

Introductory lecture by Matthew Semple in the Homoeopathic Medical College of Pennsylvania : delivered November 25, 1849.

Contributors

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no. 15

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

BY

MATTHEW SEMPLE, M. D.,

PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY AND TOXICOLOGY

IN THE

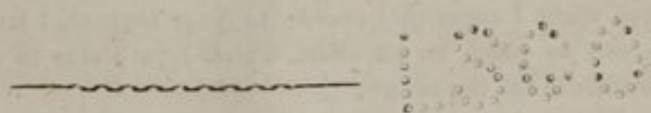
HOMŒOPATHIC MEDICAL COLLEGE

OF

PENNSYLVANIA.

DELIVERED NOVEMBER 25, 1849.

PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.



PHILADELPHIA:

MERRIHEW AND THOMPSON, PRINTERS,

No. 7 Carter's Alley.

1849.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Philadelphia, Oct. 27th, 1849.

PROF. SEMPLE:

DEAR SIR: At a meeting of the gentlemen composing the class of the Homœopathic Medical College of Pennsylvania, the undersigned were appointed a committee to solicit for publication, a copy of your eloquent and highly interesting Introductory Address, delivered on the evening of the 25th instant.

In performing this most agreeable duty, permit us, sir, to cordially add our personal solicitations, trusting that you will comply with our request.

Very respectfully,

We remain, yours, &c.,

JAMES E. GROSS, Maine,
J. K. LEE, Pennsylvania,
J. L. MULFORD, New Jersey,
BARTON MUNSEY, North Carolina,
THOMAS A. PEIRCE, Maine,
D. WILDER, Massachusetts,
G. W. BIGLER, Maryland,
G. W. CHITTENDEN, Wisconsin,
E. H. BACON, New Brunswick,
D. R. LUYTIES, New York,
SMITH ARMOR, Delaware,
JOHN J. CUSHING, Rhode Island,
A. S. WRIGHT, Ohio.
LEWIS DODGE, Michigan.

Philadelphia, Oct. 30th, 1849.

GENTLEMEN,—I cannot but feel proud of the very flattering notice which the class, through you, have been pleased to take of my opening address; and while I cheerfully accede to your request, I trust it will be regarded, —not so much as an effort which lays claim to any merit,—as a small memento for the future.

With assurances of my warmest regard, permit me to add a fervent wish for your future success and prosperity in the noble profession you have chosen, and for your final happiness.

I am, gentlemen,

Very respectfully, yours, &c.,

MATTHEW SEMPLE.

To Messrs. Gross, Lee, Mulford, Peirce, &c. &c.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

The rewards of the harvest, gentlemen, in all time, ever since the fall of man up to the present moment, have been preceded by the season of labor and seed time—the soil must first be opened up and prepared, stones, rubbish and weeds must be removed, then proper seed must be supplied, and fed with that aliment, which is necessary for its germination and fructification. Nor is this truth less applicable in the intellectual than in the physical world. All who have ever attained to eminence in any profession or in any science have done so through patient toil and persevering study.

To us, gentlemen of the medical profession, this is emphatically the commencement of seed time, for, as if reversing nature's seasons, we make

“Dark night and gloomy winter
As a glorious spring,
Heralding rich summer fruits
With the glad shout of harvest's welcome home.”

Here we gather to the pleasurable duty of spreading the pure seeds of medical truth upon the fertile soil of willing minds; of presenting those facts before the enquirer that are to be tended and nurtured with care till they produce, first, the bud, then the full flower and richest fruits of medical skill and scientific attainments.

Grateful that amid the chances and changes of ever changing time, our lives have been spared once more to greet each other; and while, amid the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noonday, the rattling

frame of the skeleton king has been heard stalking abroad throughout the length and breadth of our land ; his icy breath freezing the purple currents as they came welling up from Life's deep fountains, till the silver cord was parted, the golden bowl was broken at the cistern, and the beating heart stood still ; his bony sceptre has borne countless victims to the shades below, among whom many of the most devoted and honored, and some of the most talented of our profession have been summoned to people the silent cities of the dead—you have come up to fill their places, and to continue their usefulness and labors among the suffering of our race.

We welcome you then to our midst—we welcome those of you who were members of the first class, and who having already received the diploma of this College have entered the arena in manly contest for the honors of your profession—we welcome you, gentlemen of the first class, who having spent one season in our midst with profit and pleasure, have now returned to complete your instructions, that properly authorized and qualified, you may go forth to take your place beside your compeers, and shed honor upon this Institution as your Alma Mater. We welcome you, too, gentlemen of the second class, who for the first time form our acquaintance, to join your studies and interests with our own ; to one and all we extend a cordial welcome, with the assurance that as you shall apply yourselves with that assiduity which the dignity and importance of your studies demand, your most ardent wishes will be realized and your most sanguine hopes crowned with success.

The present century has been styled the age of progress, and so too it is. But, gentlemen, amid the giant stepplings of the human intellect there has been no one of the sciences that has advanced so rapidly, and so far, or which has contributed so largely to the rich treasures of mental development, as that branch to which it will be both my honor and pleasure to introduce you, during the many hours in which we shall be happily together.

Chemistry, gentlemen, is a noble art, but a still nobler science; she is the twin sister, nay, the patron, the foster-parent of all the sciences. She can live and prosper without them, whilst they on the other hand, without her, languish, wither, droop, and die. She takes a wider field for the display of her operations than any other of the departments of human knowledge; in fact, she enfolds them all within her circling embrace and imparts to them warmth and beauty and life.

Ere astronomy can soar and sail amid the illimitable ocean, the azure space, noting the lovely islands that float in those celestial seas, she must entreat our glorious science to give her glasses by which her vision is enabled to scale the distant clouds, and, as it were, lay those mighty orbs at her very feet for investigation.

Mineralogy and Geology may roam the surface of the world, and gather up its gems, or from the caves and caverns and the bowels of the earth, tear out and bring to light the richest treasures of the mineral kingdom, but then if they would understand their value, their composition and their use, they must bear them into the laboratory of their accommodating sister for explication and analysis. Thus is she universally operative in the mineral kingdom.

Botany looks upon nature in its most gorgeous attire; yet when spring comes forth to wake the earth from the sleep of winter, who can tell whence is it that so soon she spreads a mantle of cheerful green o'er hill and dale; while the sweet fragrance of her breath perfumes the passing breeze, and beneath her feet spring up every where beauteous buds and flowers, the brilliancy and splendor of whose hues outvie the richest pencilings and highest efforts of human art. Whence come these gorgeous hues, whence comes this sweet perfume, and from what vast store-houses are drawn the varied products of succeeding seasons? By what magic change are the acid juices of the summer fruits, the peach, the apple, grape, &c., converted into the sweet and luscious richness of the

gifts of autumn? Ask any of the sciences and they are sealed in silence; ask even botany and she too is dumb; 'tis beyond her skill while counting leaves and petals, pistals, germs and stems, to explain the mysteries by which these surprising changes are effected. Then ask Chemistry, and quickly she replies that the earth and air contain all that is required, and all these varied gifts of fruit and flower, of tree and shrub and grass, are but the collaboration of a little charcoal and water, that the mysterious conversion of the green and bitter and sour fruits of spring, to the sweet products of a later season, consists only in the addition of a drop of water, by which the starch in the former is transformed into sugar in the latter.

Nor is it the scientific and theoretical alone who derive benefit from agricultural Chemistry. The brilliant researches of Leibig have enabled the laborious agriculturalist, the hard working practical farmer, to greatly improve his tillage and manures, thereby vastly increasing his sheaves and his crops.

Thus do we discover Chemistry pushing her analyses and investigations far into the vegetable and mineral kingdoms. But it is in the animal economy that she performs a still higher and more solemn office. Here she teaches proud man himself—that his own material frame, so beautiful in its aspect and so noble in its bearing, is, in truth, but a compound of a few simple elements, which as they have previously existed in other combinations, will ere long be dissipated in decay and death, to be gathered into new forms of living things, which are seen springing into life even from the lap of death, forming parts of the crawling worm, which feasts sweetly upon his decaying body, and the noisome weed which springs up in rank luxuriance from his tomb, or imparting nutrition and vitality to the lowly daisy, the spotless lily, the perfumed and blushing rose and mournful willow, which kindred matter may have placed to hang its drooping branches, over the damp, dark and cold sepulchral bed of the departed friend.

But the mind of man has not been satisfied with gross matter as it is—the propelling influence of the age is an un-

conquerable, unquenchable thirst for advancement. Man seems to be aroused to a knowledge of the fact that he lives in a world of wonders, in a universe of prodigies. Impatient to explore what yet is concealed, he would break every seal and tear off every envelope that hides the object of his pursuit. That he may become the possessor of all wisdom, he has rushed out amid the wild untutored elements that he might throw reins upon them and bring them into subjection to his will, and he has succeeded. He has coveted Jove's red thunderbolts, that he may play with them as in sport, and now when round his head the

“ Rattling thunders war,
 And the live lightnings' leap from crag to crag.
 He stands unblenched amid the raging storm,
 And laughs the tempest into scorn,
 Seizing with giant strength a quivering trail
 Of fierce electric light, he charges it with thought,
 And sends it chained upon its wirey path
 To tell of life and death, of health and weal and woe
 To anxious friends remote.”

Wind and water and fire all crouch in subjection at his feet, ever ready to answer and obey the beck of man ; as the lord of creation, he has harnessed them to the chariots of his pleasure and commerce, and made them the ministers to all his wants. At his bidding the iron steed now rushes with impetuous speed along his allotted way, bearing large trains of merchandize in his course, while his panting nostrils dilate and scatter his fiery breath along his track; now bounding through the dismal valley—now thundering through the very heart of the granite mountain, over the swollen stream and along the plain, till he has performed his task and stops at the appointed stage.

But, Gentlemen, when shall I arrest my eulogy upon my favorite science ? Should I occupy your ear till

“ On the air
 The faithful bell hath knelled the midnight hour,
 The half would not be told.”

Suffice it then to say once more, that Chemistry is the most pleasing, profitable and attractive science which unfolds itself upon the page of nature before the mind of the student. Well do I remember when that page was first opened to my eye by Professor Wood, now Professor of *Materia Medica* in the University of Pennsylvania, but then Professor of Chemistry in the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy; yes, gentlemen, well do I remember, how then

“ She won upon my heart
Like love, on the young maiden’s soul,
When first its fires are kindled up,
No more to die.”

And it shall be my constant aim, gentlemen, to awaken your interest—to inspire your minds with the same delightful emotions that I have experienced, and to kindle up in your hearts the same ardor and the same love for this science which burns in my own.

This science will be more necessary to you, gentlemen, as Homœopaths than to others, because you will have to deal in most minutely divided doses, and Chemistry teaches to reach to the ultimate atoms of matter. It will teach you to combine correctly where you may find combination necessary, and to avoid neutralizing or antagonistic elements in your compounds; it will at the same time teach you how wonderfully, how inconceivably minute are the divisions of matter, how almost infinitely it may be subdivided, and by demonstrating to you the minuteness of the ultimate atom in every element, will clearly prove that the smallest portion of a medicine or any other material, will and does exert its due influence on every other substance with which it is brought into contact.

Superficial men may laugh at this. Well, let them laugh; laughter is the last argument of fools—it is all they can do: they only display their own ignorance and folly. Philosophers have long taught, even in the grosser subject of mechanics, that the least particle of matter must and does

exert a perpetual influence, on every other mass, no matter how great its bulk, and the pebble let fall on the sea shore attracts the world to it as really as the world attracts the pebble.

It has ever been the fate of great minds, especially if they have ventured to make known, for the first time, some newly discovered truth, to be laughed at by those who were either too ignorant to comprehend them, or who having some sinister purpose to accomplish, were, therefore, too wicked to acknowledge the truth.

So was it with Noah, when by divine command he spent one hundred and twenty years in building

The first staunch ship that ever floated on a troubled sea ;
all those around him laughed and mocked his warnings and advice, till the fierce flood overwhelmed them in its waves.

So was it with Columbus when he offered kings a wider empire and a new world to bound their sceptres' sway. They mocked him till he sued a beggar for a meal to feed himself and son, but plead so warmly with the Spanish queen that Spain at last reluctant took the boon.

So too with Harvey, when he taught that from the heart the blood flowed through the veins and arteries of the frame ; he was laughed to scorn, and so ridiculed and persecuted by the medical profession, that he lost his practice and nearly starved to death for his reward.

Fitch and Fulton when they first broached the theme of steam navigation were counted addled, frenzied enthusiasts ; and even when Fulton had completed the first steamboat that ever stemmed the tide, those gentlemen whom he honored by an invitation to partake the pleasures of his trial trip, were ashamed to be seen in his company, lest they should be by some identified with the crazy schemes of a crack-brained projector. But all these great truths have been established. Noah found salvation amid the horrors of a drowning world—Columbus proudly trod the shores of his fancied Ophir—every child knows that the blood does circulate—while the

puffing of 10,000 steamers on lake and sea proclaim the triumph of the genius of Fulton. But it may be said the world has grown wiser since then—well, so indeed it has grown wiser, but not better; interest still continues to warp the mind and to pervert the heart. Hence, although Homœopathy has thrown the gauntlet to the world—though the truths which she teaches, both as to the influence of divided doses, and of that great and fundamental principle by which even the cures of so-called Allœopathy are effected—*Similia Similibus Curanter*—have been long triumphantly established; still there are found men who, entirely ignorant of its merits, spend their time in sneering and in ridicule, which might better be employed in investigating its claims. But why is this? They fancy their interest demands them to smother the truth and crush the young Hercules even in the cradle. Or, settled in old customs, they will not take the pains to learn and fear to know the truth, like the candid fellow who argued with Galileo. When that great astronomer declared that the moon was globular, he was fiercely persecuted for heresy. Upon a certain occasion, while looking through his telescope, he was accosted by a philosopher, who took him roundly to task for his error. “Why, what folly,” exclaimed the wise one, “to attempt to make a man believe the moon to be round, when he has good eyes to see that it is only a flat disc.” “Here, here,” replied Galileo, “take my telescope and look for yourself, and you will be convinced of the truth of what I say.” “No, no, good faith, not I,” cried the fellow, “not I, for if I should see it, as you say, to be true, I would have no longer grounds to withstand you in dispute.

So is it, gentlemen, with many opponents of Homœopathy. Offer them opportunity for observation, entreat them to make a trial for themselves, and put its truths to the severest test, and they cry out, “No, no, not we,” and from my heart, gentlemen, I believe if they would tell the whole truth with Galileo’s philosopher, they would add, we are afraid we shall see the truth as you proclaim it, and should no longer be able

to dispute your doctrines or practice our old and confused systems with clear consciences.

But we are happy to find that there is a rapidly increasing desire to come to a knowledge of the truth. The history of this College gives encouraging proof that men are opening their eyes to the ascending sun of true medical principles, and your future studies and lives are destined to aid in extending this light, till it has illuminated the most distant part of our globe, and spread its healthful beams over all the abodes of suffering humanity.

We look for much from you in this glorious work, and, therefore, urge you to the most patient and untiring devotion to the acquisition of all its precepts. Make yourselves masters of your subject, masters of every branch, because there will arise cases in each department, where human life will depend upon your perfect knowledge of that department. As, for example, in cases of fractures and accidental wounds to which you may be called; then, if I may use a trite but forcible adage, you must have your anatomy and surgery at your fingers' end. In a case of broken leg and severed artery there is no time to be lost with safety; while you go to consult authority, the limb may have so swollen as to render the reduction painfully difficult or impossible; and in the other case the patient may have bled to death ere you had determined on what were best to be done. And again in cases of poisoning or suspected poisoning, the remedy to be efficacious must be immediate, and the antidote should be fully known and promptly administered; while you are searching for the test the work of death may be consummated, and both test and antidote come too late.

In such a case as this I would pronounce that man a murderer. Yes, gentlemen, that man who hangs out his sign and invites his fellow-beings in their distress to repose upon his skill for their lives, while he is utterly ignorant of the proper curative agents, I repeat it, in a case like this, where death results from the physician's ignorance, I would un-

hesitatingly pronounce that man a murderer; and in after life, if not bereft of all moral perception, his own conscience would confirm the sentence.

Whatever justice or truth in general may attach to the aphorism of Pope, I assure you it holds most perfectly true in medicine, and I would emphatically enjoin it upon every medical student to bear his lines upon his memory; for here at least

“ A little learning is a dangerous thing,
 Drink deep or taste not this Pierian spring,
 Here shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
 But drinking deeply sobers us again ”

Yes, gentlemen, it is only deep draughts that give to the physician a due sense of his great responsibility, and makes him truly desirous a proper preparation for his profession, and it is only by persevering toil and untiring study faithfully pursued, that this desirable fitness is to be attained, and the crown of happiness at length secured.

To attain then, gentlemen, a due sense of your moral responsibility in the practice of your noble profession, you must ever remember that every patient who comes under your care, places his future well being, his health, his very existence in your keeping. You have then the lamp of life placed in your hands to trim and to relume. 'Tis when that flame burns dim and low that eager friends seek for your aid and skill, that lambent flame once more to touch and kindle into health; 'tis then, too, while that flame is flickering in its socket and seems about to expire, that a genial breath may wake it into life again, or too rude a blast may put it out forever.

While you then shall apply yourselves with diligence to obtain every help and information to rightly qualify you for the pleasurable discharge of the duties of that station into which you will ere long be inducted, we, on our parts, will endeavor to supply every aid, to remove every difficulty, and to smooth your pathway to the inner temple of medical

learning; and happy shall we be to shed a clear ray of light on that road which will lead to the blissful consummation of your best hopes.

With these views and these feelings gentlemen, we once more welcome you to our midst—to our social circle—to our labors and to our hearts; nor in this, gentlemen, do we design merely to offer you a cold unmeaning courtsey; we *mean* what we say; it shall be our constant aim to make you not only proficient in all your studies but, happy in the pursuit of them. We do not wish to hold you off at arm's length, as if in fear and awe; but we bid you a sincere welcome to our closest intimacy. That while we are directing your studies to a proud consummation, we may also minister to your comforts and your wants. Should the hand of adversity and sickness fall upon you, we will most willingly obey the summons to your bedside, and strive with the help of Heaven's blessing to restore you to your wonted health and the pursuit of that godlike profession which you have chosen to adopt. We welcome you then to our sympathies and our friendships, for we know by experience how sad becomes the heart in its absence from home and kindred, especially when thrown for the first time into the bustle and, we may say, dreary loneliness of a large city; it is only then that we can realize the utter desolateness of being left alone. For to use the language of one of England's most gifted and heart-friendless poets, Byron:

“’Tis not to sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
Or slowly trace the forest's shady scene;
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been.
'Tis not to climb the trackless mountain all unseen
With the wild flock that never needs a fold,
O'er steeps and foaming falls to lean,
Or sail the sea sole tenant of your bark,
Or roam the desert mid its trackless sands,
Even this is not to be alone, this is not solitude.
'This is to converse with nature in her charms,
To be in company with God.

But mid the crowd, the hum, the shock of men,
 To see, to hear, to feel, and to possess,
 With none to bless us, none whom we can bless ;
 No gentle voice to speak in welcome tone,
 No heart to beat responsive to our own
 And give back sigh for sigh and love for love.
 None who with kindred sympathy endued,
 If we were not, would joy or smile the less ;
 This is indeed to be alone, this, this is solitude."

And it is to avoid such feelings that we proffer our advice and counsel, our friendship and our aid.

And to conclude, gentlemen, with the same simile with which I commenced ; we wish that each of you, after the labors of the seed time shall have passed away, may reap not only an abundant harvest of pecuniary recompense, but what is far richer and more precious to the high-toned and honorable mind, may you all shine conspicuous as the benefactors of mankind, and in the successful prosecution of your profession may each of you write his name high up on that pillar which records the achievements and triumphs of the healing art ; and at last, gentlemen, may you, one and all, reap a full harvest of immortal glory.

HOMŒOPATHIC MEDICAL COLLEGE

OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Located in Filbert above Eleventh Street, Phila.

Lectures will commence annually, on the first Monday of October, and continue until the first of March ensuing, and will be delivered under the following arrangement.

CALEB B. MATTHEWS, M. D.,	<i>Materia Medica and Therapeutics.</i>
WILLIAM S. HELMUTH, M. D.,	{ <i>Homœopathic Institutes and the Prac-</i> <i>tice of Medicine.</i>
SAMUEL FREEDLY, M. D.,	<i>Botany and Medical Jurisprudence.</i>
CHARLES NEIDHARD, M. D.,	<i>Clinical Medicine.</i>
WALTER WILLIAMSON, M. D.,	{ <i>Obstetrics and the Diseases of Wo-</i> <i>men and Children.</i>
ALVAN E. SMALL, M. D.,	<i>Physiology and Pathology.</i>
MATTHEW SEMPLE, M. D.,	<i>Chemistry and Toxicology.</i>
FRANCIS SIMS, M. D.,	<i>Surgery.</i>
WILLIAM A. GARDINER, M. D.,	<i>Anatomy.</i>

Amount of fees for a full course of lectures,	\$100 00
Matriculation fee, paid only once,	5 00
Practical Anatomy,	10 00
Graduation fee,	30 00
Students who have attended two full courses in other schools,	30 00

The commencement will take place early in March.

W. WILLIAMSON, M. D., DEAN,
No. 80 North 11th St. Phila.



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