often intrude. When a wider ambition leads them beyond its limits, the training to which it has subjected them renders them the most fit of all for high success and distinction. The lamentations of a whole people, I might say of a world, are at this moment heard over the untimely loss of one who has shed an untarnished glory over his country, and illustrated the records of science and adventure. I need not say that I allude to our most distinguished fellow citizen, DR. E. K. KANE.

The social position of the physician is always an high one; to him especially belong the pursuits and revelations of science and her rewards. It may be that you will see the pretender and the quack exalted—leave their claims to time—neither granite piles nor ducal palaces can claim respect for their owners, or give peace of mind. You may hear your profession ridiculed; but, as Molière, the bitterest satirist of the profession, himself

says, "It is easy to laugh at medicine when one is in good health."

The time does come when the physician receives his due rank. "When the lurid breath of pestilence scatters destruction, desolation and dismay throughout the land, and death tramples with relentless and indiscriminate fury over the people; when the ties of relationship, of friendship and of affection are sundered by fear, and utter selfishness seizes on the hearts of men; then does the profession receive its meed of honor—then is the physician looked up to—then are the sneerers dumb, and the voice of ridicule hushed into silence."

But, above all, gentlemen, the practice of medicine is one elevating and ennobling in its character; its trials, its very contact with suffering, death and mourning, tend to strengthen and subdue the nature of man. It teaches the virtues of patience, forbearance, firmness, charity; it makes man kinder, gentler in his nature. It has been most truly said that no man is a true man in whose moral nature there is not much of woman's. The practice of medicine, gentlemen, develops the woman's nature in man, and thus ennobles him, tending to form the *eidolon* of the race—the being who shall combine the power, the intellect, the firmness of man, with the unselfishness, the gentleness, the nobleness of woman.

We are now about to part, gentlemen, never all to meet together again. Rest assured that your future career will always be one of deep interest to us; the ties already formed shall be lasting. We trust that on your part there will be an equally kind recollection of those whom you have regarded as your instructors, and that you will ever remember with pleasure the days spent in the halls of the PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF MEDICINE.

