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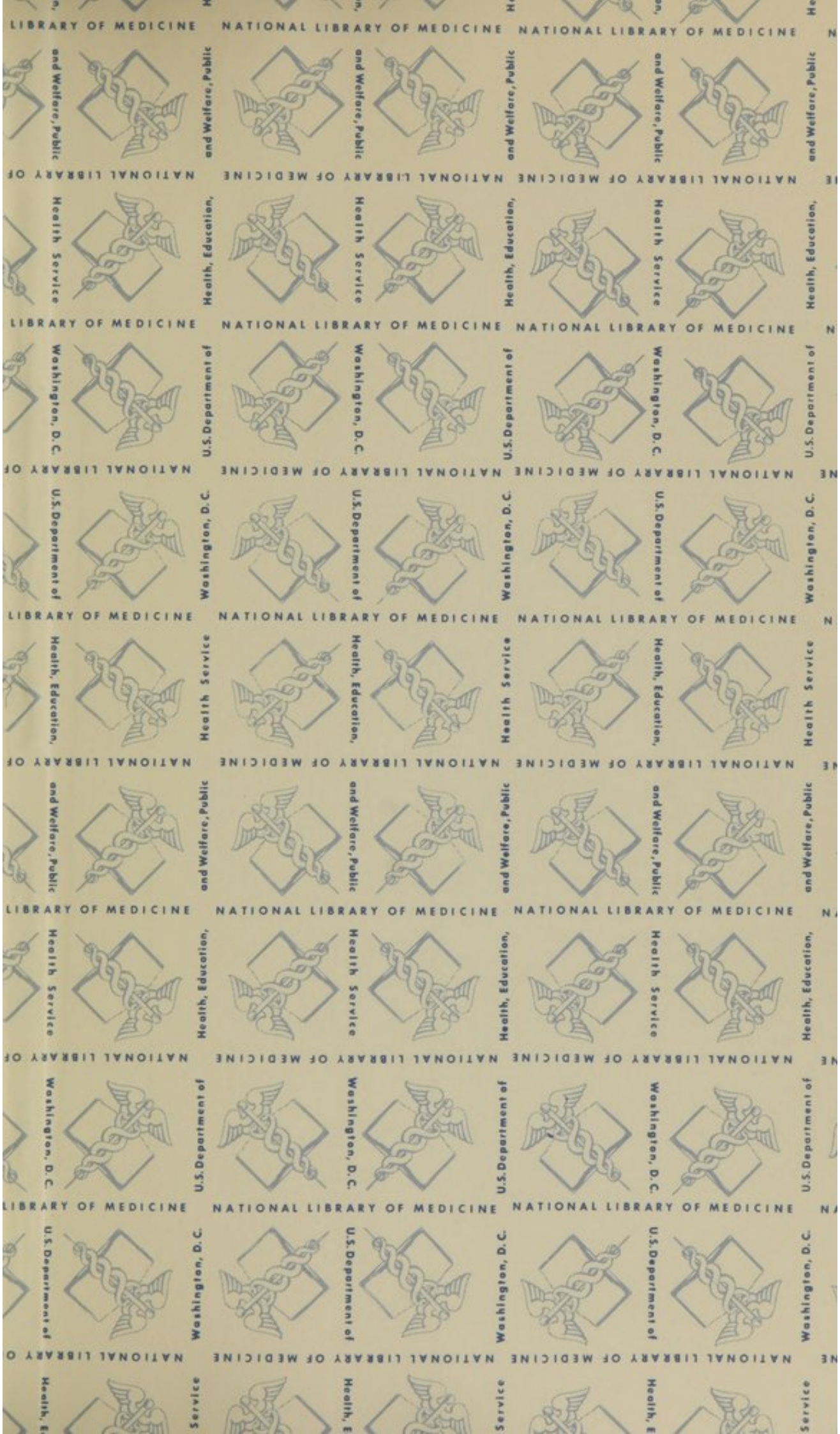
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DISCOURSES

ON

MEDICAL EDUCATION,

AND ON THE

MEDICAL PROFESSION.

By JOHN WARE, M. D.,

HERSEY PROFESSOR OF THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PHYSIC IN THE UNIVERSITY AT CAMBRIDGE.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.
1847.

TO

JAMES JACKSON, M. D.,

WHOSE INSTRUCTIONS HAVE DONE

SO MUCH TO PROMOTE MEDICAL EDUCATION,

AND WHOSE LIFE

SO MUCH TO ILLUSTRATE THE MEDICAL CHARACTER,

THESE DISCOURSES

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The first of the following Discourses was delivered, in May last, before the Massachusetts Medical Society, an association which is intended to include all the regularly educated physicians of the State. Being, as is usual, published by the Society, I have availed myself of the opportunity to have some additional copies printed, and have added to it two Introductory Lectures, upon related subjects, delivered at distant intervals, before the Medical Class of Harvard University.

From this similarity of subject, the reader will perceive a repetition, sometimes, of nearly the same thought, and often perhaps, in nearly the same language, in the different discourses. As they were, however, intended for different audiences, and delivered at periods far apart, I have preferred to leave them precisely as they were written to answer the particular design for which each was originally prepared.

They are published with the hope that they may direct the attention of those into whose hands they may fall, to the very important topics to which they relate, viz: medical education, and the character and relations of the medical profession. I cannot but think it singular, that society takes so little interest in a subject, which every one, on reflection, must admit to be of the utmost consequence. In his own individual case, every one feels and acknowledges the great importance of the character and acquirements of his medical attendant; yet, as a whole, mankind seem profoundly indifferent as to all provisions for the education and the formation of the character of those who are to sustain this relation to them. My object will be answered if I shall have contributed to lessen in any degree this indifference, and to produce the conviction that medical education and the formation of the medical character are not merely an affair of the profession, but one in which the community also have a deep interest; and whilst, on the one hand, I would have the members of our profession entertain high views of the duty they owe to society, I hope, on the other hand, society will learn to feel that there is a duty also on their side, which they have not always performed in regard to us.

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CONDITION AND PROSPECTS

OF

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

Read at the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Medical Society, May 26, 1847.*

Mr. President and Gentlemen,

It was my original purpose, in addressing this Society to-day, to have fallen in with the general custom, and selected a subject exclusively of practical interest. But the circumstances of the times having turned the thoughts of many among us to the present position, relations, and prospects of our profession, it seemed not improbable that our attention might be profitably directed to the consideration of some topics closely connected with them. In the discussion of these topics I hope not to depart from the true purposes of our meeting, or to mistake the true objects for which we

* Considerable portions of this discourse, which, in consequence of the indisposition of the writer, were omitted in its delivery, are here inserted.

are associated. This Society was established in order that it might promote the well-being of the medical profession in the Commonwealth. But by this is to be understood not merely the well-being of physicians individually and as a body. In its original constitution, there is implied, if not directly enforced, a still higher function. It is in all respects the responsible guardian of the medical profession. It is intended to gather together and to keep together all practitioners in one uniform body; to take means to give them the highest possible medical education, and ensure them the highest possible personal character; to do it equally with regard to all, in all parts; and to do it in such manner, that the community shall have cause to repose confidence in the spirit in which it is done, and in the results which are brought about.

For it is to be recollected, that we are not constituted by our own act, or mainly for our own interests. Physicians do not exist of themselves or for themselves. Their existence is not in itself a benefit. It grows out of a certain necessity in the community, which renders them only indirectly useful, inasmuch as they furnish the remedy of an evil. And so of our Society. It was not formed chiefly for our sakes. Privileges were not conferred upon us chiefly for our advantage. The ultimate object was the benefit of the community. Mankind require, for their comfort and safety, a body of well-educated and conscientious physicians. As the surest means of accomplishing this purpose, they have commanded us to associate together; and, giving us certain duties to perform, have

also endowed us with certain privileges to induce us to their performance.

We should take, therefore, a very insufficient view of the objects of our organization, if we regarded it as existing merely that we may come together, once a year, to take each other by the hand, to consult concerning our common interests, to establish regulations for our intercourse with one another and with our patients, to administer discipline if it should be necessary, to hear an annual discourse, and to assemble in a kindly and fraternal spirit around the social board. These, it is true, are worthy purposes, and they alone would have been enough to justify the existence of our association. But we still have another object, because we have another relation than that which we bear to each other—namely, that which we bear to the community that has called not only our Society, but our profession into existence, and for which we may be said to live and move and have our being. Our first and highest responsibility is to this community. Our great duty is to see that its interests are attended to. The mode and character of our organization, our policy, and our attention to our personal interests, are only so far commendable, as they do not interfere with, but rather tend to promote, this great ultimate purpose.

And fortunately, as it happens, not only are these two things not inconsistent, but the means promoting the one are those also which will tend most certainly to the promotion of the other. There are abundant evidences in the proceedings of this Society, that the

principle I have stated has neither been forgotten nor neglected. But it is a weakness from which none are free, that, when zealously engaged in the attainment of any end which requires a complicated and extensive organization of means to bring it about, we are apt to overlook the paramount importance of the end, in the interest which becomes attached to the means. This weakness displays itself both in small things and in great. We see it in little societies established for the most trivial of purposes. We see it in those organizations which decide the policy of nations. Thus the profession of arms comes to be considered as a pursuit worthy of existence for itself. Thus governments, in all ages and of all kinds,—Monarchical, Ecclesiastical, and Republican,—after a while come to believe that the people are for them, and not they for the people,—that they have an existence independently of those who really created them,—that this existence is in itself a good,—and that they thus have inherent rights of their own.

We can scarcely hope to have kept ourselves entirely free from so universal a tendency, however insensible we may have been to it, and however we might shrink from its intentional indulgence. It can hardly have happened, in our earnest and proper cultivation of an *esprit du corps*,—in taking measures to ensure regularity and discipline within, and to prevent encroachments from without, our ranks,—that we have not sometimes erred in confining our regards too much to our own organization,—our own independent exist-

ence,—our own interests. Whether this have been so or not, if merely the danger of it exists, it cannot be without its use from time to time to review our position and our relations,—to go back to the first purposes of our existence,—and thus to refresh in our minds the knowledge of the principles which should guide us, and the duties which devolve upon us. We are the guardians, as I have said, of the medical character; we are appointed to watch over the interests of society in this particular; to us the public look for assurance that they will be faithfully served, in some of the most important and interesting relations of life. Our great and ultimate purpose should then be to perform this duty well; to adopt such a policy, and take such measures, as will secure to the community an improved and improving medical profession,—as will give to its physicians, now and in future, the highest possible social, intellectual, professional, and moral character. It is thus, indeed, that we shall in the end best promote our own interests. It is thus, that we shall at once show our sense of the true excellence of our calling, and manifest to the world that in which its true worth and dignity consist.

It will not be amiss to suggest here certain circumstances, in the condition and prospects of the medical profession in such a community as ours, which should operate as strong motives to give the subject, in this point of view, our earnest attention. Our profession holds, in a country with such institutions as ours, a far other and more important relation than elsewhere. Where there is hereditary rank, or where

there are certain classes of men with a defined position in society, transmitted from generation to generation, either as the inheritance of blood or of fortune, the mass of mankind look up to such classes as their leaders, as their models;—always, certainly, in customs, manners, and all those lighter arrangements which give a charm and elegance to human intercourse; and too often, also, in morals and religion. Now, among ourselves, we may scorn as we please the imputation of social inequality, and assert that, as no class has the right, so none has the power, to exercise among us this sort of social influence. But it is not so, and, constituted as mankind are, it cannot be so. The bulk of men do, and must, think and live on authority and by imitation. They look upward, somewhere, for models in opinions, in manners, in morals. We have pulled down the idols of silver and gold which are worshipped in the old world, and are proud of our own purer political devotion. Let us be sure that we do not put up in their stead idols of iron and clay.

Now, our profession is, and, in this country, always must be, one of those permanent classes which exercise a wide social influence. We are not, as in some other countries, a class, honored indeed to a certain extent, but still subordinate to the aristocracy, to the landholders, even to the gentlemen of the land. We are here of the aristocracy,—I use theterm in no offensive sense,—we are, or ought to be, among the gentlemen of the land. There is an influence in this relation, which we must exert, whether we will or not. Surely this is

one of the responsibilities that should excite us to establish such a standard of education, manners, and character, as will make that influence a salutary one.

The condition and character of the community to which we belong, not only presents us with a powerful motive, but at the same time offers us the best opportunity and the highest rewards, for aiming to establish a high standard in our profession. On the whole face of the earth, you can hardly find a spot which contains within itself the elements of so favored a lot. Our Commonwealth, though small in extent, has a population large enough for energetic undertakings, and yet not too large for the maintenance of a steady and uniform social character. Though our soil is barren, and our climate harsh, they still do not refuse a sufficient return to that industry which is stimulated by the very obstacles they present. These obstacles, indeed, excite a spirit of intelligence and enterprise which exhibits itself in the developement of countless sources of wealth and comfort, that do not depend upon soil or climate, but on a persevering will, for their existence, and ensure to us an increasing prosperity with an increasing population. Then, by means of a system of intercommunication, gradually penetrating to every corner of our territory, we are practically compressed into a space so small, that each man may almost call every other man his neighbor, and feel his influence either for good or for evil. Beside all this, there were early implanted here, by those who founded our community, high political, moral, and religious principles, without which the best advantages of soil and climate and situation are worthless.

In its progress and present position we witness results which are the legitimate effects of the circumstances that have been enumerated. I do not refer merely to a worldly prosperity almost unexampled, when compared with our original physical advantages, but to results of a more important kind. Where have the principles of constitutional liberty been better understood, or more ably defended, or received a stronger forward impulse, than among the people of Massachusetts? What community first set the example of the abolition of African slavery? Where originated the modern movement against the barbarous custom of war? Where the temperance reformation? Where are the interests of general education more sacredly guarded, and its principles investigated and illustrated with more earnestness and perseverance? Where has there been any earlier, or at least more zealous exhibition of that improved humanity, which has mitigated the punishment of crime,—has aimed to make the law a reformer instead of an avenger,—devised improved systems of prison discipline, and soothed instead of exasperating the fury of the maniac? Where is there any community which can show so many devoted spirits striving to elevate the intellectual, social, moral, and religious condition of mankind,—many of them no doubt with an intemperate and uncharitable zeal, but still always with the essential purpose, at the bottom, of doing good?

Who can doubt of the onward progress of such a community as this?—and is it not our part to do something in this great work, and to keep the standard of

our profession up to that of every thing about us? Shall we fall behind others in this enterprize? Shall we not partake in that spirit of the age, whose watchwords are Improvement, Progress, and Reform?

There is yet a further reason, and one more peculiar to ourselves, why we should at this time pause to look out our position, with the purpose of defining to ourselves the design and spirit which are to guide us in our course. We are not to conceal from ourselves the fact that this position is different from that which we once held. Formerly, though often the subject of ridicule and satire, medicine was looked upon by the mass of mankind with a veneration almost superstitious, as it still is among savage nations. In times long since past, there was supposed to be something recondite, mysterious, far above the apprehension of the vulgar, in the knowledge of physicians. The oracular air and the dictatorial authority which they assumed, were submitted to as rightfully belonging to those who possessed secrets of nature and art of an almost supernatural character. And, more recently, although the excess of this feeling had passed away, there still remained a *prestige* around the profession, which gave its members a sort of authority over the minds of men in their peculiar vocation, resembling that possessed by ecclesiastics at the confessional. But this has nearly ceased. Indiscriminate reliance on authority no longer exists. To assume it, would expose us to derision. The confidence of mankind, as a mass, in the regular profession, has changed its character, and has probably much diminished.

So far as it remains, it depends more on personal regard, and reliance on the individual, than upon any general high appreciation of medical knowledge. How ready are people of all classes to trust themselves to men of imperfect education, if not of equivocal character! How ready are those of even good education and intelligence to set themselves up as final judges upon questions with respect to which men of the largest capacities, trained from youth to the study of such subjects, and grown gray in watching disease, find it very difficult to get at the truth!

So much is this the case, that some among us have at times entertained fears with regard to the stability and permanence of our profession, as at present constituted; and, rendered timid by the signs of the times, have seriously apprehended that we are to be sooner or later supplanted by some new medical dynasty, if I may so call it. At the same time many, out of the profession, the proselytes of some recent sect, have, almost exultingly, prophesied, that at no very distant period the new system, to which they have given their adhesion, will establish itself upon the ruins of the old.

But, while I have not the slightest apprehension of this result, and, on the contrary, the most unlimited confidence in our stability and permanence, yet, since it is impossible not to admit the reality of the change to which I have adverted, we are, I think, imperatively called upon to consider seriously our present condition, and to call up for reflection the principles of conduct which will contribute most certainly to establish the

profession in future upon an honorable and enduring foundation. And we may remark, in the first place, that, whatever may have been the merits or demerits of the members of our calling, it has not, in point of fact, been from a knowledge of the former, that the confidence of mankind has been given them,—nor from a discovery of the latter, that it has been taken away. Those who once bestowed their confidence were no competent judges whether it were deserved; those who have now withdrawn it or diminished it, are as little capable of appreciating the qualifications of those upon whom they sit in judgment. It proceeded from that blind reliance upon prescription and authority, which led men to accept upon trust many opinions, and suffer the existence of many institutions, which had no other foundation. This is a species of confidence, which, among the progressive portion of mankind, is not now reposed in any thing. Neither in law, in government, in morals, nor in religion, is such authority recognized. Every thing is made subject to careful scrutiny,—its foundations are examined,—its truth is tested. Every thing is presumed to be capable of improvement. And if on any subject there exists, or is fancied to exist, in those connected with it, a disposition to oppose the operation of the principle of progress,—a disposition to cling too closely to the past,—there will result, as a natural consequence, distrust and want of confidence. Such a disposition does exist, with regard to all subjects; and, although in many persons, on the one hand, the spirit of improvement degenerates into an indiscriminate zeal for novelty and change,—

a desire to destroy one thing merely because it is old, and to substitute another merely because it is new,—yet it is equally true, on the other hand, that there is a class, in whom the opposite tendency predominates; who resist all proposed improvement merely because it is new, and cling pertinaciously to the shadows of the past merely because they are old.

In all professions and occupations, such a class exists, and it is not strange that they should be the occasion of distrust, especially when, as in our pursuits, so many things present themselves, which are at first calculated to startle the inquirer, and lead him to believe, on a superficial examination, that there can be no truth and no certain knowledge, where there is so much disagreement, and so much doubt, upon what seem to be essentials. He sees, that, from time to time, the most opposite theories have held sway over medical opinions and practice. He hears those of one school, or of one age, denouncing as absurd and hurtful, doctrines, which those of another regard as sacred for their truth, and inestimable for their practical benefits. He hears one man, or one set of men, proclaiming, as destructive to health and life, modes of practice which others regard as indispensable for their preservation. He perceives how much of our knowledge, as to the nature, causes, and treatment of disease, is admitted, by the best informed, to be uncertain,—what differences of opinion consequently exist among the wisest: this uncertainty and these differences seeming to increase as our knowledge really increases. It is not strange, while this is found to be the case among

those who were once looked up to as oracular and infallible, that distrust should creep in, and the actual amount of certain knowledge come to be undervalued.

We have been often reproved for our errors, our mistakes, our disagreements, our uncertainties; but I still think medicine will bear a comparison in its history, and in its present condition, not only as to the spirit of truth and humanity with which it has been pursued, but also as to the results which have been attained, with any branch of human inquiry, when the difficulties which surround its investigations, and the circumstances under which the comparison is made, are taken into consideration. It stands, in relation to its studies, on an entirely different ground from any other science. In its practical departments especially, the investigation of disease and the application of remedies, we are interfered with by the influence of circumstances, which have no place in other scientific inquiries, and which confuse and embarrass the judgment. Moral elements constantly mingle in; and, whilst they change the conditions under which the inquiry is to be prosecuted, they at the same time prevent that cool and dispassionate state of mind which is so necessary to a fair result. Hope, fear, impatience, anxiety, imagination, pride, and even superstition are constantly combined with the pure physiological materials, incapable of being appreciated if perceived, and often unperceived by the observer, when they are producing their full influence upon the patient. These circumstances in practical medicine combine to render it a more difficult subject for judg-

ment, than any other which comes before the human mind.

But, even in those departments of our science which are free from these impediments, I cannot but think that the uncertainty and imperfection of our knowledge have been much over-stated, when the nature and extent of the subject to which it relates are considered, and the intrinsic difficulty of the study. In comparing medicine with other sciences, it seems always taken for granted that it presents a field about as extensive as each of the others with which it is compared. But this is a most erroneous view. Medicine embraces the whole science of living bodies. The phenomena of living bodies are much more various than those of inorganic bodies,—and so are the laws according to which they take place. The collection of physical sciences, then, which concern inorganic matter, are *all together* to be placed in comparison with the science which relates to the laws of living matter. The chemistry of life, for example, is as extensive and complicated a subject as the chemistry of the inorganic world; and so of the infinite motions which take place in a living body, and of the infinite relations which are maintained by means of the nervous system,—they are more numerous, more obscure, more complicated, than those existing among the inorganic bodies, which are the subjects of natural philosophy and astronomy. Now, when we comepar the amount of labor which has been bestowed on mechanics, or astronomy, or chemistry, individually, with that which has been bestowed on med-

icine individually, these sciences are found in advance. But compare the *whole* of the labor which has fallen to the lot of Astronomy, Mathematics, Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, Geography, and Geology, on the one hand, with that which has been bestowed on Medicine as a science, on the other, and the progress it has made is rather a subject for pride than for humiliation.

There are still other points in this comparison which should be stated, in justice to the condition of our science. The properties forming the object of investigation in other sciences permanently appertain to the bodies which are their subjects. The affinities of these bodies, their chemical relations, their mechanical relations, their weight, their measure, their action on one another, are known and permanent. But you cannot examine life till you have destroyed it. The very object of your investigation escapes as the consequence of the first step of your experiment; the sacred fire goes out, as soon as you lay your hand on the materials by which it is supported. Suppose that the astronomer had been obliged always to examine a universe at rest; that the mechanical laws of the heavenly bodies must be suspended, and the sun, moon, and stars must stand still in their orbits, as a necessary preliminary in his investigation; the science of astronomy would then have been as difficult as the science of life.

In contrasting this, commonly regarded as the most perfect, with our own, which many are pleased to consider as the most imperfect of sciences, there is

still another circumstance which contributes not a little to give to the former some of the comparative lustre which encircles it, namely, the immense distance of the bodies to which it relates, and the impediment which this is supposed to present to their examination. But is not this a fallacious view of the matter? The very fact of distance, instead of adding to the difficulty, diminishes it. It insulates them; it renders them more susceptible of exhibiting the amount and the laws of their mutual dependence. Astronomy relates to a few simple laws of matter governing the motions of bodies at a great distance, but still perfectly separated, and capable of a separate examination; their motions may be distinctly perceived and followed and measured,—all, in fact, are insulated, and free from extraneous and conflicting influence in consequence of their very distance from us and from one another. *Distance* among bodies thus uncomplicated is far less of an impediment, than are *minuteness* and *indistinctness* among bodies which are complicated. In this point of view, the investigations of the physiologist are encompassed by a thousand difficulties which do not embarrass the astronomer. The telescope is much easier of management than the microscope. It is easy to follow the stately course of a planet through the heavens with the former, to measure its motions, its rapidity, its deviations; but how hard to keep close on the tortuous track of a particle of blood by means of the latter. Many may smile at the assertion, perhaps some who hear me may be of the number; but, taking circumstances like these into view, I account the

discovery of the circulation of the blood by Harvey, to have been hardly a less difficult and honorable achievement, than the true explanation of the motions of the heavenly bodies by Copernicus.

But, to return to the point from which we have thus digressed, while we admit that the confidence reposed in medicine is not what it was, is it certain that this is to be lamented? Should we desire to be regarded in the same light as formerly? to be held in the same kind of regard as in a less enlightened age? It would be a confidence unworthy of the age, unworthy of the present advanced state of the profession. It is true, that we need the confidence of mankind in order to our usefulness; but I am sure, that, when the history and character of the profession, and its present improving condition, are thoroughly understood, we shall receive, as I believe we deserve, a place in the estimation of the world more honorable and substantial, than ever before. It is only for the present, during a sort of transition period, when old relations have been broken up, and before there has been time for new ones to become established, that our position can be at all uncertain or equivocal. The following consideration, I cannot but think, has much weight, in enabling us to judge of the probable future destiny of our profession; namely, that whatever may be the currency of particular opinions, or the reputation of particular bodies of practitioners, the public will confide, mainly and habitually, in that body, or that succession, of men, who show themselves to be devoted to medicine, not merely as a means of getting a live-

lihood, or even as a means of treating disease and relieving suffering by the common routine of practice, but who pursue it as a great subject, all the relations and bearings of which it is their duty to investigate; who regard it as a science which they are deputed to build up and perfect; and who do all this, as diligent, earnest, and disinterested inquirers after truth.

It is this class of men, who, when they are fully understood, will receive the permanent confidence of mankind; and such, I undertake to assert, has been, and is, the essential character of our profession. Individual cases, it is unhappily too true, of selfishness, bigotry, narrow-mindedness, and prejudice, have so often occurred among prominent men, that the public have been sometimes almost ready to look upon these qualities as characteristics of the profession. But a glance at our history is sufficient to show how false is this estimate, and how different has been the character of those who have really been its lights and guides. Mankind are often disposed to reproach us, and we are sufficiently ready to reproach ourselves, with what we have failed to learn; but, if we examine into the amount of knowledge in medicine and its subsidiary branches which its votaries have accumulated, and at the process by which it has been accumulated, we have no reason to shrink from a comparison with any other company of philosophical observers.

Look at Anatomy and Physiology; the former, the most perfect of the descriptive sciences, the latter, though the most difficult of subjects, bearing a fair

comparison in its condition with any other. We cannot fully appreciate,—we can hardly imagine,—the difficulties with which they had to contend, who first investigated them, and have done the most, by laying a good foundation, to bring them to their present state of improvement. They persevered, century after century, not merely contending with the impediments growing out of the circumstances of the times and the imperfect modes of investigation then prevailing, but against prejudice and superstition and persecution. The state of human progress was against them.

Look next at the collateral branches. I do not claim for physicians the honor of having established the science of Chemistry, though I am not sure that we might not make out a strong case; but, during the greater part of its history, it has been much in their hands, and has derived its chief impulse and support from its connexion with them. They at least cherished the feeble steps of its infancy, though it has now the strength and courage to stand by itself. We may say nearly as much of Botany, of Zoology, of Comparative Anatomy, of Mineralogy, and of Geology. Strip these sciences of what has been contributed to them by physicians, or by those who have had the discipline of a medical education, and a chasm is left which it would be difficult to fill.

But, coming to labors more directly practical, to say nothing of the accumulated experience of those who have devoted themselves to the care of the sick in private life, follow those who have exposed themselves

to privation and danger in a thousand forms, in the cause at once of humanity and of science. On the field of battle and in the camp; in hospitals and lazarettos and jails; in the midst of miasmata and contagion, of pestilence and death; whether in the torrid zone or in the frigid, on the land or on the water; wherever men have been carried by the love of wealth, of enterprize, of fame, of knowledge, or as ministers of religion, there have their steps been waited on by the members of our profession, ready at once to perform the offices of humanity, or subserve the cause of science; and, among the earnest and the faithful, who more earnest and more faithful? As the fruit of their various exertions, to say nothing of contributions to collateral branches of science, and of the relief of human suffering, and the saving of life, there has been accumulated an immense amount of knowledge upon subjects the most important to humanity; as, for instance, the causes and the laws of disease, the circumstances which promote or prevent its propagation, the laws of individual health and of public health, and the principles according to which the physical condition of man at all ages, and of communities of men under all circumstances, may be made to maintain the highest possible standard.

But we have a claim on the confidence of our fellow-men, not only for what has been done, but for the spirit in which it has been done. These services of the medical profession, upon the whole, have been among the most disinterested ever rendered to mankind. They have been distinctly governed by

the desire of acquiring that knowledge which will confer practical benefits on society, without reference to the amount of reward, or to any fame except that of doing good. There is no better proof of this than the fact, already implied, that the aim of those who are most prominent in medical history, has been more to investigate the laws of disease, and thus to prevent it, and raise the standard of health, than to acquire reputation or wealth by what is far easier and more lucrative,—attention to the ordinary details of a medical practice. And, if it were necessary to introduce a more striking example of what is to be regarded as the governing spirit of those who are the true index of professional character, we have but to name the discovery and gift of vaccination to mankind by the illustrious Jenner.

In spite of all this, as I have already admitted, ours being a practical art which is necessarily connected with every rank and condition in society, it has of course happened, that, among that class of the profession who are engaged in its common details, a large proportion merely regard it as a means of earning their daily bread, or of acquiring property and consideration. To them, the practice of medicine is like the practice of any other occupation, selected and followed almost mechanically. Hence there are always to be found physicians of sordid minds and purely selfish views, who are yet high in professional rank and emolument. Such men, naturally enough, but unhappily for our good name, have often been the most prominent to the public eye, and have been the chief

recipients of favor and patronage, just as it has happened in all other departments; and they have been thus sometimes taken as exponents of the character of the whole profession. But its true representatives are they to whose lives and labors I have just referred; and from these men the treasures of knowledge, which they accumulated in years of faithful and unceasing labor, have descended to us as our rich inheritance; possessed of which we should feel safe as to our future destiny, whatever may be the accidental and temporary alienation of portions of that public whom we serve, and whose confidence is so necessary to our usefulness. If we are faithful to the true character of our profession; if we go forward with honesty and fidelity in the path of our predecessors, governed by the same desire of knowledge and of usefulness, we need not fear but that the present movement of opinion will be transient, and that our position will become more firm and durable than before.

But, however confidently we may cherish this expectation, it is not the less our duty to look into our condition, and see if there be nothing in our institutions, our principles of action, our systems of education, which is either capable of improvement, or which requires more zeal, more earnestness, more perseverance, and more concert of action; and I propose, in the remainder of this discourse, to suggest briefly some of those considerations relating to the subject, a regard to which will have the effect, not only of elevating progressively the standard of medical education and character, but of bringing about in the com-

munity a better understanding of these, and a more just appreciation of the claims of the regular profession upon its confidence and respect.

One very important means toward this end is, to adopt an improved and improving standard of attainments for those who enter the profession; *improved*, because, although there have been vast accessions to medical knowledge in our day, the standard of education remains nearly where it was; *improving*, because, great as these accessions have been, the increase of knowledge, of valuable practical knowledge, is destined to be much greater in the next generation than it has been in the past. He, therefore, who now enters the profession, should not only be possessed of a greater amount of knowledge than his predecessors, but of a more cultivated capacity for the acquisition of knowledge.

It is worthy of consideration, then, whether there should not be required of those who enter upon the study of medicine a more thorough education in those elementary branches, which are preliminary to the right understanding of any scientific inquiry, even of the simplest kind. Is nothing more necessary, before entering upon some of the most difficult subjects, than a common English education? Is it merely necessary to be able to read and write our mother tongue, and that perhaps in a very imperfect manner? Are no habits of mental discipline, is no intellectual training, of advantage, before attempting to master subjects like those which engage the attention of the medical student?

But, further than this, is it not true that even the

preliminary branches of medical study themselves are passed too slightly over,—Anatomy, Physiology, Chemistry, and especially Animal Chemistry? Are we not apt, in our haste to plunge into the practical branches, which are to be the business of our lives, to hurry over these elementary studies, without which there can be no proper comprehension of the more advanced ones? I can truly say, that, through the whole of my medical life, and under circumstances which have generally presented the strongest inducements to the acquisition of knowledge, I have felt constantly impeded and embarrassed by the want of thorough preliminary study; a want, which it is almost in vain to attempt to make up, amidst the labor and responsibility of our daily duties.

There is another deficiency which should be noticed, growing partly out of these original defects of education, partly out of the want of early habits of study, and of the consequent love of, and facility in, acquiring knowledge, and partly out of the mode of life which necessarily attends upon our occupation. We do not always, even so far as we might, keep up with the medical improvement of our age. How many of us continue to be faithful students and thinkers, after we have attended our last course of lectures, and obtained our credentials for practice? How many of us keep watch on the labors of those who are spending their lives in searching out new knowledge in medicine? With how many of us does our reading go much beyond that of a few elementary books, and of a few medical journals, and those not always of the highest and most instructive character?

I appeal to all those who have been in any way conversant in medical education, to those who have acted as the examining officers of this Society, to every individual in his own case, and in that of his neighbors, whether I have intimated more than their experience confirms. And if I have not, does it not become our duty gradually to remedy these deficiencies, to raise, and to keep up, the standard of medical education; to put ourselves on a level in this respect with the rest of the community in which we live, and to show them that it shall be no fault of ours, if we do not merit and receive their confidence?

I know there are many who are disposed to question the utility of some of the preliminary training to which I refer, and especially consider as useless those classical acquirements which form so large a part of a liberal education. But, for my own part, such is my estimation of the happy effects of such studies in general upon the minds of the young, in opening and cultivating their faculties, rendering them more susceptible of higher knowledge, giving them habits of acquisition, turning up the virgin soil thoroughly, as it were, before the seeds of life are sown, that I could wish every man who enters our profession had the advantage of a liberal education. This, in our community, is, to be sure, impossible; but still we ought to make as near an approach to it as is practicable. We should perceive its effects, not merely in the softening and ameliorating influence which it has upon the general character and manners, but in augmenting the capacity even for purely professional acquire-

ments, and in communicating a love of mental occupation, which will follow the physician, and never suffer him to be contented with the mere routine of his daily life.

There is no greater relief to the anxieties, or support under the responsibility, or refreshment after the toils of a medical life, than is to be found in a taste and capacity for some kind of reading and study. It may be the study of professional works only, though I cannot think a man is wise, or does justice to his own mind, who confines himself to these,—or the pursuit of some kindred branch of science, as Chemistry, Natural History, or Natural Philosophy ;—or, instead of these, or, what is still better, mingled with these, an indulgence in that lighter taste which leads one to works of general literature, criticism, poetry, fiction; any of them is better than none, and all together better than any one alone. But unhappily there is apt to be too little disposition for any of them in him, whose love of mental occupation was not formed and cherished before he entered upon the engrossing task of preparing for his profession, or, especially, before he became involved in its practical duties.

It will occur, perhaps, to some, that, by requiring a higher education, we are rendering entrance to medical life more difficult, and putting it out of the power of many persons of limited acquirements and narrow means, to gratify the ambition, so common among us, of enrolling themselves in the ranks of a profession. This is true. It *will* be made more difficult to become a physician. But is it not now too easy? It

will diminish the number of those who become physicians. But is not the number now too great? I put it to the good sense of this audience, whether this objection has any weight. Is it any advantage to the profession, or to the community, that entrance into it should be very easy? Should the prizes of life be made so cheap? Do we not thus undervalue our calling? Is not the standard of professional character, as well as of acquirement, lowered by this facility of attaining its honors? Is not our profession injured, not merely as it regards the honest worldly reward of its laborers, which no man ought to pretend to despise, but is not its duty to the community imperfectly performed as a consequence?

It is, to be sure, popular to talk of making education cheap, and of making the avenues to honor and profit open freely to all. But this is said in a very loose way. It is said for effect, by those who have no definite idea of what they really mean. That education which is equally necessary to all,—to every occupation, the humblest as well as the highest,—should be made free to all. This the very safety of society requires. But, when we come to the education of men for particular stations in society, the case is very different. Even then, let the education be made as cheap and easy as it can be; but not cheap and easy by making it poor. Do not let us deluge the community with a flood of half-learned professional men, who drudge heavily through life, half employed, half paid, half starved, far less respectable in their vocation than a substantial farmer, an honest trader, or a skilful

mechanic, because we choose to be blinded by a falsely so called republican maxim, which it may answer very well to bandy about at a political caucus, but which should never pass current with those, whose aim is the true respectability of their profession, and the real good of the community.

But, in order that we should deserve and perpetuate the confidence of mankind, not only is it necessary, that those who are to enter the profession should be highly educated; it is also necessary, that we, who compose it, should exhibit to the world a spirit of improvement and progress,—a disposition to employ faithfully all the means we now possess in the practice of our art,—and that, free from a primary regard to personal emolument and reputation, we should be ready to examine with a fair and candid spirit all and any suggestions, however they may arise, and from whatsoever quarter they may come, which hold out a fair promise of increasing those means.

And I must be permitted to say, that the character of our profession has often suffered in the opinion of mankind, and confidence in the real value of our knowledge has been lessened, by the spirit which has been frequently exhibited on this subject. There has sometimes been a want of liberality, a reluctance which must be called narrow-minded, not merely to admit, but even to look at the evidence of any new truths, and especially new modes of treatment, which present themselves out of the beaten track of medical observation. It has even gone farther than this, and the same disposition has shown itself, with regard to new things which have

come up in the profession itself, especially if there happened to exist any of those petty jealousies, growing out of individual or local rivalry, which we so often suffer to blind and mislead us.

Now this disposition arises from a species of caution, good in itself and useful, growing out of a large experience of the fact, that, of new things, a great proportion are false, and that the evidence upon which most men rely as sufficient for proof, especially on medical subjects, is totally inadequate. But, still, new things are sometimes true, and we can only select these by an examination of all. And, even were we capable of determining, as we sometimes are, *a priori*, without examination, that certain things are false, we cannot place mankind in that position for observation which we occupy, we cannot impart to them those elements for judgment which we possess. We expect them to take our opinions on authority; but, in order to secure submission to authority, we must satisfy them that we are candid inquirers and impartial judges; we must be free from the suspicion of professional prejudice or jealousy. In order, then, to lead the opinion of the public in the matters which concern our occupation, we must be content, not merely to examine the evidence for the things which *we* think offer a fair show of probability, but for those which *they* think offer such a show. What may seem very unlikely to us, may seem very likely to them. What we even *know* to be impossible, they may be very ready to believe; and this, even among those who in their own pursuits are intelligent and well-informed. To se-

cure their reliance on our opinions, we must, in making up a decision, put ourselves in their place, instead of expecting them to put themselves in ours. We must allow much for the circumstances under which they judge; much for their prejudices. Let us be sure that we do not yield to our own. We must be content to sift the chaff for their satisfaction, even when we feel confident there is not amongst it even a single grain of wheat to reward our search.

The disposition to which I have referred has often exhibited itself in the past history of medicine, and still continues to manifest itself in different ways, and in an irregular and unequal manner. We know how slowly and reluctantly assent was yielded to the discovery of the circulation of the blood, and how its author was subjected to obloquy, persecution, and even the charge of impiety. It was somewhat so with the great discovery of Laennec. How slow were many, especially the older members of the profession, to admit its value. By some it was received with doubt, by some with ridicule, and by some it was even declared to be impossible. But one of the most remarkable examples on record of this sort, is that which relates to the introduction of inoculation for small pox; and it is at once so curious and so instructive, that I cannot forbear recalling it to your attention. We, who have always lived in a community secured by the mild efficacy of vaccination from this loathsome pestilence, can know but little of its real horrors, when it prevailed unmitigated and unchecked. But we know enough to have taken it for granted that even

such an alleviation of them as was promised by inoculation would be hailed as a gift from Heaven. But it was not so; inoculation met with the most strenuous opposition, not only from the vulgar and the prejudiced, but from the faculty themselves. 'Nay all,' says a biographer of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, 'rose in arms to a man, foretelling failure and the most disastrous consequences.' 'We now,' he continues, 'read in grave medical biography, that the discovery was instantly hailed, and the method adopted, by the principal members of that profession. Very likely they left this recorded; for, whenever an invention or project, and the same may be said of persons, has made its way so well by itself as to establish a certain reputation, most people are sure to find out that they always patronized it from the beginning; and a happy gift of forgetfulness enables many to believe their own assertion. But what said Lady Mary of the actual fact at the actual time? Why, that the four great physicians, deputed by government to watch the progress of her daughter's inoculation, betrayed, not only such an incredulity as to its success, but such an unwillingness to have it succeed, such an evident spirit of rancor and malignity, that she never cared to leave the child alone with them one second, lest it should, in some secret way, suffer from their influence.'

This picture is perhaps somewhat colored by the lively imagination of this celebrated woman, yet we have no reason to doubt, that it is essentially true. It may teach us a useful, though a humiliating lesson; and, though I trust there is less of such a spirit in an

age so enlightened as ours, yet we see some exhibitions of the same sort in our own times; and there is scarcely any thing, which, as it appears to me, does more to lower the tone of public confidence in the profession, and excite distrust of its spirit and tendencies. It should be said, however, in justice to ourselves, on the other hand, that, although this illiberal reception has been given to new discoveries by certain individuals, at particular times, yet, with regard to things really valuable, such has not been the final judgment. Essentially, fairness, honesty, love of truth and of usefulness have prevailed; and justice, too tardy sometimes, it is true, has been rendered to them. The very fault to which I have referred, does in part arise from the very excess of these qualities; the fear of admitting that which is not true; an excess of that caution which is in itself right. It would not be easy to say which would be in the end most injurious to medicine, the credulity which eagerly seizes upon and appropriates every novelty that is suggested, or the incredulity which as decidedly rejects it at once, equally without any examination or inquiry.

You will readily perceive, and I am far from being desirous to conceal it, that these remarks have been suggested by the attitude the profession has assumed toward several systems, the current novelties of the day; which attitude has, I fear, had something of that influence on public opinion, to which I have referred. It is not necessary to state particularly what this attitude has been. It is sufficient to say that the systems to which I refer, that have been branded as the

offspring either of folly or of imposture. This I regard as impolitic, for the reasons before mentioned; we cannot place the public in our position, or give them our materials for judgment;—and, as wrong, because, admitting these systems to be ever so wanting in truth, the history of human opinions shows us that there is nothing so absurd in doctrine or in practice, which has not been honestly believed by persons of intelligence and education. It is no doubt the case, that there will always be, among the adherents of a new system, many persons of quite an equivocal character. Some adopt it from a love of novelty or of notoriety, or from the desire of gain, or on account of the ease with which distinction is obtained among the proselytes of a new sect. But this would be the case with a system founded in truth, as well as with one founded in falsehood. Hence, although there are probably many unprincipled adventurers among the disciples of these new systems, I see no reason to doubt, that, as a body, they are governed by the same principles of action as the average of mankind.

The relation which we maintain towards systems we believe to be false should be determined by a principle which is most important in its bearing; namely, that there is no form of error, from the careful observation of whose origin and progress important inferences may not be drawn for the establishment of truth. Every kind of error has of course some truth, to which it is, as it were, the negative pole; the knowledge of one is necessary to the knowledge of the other. This is as applicable to

medicine as to any other subject, perhaps more so. I will make its application to but a single one of the systems to which I have alluded, Homœopathy. I select this, because it has been the most respectable in its origin and in the character of its advocates; because it originally arose in the midst of the medical profession; and because, in the opinion of many, it has done so much to shake the confidence of mankind in the old school, and, according to the prediction of many, is destined, in no very long period, to take its place.

As to its theory, there seems nothing in it more at variance with sound medical knowledge, than in those of Boerhaave or Cullen or Brown. It is just as good as those hypotheses which formerly divided the medical world, and no better. Like them, it is entirely destitute of legitimate evidence. But in considering the treatment of disease by Homœopathic doses, that is to say, by quantities of medicine so small that even our imagination is at fault as to their actual existence, we find it difficult to conceive that any one, who has been used to observe the effects of remedial agents on the human body, or, indeed, the effects of any one agent on another, can believe in their influence as remedies. Yet it is certain that many intelligent and educated and honest men do so believe. It would not be difficult, also, to rake up, from the past, examples of belief in remedies quite as extraordinary, and supported by quite as little evidence. But those, you will say, were opinions held in an age when the laws of evidence were not well

understood, and men were credulous because they were ignorant. But this statement is hardly supported by facts. The form of credulity varies in different ages; it may be concerned about different subjects; the real amount of it is always very much the same. It is the characteristic of certain minds, and not of certain ages. Its amount is by no means in proportion to the amount of ignorance. It may be more refined in one century, or in one class, than in another, but it is hardly less in quantity, and it appertains to men of the same cast of thought. There is nothing in the history of religious fanaticism in times past, more extraordinary than that of Millerism and Mormonism in our own times. There is nothing more extraordinary in the belief of our ancestors in witchcraft and fortune-telling, than that of some of our own brethren at the present day in the extravagances of Mesmerism. Lord Bacon believed in the efficacy of spells and amulets, and Sir Theodore Mayerne, the physician of three kings, in the remedial virtues of the heart of a mule who had been ripped open alive, and of the hand of a man who had been gibbeted. Are there not philosophers and lords and knights, who believe now in remedies, which, to the medical philosopher, present quite as little probability of efficacy as these?

But, although there are doubtless some who believe with perfect honesty, and after what they regard as a fair comparison, that the Homœopathic is the true and most successful method of practice; still it is generally true, that men medically educated believe it to be entirely negative, and that patients thus treated, so far as medicines are concerned, are practically left

to the resources of nature. Now, this being the case, it affords us a means of observing, on a large scale, the natural history of disease, as it goes through its course uninfluenced by the interference of art. The want of such an opportunity has been one of the greatest obstacles to the advance of the practical department of our profession. In its elementary branches, our science has improved, slowly perhaps, but with no uncertain steps; whilst in Therapeutics it has constantly struggled with the want of some standard of comparison. How can we judge what is the efficacy of any given method of treatment, unless we know what course disease will take without treatment? The want of this knowledge,—the knowledge of the natural history of disease,—has been the cause of almost all the uncertainty, the opposition, the vacillation in the management of disease.

This want it has been extremely difficult to supply in the ordinary course of practice. Approaches have been made to it with regard to a few diseases and on a small scale; but, in order to supply it thoroughly, it needs a long experiment on a large scale. Now, believing as we do in a greater or less amount of efficacy from our method of treatment, it has been impossible for us, conscientiously, to institute such an experiment; and the world would not support us in doing it, if we were disposed. But the Homœopathists are performing, as we believe, this very experiment; and, fortunately, such is their confidence in their system, that they do it boldly, and can keep up, in this way, that reliance of their patients on their remedies

which is necessary to the success of any treatment. It is only to be regretted that this same undiscriminating confidence on their part prevents the experiment from having its full value, since those who conduct it, and therefore might best observe it, do not scrutinize its results as philosophers, but merely gather them up as partisans. It is nevertheless our duty, without any feeling of rivalry or ill-will, to watch its progress as best we may, to avail ourselves of the fruits of what we regard as the errors of others,—as we ought to do of our own,—to enrich ourselves, as it were, with their spoils.

In a kindred spirit should we keep up a constant observation of the various attempts which are constantly making, sometimes by individuals and sometimes by bodies of men, to devise new methods of treating disease; and with a similar purpose of appropriating whatever may present itself which promises advantage. Every thing which happens to those laboring under disease,—everything which is made in any way to act upon them,—is capable, when accurately observed, of illustrating the laws of life, or of disease, or those according to which recovery from disease takes place. The more varied are the conditions under which the observations are made, the more rich will be the results; and, considered in this point of view, there is no mode of treating disease, however irregular, and in hands however ignorant, no delusion with regard to remedies, however strange, from such an observation of which useful knowledge may not be derived, either with regard to the history

and treatment of disease, or, at least, with regard to the influence of imagination and prejudice upon its character and progress. All are experiments, which, though performed for no such purpose, should really be made to operate for our benefit. We are to consider that we cannot make them ourselves. With our knowledge of the accurate relations of disease, of the uncertainty of remedies, of the great powers of nature, and with that delicate responsibility to our patients, which imposes upon us the observation of the great first law in Therapeutics, '*to do no hurt*,' we cannot run the sort of risk which such experiments imply; they require a recklessness of the result to which we cannot consent. When others choose to incur the responsibility of making them, it is right that we should reap the fruits.

In this way, I am convinced, we may, from time to time, learn much to aid us on the difficult subject of Therapeutics. We may find, that some modes of treatment which have been highly prized, have less connection with recovery from disease than has been usually imagined; and, on the other hand, that certain other measures may have been undervalued and overlooked. But, if this inquiry be always made in the calm and rational frame which should characterize the medical observer,—free from that turbulent spirit of animosity toward rival sects which we are too prone to indulge,—looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, to discover what the effect will be on our profession considered as a mere trade,—we shall be constantly adding to our stock of practical truth.

The same general principle is also applicable to the regulation of our conduct with regard to remedies, of whose composition, or mode of preparation, we are kept in ignorance. It is undoubtedly a fundamental principle of medical morality, that no medicines or modes of treatment, in short, no knowledge capable of beneficial application in medicine, which any one physician possesses, should be kept from his brethren, or indeed from the world at large. There are to be no secret means or medicines among us. Every thing is to be free and open as the air. Knowledge is the common property of the profession; and we would hold him up to universal scorn, who keeps any of it to himself, which can be made useful by others in the treatment of disease.

But this feeling, so just in itself, so honorable and so general among physicians, is carried too far, if it assumes that we should, in no case, permit the use of an unknown remedy, when the responsibility of keeping secret its composition or mode of preparation falls upon those out of the pale of the profession. This is an entirely different case. Our first duty unquestionably is to the sick. Whenever, therefore, we have good reason to believe, on such grounds of medical evidence as are usually sufficient, that any such remedy is capable of producing such beneficial results on disease as we know no better means of producing, the same professional philanthropy, the same sense of duty to our patients, obliges us to employ it.

The adoption of any such remedy or mode of treatment by a regular member of the faculty is

regarded, if not exactly illegal, yet at least, as being somewhat unprofessional, and certainly it is a course to be avoided if practicable. Still, in a great many cases, articles have been received and taken into regular professional use, although their peculiar composition or mode of preparation was unknown, because they were found better adapted to fulfil certain indications of treatment, than any of the compounds of the Pharmacopœia. But,—without mentioning particular examples of this sort, which must be familiar to those conversant with medical history,—to put a very strong case, suppose it had happened that the insensibility to pain which follows the inhalation of sulphuric ether had been produced, as was at first supposed, by some newly discovered combination of articles, the knowledge of which was concealed from us. Will any one say, that, if a reasonable probability had been established that this was actually the result, we should have hesitated to give it a trial, and to employ it, if found successful? I trust not. It would have betrayed a sort of atrocity like that, which would have strangled vaccination in its infancy for a similar reason. On the contrary, we have reason to congratulate ourselves that it received among us so ready a trial, even when some mystery was still suffered to hang over its composition; that the prominent persons, especially, in that department of practice in which, thus far, it has been chiefly useful, were so prompt to give a hearty welcome to what will probably prove to be the most important discovery in medicine since the introduction of vaccination.

I admit that this subject should be watched with much jealousy; that such remedies should be resorted to with great caution, and only where there is a reasonable probability that we can thus treat disease better than by our ordinary means. It is to be kept in view, also, that, where the nature and composition of an article are unknown to us, we should require a more careful scrutiny, a more complete array of evidence, than where a knowledge of its origin or composition aids us to judge, from analogy, what its effects are likely to be. So, too, it should always be understood, that the principle of concealment is utterly at variance with our professional code. With these limitations, the ground I have stated is not only that of the letter and spirit of our regulations, but is the only one consistent with that regard for the public good, which must supersede other considerations.

There is still another subject somewhat connected with these, namely, the relation in which we stand to irregular practitioners, or to quackery. There is much sensitiveness on this point; many are warmed with a very earnest zeal for putting it down, and we are often met by the inquiry, 'Can we do nothing to exterminate it?' But we are to recollect, in making up our judgment as to our proper course, that there are circumstances which render its existence, in some way or form, almost a necessity. There are many persons, who, from their natural temperament, and there are many others, who, under the influence of disease, cannot be satisfied with the steady, sincere, and unpretending management which the self-respect

of the regular practitioner obliges him to adopt. They require to be encouraged by hopes which are to prove fallacious, by promises which are to be broken; to be soothed and kept patient by a thousand flattering arts, which those who understand disease and can really foresee its course, and who feel bound to honesty of purpose and deportment, cannot employ. Hence a resort to quackery is almost essential to this class of patients. Happy it doubtless is to many of them, that they can have recourse to those whose ignorance, or whose conscience, does not prevent them from pretending to knowledge which they do not possess, or from professing to accomplish that which we know to be impossible.

It was formerly the case, before the limits of our knowledge were so well ascertained, and before the proper decorum of the profession was so well settled, that there were many among the accredited members of the faculty, who held, to all intents and purposes, the same relation to the sick, that this class of practitioners now do. Quackery, it is to be remembered, does not principally consist in using medicines of a particular kind, but in using any medicines in a particular way. The quackery is not in the character of the drug, but in that of the man. Quackery may strut with a doctor's diploma, or seat itself in a professor's chair, as well as ensconce itself behind piles of boxes and rows of bottles, and boast of its miraculous cures through the columns of the press. But whilst, with a gradual improvement in the standard of professional character, this class of men has dimin-

ished *in* our ranks, they have been increasing *out of* them; and, though other circumstances in the altered condition of society have partly contributed to this result, I believe that one great cause why there is more quackery out of the profession, is because there is less in it. Though we may hope that it will diminish with the increasing respectability of our profession, and with a better appreciation of its character on the part of the community, we cannot flatter ourselves that it will become extinct, since it is founded on an essential infirmity of human nature, and one which exhibits itself on other subjects,—on religion, politics, and education,—as well as on medicine. This is, then, a subject on which it is neither for our interest nor for our dignity to interfere. Any sensitiveness, and more especially any action on our part, whilst they are sure to be inefficient, are also likely to be misunderstood. They magnify the importance of this class of practitioners, and are apt to be attributed to jealousy of their success, and to our fear of being supplanted in the favor of the public.

In the remarks which have been made, my object has been to bring up for our consideration certain principles which should guide us in reference to the welfare of the profession, rather than to point out any definite course of action, or to speak of particular measures. These naturally present themselves, from time to time, to those to whom the guardianship of our institution is committed; and if we are governed by a true professional spirit, a determination to be true

to the character of those who have preceded us, we need not fear but that our future progress and condition will be such as to do no discredit to the honorable recollections of the past.

For, as I have already endeavored to show, the past history of the profession has been honorable, and it has always been devoted to the best interests of truth and humanity. It is true, various sects have arisen within its bosom, exhibiting, as sects always do, bigotry, prejudice, and intolerance; strange opinions have been entertained; an infinity of modes of practice have prevailed, some good and some bad. Bad men, ambitious men, men of a selfish and mercenary spirit, have frequently presented themselves, have often become prominent, have, for a time, impressed too much of their own character on medicine, and thus proved obstacles to its advancement. But, in spite of all this on the surface, it is astonishing to remark how distinctly the under-current has always been directed by the ruling principles of honesty and humanity. How thoroughly has age after age sifted the materials which have been presented to it. How certainly, one after another, every form of falsity, which had for a time usurped a place amidst the accredited knowledge of our profession, has been suffered to pass into oblivion, whilst whatever was true has been preserved amidst its treasures.

And such will continue to be the case. We have seen, in our day, this process going on, by which the truth, though doubted, and subjected to a severe

ordeal, maintains its place; whilst from error, though discarded, lessons of value are still educed. It was in conformity with this uniform tendency, that the great discoveries of Laennec, though received with doubt and hesitation, were, after careful scrutiny, accepted and recognized as of inestimable value. It was also in conformity with it, that the Theory and Practice of Broussais, though at one time received by a considerable portion of the medical world almost with acclamation, has not had enough vitality even to survive its author, though it has served, by the indirect lessons it has taught us, to modify, in a most important manner, various views of pathology and practice. No matter what sects arise about us holding new opinions of disease, or advocating new modes of practice. No matter how much they may, for a time, make their way into public regard, and contend with us for the favor and confidence of mankind with apparent success. The same will be our history in regard to them, the same will be their fate. From our very character and constitution, we shall be a permanent body; they, transient and evanescent. Our profession always has, gradually, and slowly, and sometimes perhaps reluctantly, selected and absorbed all the truth, rejecting the falsehood which has arisen within and around it. This process will continue. New sects will arise and decline, and others will take their place; but, so far as they advocate any just opinion, or originate improvements in practice, or illustrate important errors, the lessons they teach will survive amid the accumulated treasures of medical knowledge. Other systems will pass away,—ours

will be permanent; nourished indeed to some extent by the very elements which come from their decay, as the eternal oak flourishes and grows green for ages from the decomposition of the transient vegetation, of which generations are springing up and perishing around it.

These are serious convictions on a serious subject, a subject which has excited much attention and some solicitude. It is indeed of the deepest importance to every one who sees in his profession any thing more than a mere trade by which he is to earn his daily bread;—it is even of some moment to him. It should not pass from our mind amid the appropriate festivities of this day, nor be forgotten amid anxieties and pressing cares which await us in the labors of to-morrow. It should dwell with us, and retain its hold on our attention. We have, with regard to it, an interest and a duty; and it will be found in this, as in most other cases, that our duty is the surest guide to our interest. To establish a high standard of professional education, to give a true elevation to professional character, these should be our great purposes, as individuals and as a Society; and, if we accomplish these, a variety of others, important in themselves, will be made easier of attainment, even if they are not incidentally brought about, which is in truth most likely to be the result.

Do we propose to secure for professional labor a fair remuneration?—We cannot hope to effect this, unless we satisfy the community that we send out no candidates for their patronage, who are not qualified to claim it. Do we design to put down quackery?—

We can do it most effectually by raising up regular medicine. Is it our aim to prevent our being supplanted by new systems?—Let us take means to make the world understand that the old is better. Do we wish to prevent all intercourse between regular and irregular practitioners?—We should make the distinction so marked between them, in education, manners, and character, that they cannot intermingle. Do we desire to bring all those in this Commonwealth, who have been regularly educated, and desire to practise medicine honorably, within the limits and under the influence of the Society, a consummation which is essential to the full accomplishment of its purposes?—Let us, as far as time, space, and the necessary impediments of intercommunication render it practicable, make its presence every where felt, and its benefits every where equally diffused.

MEDICAL EDUCATION.

AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

Delivered before the Medical Class of Harvard University, November 1, 1843.

It is my duty, Gentlemen, according to the custom of this institution, to address to you a few remarks, preliminary to the course of lectures on which we are about to enter. I would, in the first place, endeavor to impress upon you the great importance of that part of your education in which you are now engaged, I mean your preparation for the profession of medicine. The years which you spend in this preparation, will have at least as much influence upon your standing, character and success in life, as any that have been devoted to your training hitherto,—indeed, it may not be too much to say, that they will have far more.

I do not mean to undervalue the preceding stages of education—the preparation of the school, the academy, the college. The loss of their advantages may be felt through life. But this loss may, in a certain measure, be made up. At an earlier age, we are not fully aware of the value of opportunity and the

relation which education has to life. We know, indeed, because we are told, that it is intended to prepare us for our future pursuits,—but we do not actually realize this so as to feel a clear, personal responsibility. We are still, as it were, led by others, and do not seem to be acting for ourselves. Then, if we waste our time and our advantages, we may afterward,—with great difficulty, it is true,—retrace our steps, and retrieve what we have lost. But, when we have chosen our profession, and begun its study, we feel, if we are ever to feel, an actual individual responsibility. We are preparing ourselves for what we are to do, and what we are to be, through life; and for the first time, we take hold on the positive, personal duties of life. Before, we have been taught by others;—now, we are to learn for ourselves. Before, we have been to school like children;—now, we are to gather knowledge for ourselves, like men. There is now only our own sense of duty and expediency to stimulate us to exertion;—there is no coercion, no restraint, no direct penalty. Hitherto, we have been always accountable to others;—now we are mainly accountable to ourselves.

If, then, under the influence of such motives, the student fails to devote himself faithfully to the improvement of his opportunities, what chance is there that he will afterwards regain the ground he has lost? If, with the feeling of responsibility which he ought to experience, he waste his time and faculties in indolence, or in something worse, what hope is there, that motives will, in the future, be found strong

enough to prompt him to the hard and ungrateful task of learning in after life what he neglects to learn now. No; a neglect of the means of professional education will be almost always found to proceed from some deeply-rooted defect of character,—a defect which will stand in the way of all future honorable exertion, as it has of all past. Exceptions there may be, no doubt; but they are few and rare. Those, then, among my hearers, if there be any such, who have heretofore failed to profit, by industry and perseverance, from the advantages they may have had, should bring home to themselves the truth of the statement which has been made. They should recollect, that to them this is the last chance of retrieving their errors, and atoning for their faults. It is truly to them their eleventh hour.

But it is not enough to be aware of the importance of an assiduous attention to professional study. It is not enough to devote one's self to it with a strong purpose and an earnest will. A right direction is also necessary. Misdirected or disproportioned studies may be fatal to success. Various kinds of knowledge go to make up that knowledge which the physician should possess. Various faculties require to be educated in order to make up that character which qualifies him for the responsibilities and emergencies of his calling. Preparation for the practice of our art requires a various discipline, and a discipline, all the elements of which must be well proportioned and well balanced.

I will next, then, endeavor to present to you, as fully

as our time will permit, a sketch of the kind and amount of the attainments, which I believe most favorable to the formation of a high medical character. You will not understand me to say that the whole of it is absosolutely indispensable to a good medical education. It is such as constitutes the highest degree of such an edcation,—a degree to which all have not the desire, or the means, to attain. But, the higher the conception the student forms of what is necessary to excellence in his profession, the more likely is he to value aright, and to improve the opportunities which he may possess.

It depends very much on the views which the student entertains of his profession and of the proper way of cultivating it, whether he shall pass his life in a dull routine of mere practical details, or shall employ it in a pursuit suggesting worthy subjects of reflection, exercising a useful and salutary influence on the mind, and presenting objects for the exercise of the affections, and motives for the cultivation of the intellect. In short, it depends on this, whether his shall be an entirely stationary life, or a life of progress. The profession may be studied and practised with such views and in such a way, that it will be scarcely more elevated as a pursuit, than the merest mechanical drudgery. That a man is a physician does not necessarily imply any thing higher or more ennobling in his daily life, than if he were to spend his days in the laying of bricks, or the making of pins. It is the mode in which he regards and follows his calling, that makes all the difference between man and man. It

is the state of mind which he brings to his occupation, or which his occupation excites in him. No doubt there is a difference in different occupations, in their tendency to bring forth and set at work the nobler faculties and affections. Some, by their very nature, and by the subjects they present to the mind, solicit it and urge it onward to something higher than the condition in which they find it. But this is by no means necessary, for many we know have nourished the true spirit of philosophy, and have been animated by the earnest desire of progress, far more in some subordinate mechanical calling, than others at the bar, in the pulpit, or in the professor's chair. The highest excellence of character, moral and intellectual, has often been attained by men of humble opportunities and occupation. The history of mankind is full of such examples; and, not to go beyond our own threshold for them, the lives of Rittenhouse, of Franklin, and of Bowditch, are enough to satisfy us, that it is not his occupation that ennobles the man, but the man who ennobles his occupation. Do not imagine, therefore, because your calling is one of the highest in society, and one of the most honorable among men, that your rank will be such merely because you have chosen it, and profess it. You must honor the profession, or the profession will not honor you. Not merely must you seek in it the means of gaining a livelihood,—though this is of course a worthy and proper purpose,—but it must be to you the object upon which your thoughts are principally to fix themselves. To this your chief interests are to relate.

It is in connexion with your profession that your mind is especially to be cultivated and enlarged. You are to seek in it for the gratification of that principle in us, which derives pleasure from the perception of beauty and use,—of truth and goodness. There is no occupation however humble, as there is no part of the creation however obscure and remote from common observation, in which the opportunities and materials for this sort of enjoyment are not to be found; and, if the disposition and the capacity for it exist, there is no man who has more of the opportunity and the materials than the physiologist and the physician; for a high satisfaction may thus be often derived from scenes and things, whose first impression upon us may be painful, repulsive, and even loathsome.

The direction of the studies of a profession, therefore, should regard not merely the period of pupilage, but the whole of life. As the pupil is to prepare for the business of life, so his thoughts and studies should prepare for the thoughts and studies of life. The plan of education, then, should be sufficiently comprehensive, and should embrace every thing which can contribute to that cultivation of the intellect and soul, of which I have just spoken. A man may be a good anatomist, a good pathologist, a good compounder of drugs, a good practitioner; he may perform all the daily duties of his profession with good success, and yet his life may be a very dull one, his mind a very stationary one; and he may fail of doing justice to himself as a being capable of improvement

and high enjoyment, and fail of doing his whole duty to society, in one of its most responsible offices.

In this plan of education will be embraced, not merely professional studies strictly so called, but those also which are preparatory, and those which should accompany them,—and, I may add, should accompany them not only now, but after entering on active duties. And here I wish to say a few words concerning the amount and importance of the education which should precede the actual study of medicine. I am disposed to speak more plainly and strongly on this point because there seems reason to fear that this preliminary training is esteemed of less value at the present day than formerly, and is falling somewhat out of favor, not only in our profession, but in others. It cannot be otherwise than of great advantage to the student that he should have had what is commonly called a liberal education; or, if he have not this, it is desirable, that he should have faithfully possessed himself of the elements, at least, of those branches of knowledge, which enter into such an education. This preparation would be of great use, were it only as a discipline of the mind. The habit of acquiring knowledge is not attained at once. It is not sufficient that the mind be opened to knowledge. It does not flow in spontaneously. It must be sought, and actively appropriated. The power of doing this to advantage is to be acquired; and it is in no way so easily or so well acquired, as by the teaching of the school and the college. The graduate, other things being equal, starts in his course with

some advantage. He has already *learned how to learn*, and has only to occupy himself in the appropriation of knowledge.

But, beside this incidental advantage, there is a kind of improvement of the mind from liberal studies,—I refer more particularly to the study of the classics,—altogether beyond and different from this,—recognized with certainty, and yet not very easily analyzed or described. I know it is fashionable, especially in our utilitarian communities, to decry these studies as useless, and account the time spent upon them as wasted. I cannot agree to this opinion. I believe the study of language to be the most fitting occupation of a certain period of life, and indeed, we may say, a necessary, or at least a very important process in the cultivation of the mind, let it begin at what period it may. There is no study so improving and fertilizing to the young mind. When early begun, therefore, it is best; but, at any rate, if not early in life, it should be early as a part of education. Language is the great instrument of human thought, as well as the great means of communicating and receiving knowledge. The faculty of language becomes, then, of the highest value in the progress of the mind, and its study is, in effect, the cultivation, the discipline, the training for use, of the whole set of powers connected with language, and renders them capable of application to the investigation and propagation of truth. The study of language, I repeat it, is the first great step in education, let it begin when it will; a certain degree of this study is essential to the percep-

tion and enjoyment of truth and beauty, and to the acquisition of knowledge.

This may perhaps seem a somewhat metaphysical and far-fetched argument for the study of language; but I appeal to fact. Do we often,—I will not say ever,—do we often find a highly cultivated and well-balanced mind in letters, arts, or even philosophy, where the foundation has not been laid in such an education, as that which has been recommended? The whole history of literature is full of evidence on this point. But of what possible use is a knowledge of Latin and Greek to the physician? The *knowledge* may be of very little use, but not so the *study*. Were it possible to imbue the mind of a young man with classical learning, and then to wipe away at once, as with a sponge, all the knowledge of mere Latin and Greek which he has acquired, you would have a rich reward for all the labor undergone, in the improved and advanced condition of the faculties which have been exercised. Cultivation improves the soil, even though the crop be consumed; how much more if it remain upon or be ploughed into it. You might as well ask what is the use of the ceaseless motions of the infant, the sports and games of the boy,—what is the use of the skill he acquires at ball, quoits, fencing? None in the motions, as such; but then the muscular training, the physical development, the accuracy and vigor of muscular movement, which he acquires, are (to say nothing of health) of prodigious consequence to him, in the active occupations of life.

It may be urged, that the study of modern lan-

guages, especially of the German and French, will answer all the purpose of discipline, and will at the same time give the student access to works of value in our profession, from the perusal of which he will be otherwise debarred. There is some force in this, I am willing to admit, and happy is he who has the industry and perseverance to add the knowledge of these languages to his other acquisitions. But I am not prepared to allow that the study of them will have that full effect on the mental habits, by way of discipline, which I have attributed to classical studies. That this is so in point of fact, I appeal again to experience for the proof; the reasons of it, I think it would not be difficult to point out, were this the time and the place.

You will understand, that I urge all this rather as an accomplishment, than as an indispensable requisite. Such a knowledge of the Latin as will enable one to understand the terms of our profession, and decypher the directions of a prescription, is all that is absolutely necessary, and is all that the statutes of our medical colleges require; often more, I fear, than is enforced. But the same allowance cannot be made with regard to some other branches of knowledge, the possession of which is, I also fear, too often regarded as superfluous.

I refer particularly to a knowledge of Natural Philosophy. Without a knowledge of Natural Philosophy, you can hardly advance a step in the study of your profession. Anatomy, indeed, so far as it is a barren description of parts in a state of inaction, may

be pursued; but the uses of parts in action cannot be thoroughly comprehended without this knowledge. What can a man understand of the laws of animal motions, if he do not understand those of mechanical motions? He can have no proper notion of the mutual relations of the bones, joints, and muscles, in the performance of their functions; and he can have no accurate idea of the nature and effects of a fracture or dislocation, or direct with intelligence their treatment.

Without an acquaintance with the laws which regulate the pressure of the atmosphere and the motion of fluids, how is he to comprehend the arrangement, by means of which the organs of respiration perform their office, and the influence which this pressure may or may not have on the circulation of the blood? Destitute of this knowledge, the physician is liable to fall into a thousand errors of theory, and doubtless also of practice. A surgeon in the navy once expressed to me the opinion, that a ball, which had apparently passed through the chest without wounding the lungs, had traversed the chest at the moment when the lungs were collapsed in the act of expiration!—evidently supposing that there was at this moment, an empty space between the lungs and the walls of the chest. A modern theory of the forces maintaining the venous circulation, viz., that of Sir D. Barry, which attributes the return of the blood from the extremities to the pressure of the atmosphere, is totally incompatible with the laws which regulate the motions of fluids; and yet, from ignorance or inattention,this theory has

had an extensive currency, and is doubtless to this day regarded by many as settling this much agitated question. Another mistake in theory, of the same kind, is founded on a presumed difference between the pressure of the atmosphere within and without the skull,—the bony arch being supposed to protect the parts within from this pressure. This mistake has been the basis of many erroneous speculations with regard to the theory of congestion, and other morbid states of the circulation within the head.

Natural History, certainly, has less claim to be considered as an integral part of medical study; yet I know not how to refrain from recommending to every man who desires to be even tolerably accomplished in his profession, that he should possess himself of a good knowledge of its elements. The physician is the student and interpreter of everything relating to life, whether in health or disease; he must study it as a whole, to comprehend it in its parts; and he should, therefore, study Natural History as a part of the great science of living things. The connexion of Natural History itself with practical medicine is truly very remote and slight; but its relation to a perfect acquaintance with the science of life is very intimate; and it is only by a perfect acquaintance with the science of life, that we are prepared to understand perfectly those states of the living system, which we call states of health and disease.

It may be deemed hardly necessary, here, to insist on a very thorough acquaintance with Chemistry, since the importance attached to it is sufficiently attested by the fact, that it is made the subject of a dis-

tinct department of instruction in this and all other medical schools. Yet I fear that even this provision has not always ensured for it an adequate proportion of attention from the student. Where such has been the case, it is, I apprehend, because the connexion of chemistry with medicine, though an essential one, is somewhat indirect, and does not lie on the surface. The importance of a knowledge of it in its relation to our profession was so fully exhibited the last year, to at least a portion of my audience, that I do not feel called upon to dwell long upon it now. I would say, however, with respect to this science, as just now of Natural Philosophy, that, without a knowledge of it, you can hardly advance a step in the study of medicine; some acquaintance with it should, nay, *must*, *precede* your other studies. How far can you proceed in the knowledge of Physiology without it? Look at the connexion of chemical laws with the function of respiration, with that of animal heat, with the mode in which living bodies are influenced by external temperature, both in health and in the production of disease. Look at the mistakes which have been constantly committed in past times,—and, indeed, are even now committed,—both in theory and practice, from an ignorance of chemistry, or from false views of the nature and extent of the connexion between its laws and the laws of life. Look, still further, at the eager zeal with which the study of the chemistry of living bodies has recently been pursued, and at the great amount of labor which has been bestowed on the analysis of the tissues and of the fluids, both in

health and disease,—and on the connexion between the kinds of aliment, the operations of the digestive organs, and the variations of nutrition and of secretion,—and you cannot for a moment doubt the immense light which chemistry has already thrown, and is yet to throw, upon our knowledge of the nature and treatment of diseases.

Neither should the student fail, while devoting himself to the study of the laws of matter, to give some of his hours, at least, to that of the laws of mind. The wonder-working intellect of man is no less a legitimate object of his attention, than his wonder-working body. Both, indeed, work together for a common end; and the philosophy of the one cannot be fully understood apart from the philosophy of the other. Many are disposed to sneer at Metaphysics, as a science in too unformed and uncertain a state to constitute a worthy object of attention to the man of true science. This may be a right judgment of the speculative Metaphysics of former days, and perhaps of some theories in our own. But the medical student should not regard himself as qualified even for the commencement of his studies, who has not acquainted himself with the elements, at least, of that practical science of mind, which teaches the laws of human thought, on the principles of common sense, and which is founded on the same accurate observation, as that which has established the truths of physical science.

Nor can I advise the medical student to confine himself to pursuits which are strictly scientific. The

same regard to the general training and discipline of the mind, which leads to the recommendation of an extensive range in his scientific studies, would also suggest a not infrequent excursion beyond them, into the fields of elegant literature. Next to classical learning,—possibly even as much,—certainly next to classical learning, nothing tends more to liberalize, refine, and embellish the mind, than an habitual recourse to the treasures of English literature, the richest inheritance, after the spirit of free institutions, that we have received from our ancestors.

I have dwelt so much upon the studies which are preliminary or subordinate to the proper departments of medicine, that you may fancy I have left myself little room to enlarge upon these. I have done so intentionally. It is, I trust, unnecessary for me to insist upon a most assiduous cultivation of Anatomy and Physiology,—of Pathology, Materia Medica, and Therapeutics. These speak for themselves. There is no question about these. No one is so hardy as even to suggest that they are superfluous, whatever he may think of Natural Philosophy and Natural History, Chemistry, Metaphysics, and Polite Learning. No one, however he may practically neglect to devote to them his best hours and most assiduous study, will undertake to defend such neglect. I have nothing to say with regard to these. You come here to pass four laborious months in their acquisition; and nothing that I could say would probably increase your sense of their importance, or stimulate you in your devotion to them.

I have, however, one remark to make, which is of some importance, and which, though sufficiently obvious when stated, may not at once suggest itself to the student. He should, at the outset, be careful so to arrange his plans, as to preserve a due proportion in the attention paid to the different branches of medical knowledge. Some branches should receive the principal, though not exclusive, attention in the early part of his pupilage, as Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, and Chemistry. Others, again, as Surgery, Materia Medica, and Therapeutics, ought to form the chief subjects of his later studies; yet even then he should not fail, from time to time, to refresh in his mind the memory of the earlier branches. A due proportion, I say, is to be observed. Young men are apt to be led away from the observance of this rule to their manifest injury. One acquires a fondness for dissection, for chemical or physiological experiment, or for morbid anatomy, and he follows out this taste to excess, satisfying himself that all is right,—for is he not engaged in the study of his profession? Another, whose aims are more practical, and who desires speedily to make his way as a practitioner, skims hastily over the preparatory branches, and, very early,—unformed as an anatomist, physiologist, and pathologist,—applies himself assiduously to Surgery, Materia Medica, and Therapeutics. These courses are equally wrong; it is not necessary to point out how they are so, for it is sufficiently obvious; but each, when he enters upon life, and still more when he becomes deeply engaged in practical duties,

will feel the bad effects of his particular error. The former error, let me say, however, though more severely felt at the outset of life,—and perhaps for this reason,—is far more likely to be retrieved, and less likely to exercise a permanently injurious influence on the character of the physician.

We cannot, I think, insist too strongly upon the observance of a due proportion in the cultivation of the mind, a proper balance in the education of the different faculties, and in the attention paid to different branches of knowledge. It is this principle in education, to which the whole of the remarks addressed to you, have, in fact, related. It has been my endeavor to illustrate the application of this principle to the study of our profession; but it is equally applicable to every profession and every pursuit. The dangers from a neglect of it are different in different cases,—the bad effects on the mind vary with the nature of the occupation,—but they are always bad.

I cannot believe in the soundness of a system of education, which ties one down exclusively to a particular pursuit, or to the studies of a particular profession, with the view of making him great and eminent. It may do this, in a certain sense; but it is at a sacrifice of intellectual habits and gratifications, and perhaps of moral ones too, which is more than a balance for the doubtful benefit. It is true that a man, even of inferior talent, but of great industry, may, by the entire devotion of himself to a particular department of knowledge, arrive at a very thorough acquaintance with it, and in this way acquire a great

reputation in that department. But what are the effects of this course upon the mind of such a man? His powers, having been all employed in one direction, they have in that acquired a monstrous and unnatural growth, whilst, in every other, they have become deficient and incapable. He has been acquiring knowledge at the expense of intellect. By this process, you may, in some sense, make a great man of him who has no natural claim to greatness; but you cramp and confine the mind which was originally large and comprehensive, and obstruct its path to that true greatness which might have been otherwise its destiny. The division of labor, however favorable its influence may be in mechanical pursuits, is fatal to the best tendencies and habits of the mind, if carried very far into its education. No one would contend that the professional man should pay an equal attention to all branches of human knowledge. That which concerns his own calling should claim the first and principal place; but there is no branch, of which every intelligent and well-educated man may not know something with advantage. The fact, that knowledge apparently the most remote, may be brought to bear with advantage on professional subjects, is constantly forcing itself on our notice; and not only does a wide range of study, judiciously proportioned, tend to enlarge the mind, to discipline and train its faculties, to elevate and refine it, but it also improves its capacity for practical duties, and furnishes it with abundant materials for constant practical application.

In connexion with, and as a sequel to, these re-

marks, I would now call your attention to some considerations on the peculiar influences which medical studies, and the duties of a medical life, are found to have on the character, when these studies have been pursued with a due regard to the principles laid down, and a just estimate has been formed of the nature and obligation of the duties which the profession imposes. The physician is engaged in the study of a science, and in the practice of an art. The first calls on him for the investigation of truth,—the second, for the application of truth to practical purposes. Hence, in the daily practice of his profession, rightly estimated, his pursuits are strictly philosophical. The habit of philosophical investigation is required in order to come to a proper decision on the minutest points in the practice of physic; and there is no practical pursuit in which the necessity for such a habit of mind is so imperative. We are constantly called to the consideration of cases which demand a most close examination and comparison of evidence, in order to determine their nature; and we are, also, as frequently, required to investigate causes the most uncertain and variable in their nature and in their influence on the human body. There are no inquiries surrounded by so many difficulties as these. So frequent, so numerous, so constantly varying are the causes which produce, and the phenomena which indicate, disease, that each case may be considered as a new one, and as requiring a separate and almost original study.

While, on the one hand, our profession requires in those who devote themselves to it, the qualities of

mind to which I have referred, so, on the other hand, its studies and pursuits have a tendency to cultivate and improve those qualities,—indeed, I am almost tempted to say that they seem sometimes to create them. This is, I think, the result of that circumstance just alluded to, which is somewhat peculiar to our pursuits,—that we are at once engaged in the study of a science, and in the practice of an art. By this circumstance we are prevented from having formed in us either of two opposite states of mind and character, into which the purely scientific man, on the one side, and the mere artizan, or practical man, on the other, are respectively likely to fall.

The exclusive man of science is misled by too complete a reliance on the deductions of mere scientific inquiry. He would apply his deductions from scientific experiment,—which is a very different thing from practical experiment,—directly to practice, and he calculates on results as satisfactory in the workshop, as in the laboratory. He does not look for, and does not allow for, the thousand unforeseen circumstances, which may interfere, in its actual application, with the operation of a philosophical principle, and may modify its result. He needs, in his speculations, a ready knowledge of practical results to correct the errors into which he falls from reliance on scientific calculations. He is wanting in a kind of knowledge on these subjects, which is precisely analogous to what is usually called a knowledge of the world, when considered in relation to the common business concerns of life.

The mere practical man, on the other hand, knowing nothing of, and perhaps despising, science and principle, while he is saved from the kind of error of which I have spoken, and is, consequently, a safer, and perhaps, more useful man, is liable to faults of an opposite description. His sphere of observation is contracted;—the focal distance of his mind, if I may so say, is too short;—he has no extensive views;—his experience is great in one sense, but it is limited in its field;—his knowledge of individual things is great, but his knowledge of the relations of things to each other, is small. His experience is not adventurous. It does not go beyond the circle in which he was first taught to move. He executes admirably, but he does not contrive. He can operate perfectly, but he cannot discover. He is the servant of his art, and not its master; and he leaves it just where he found it.

These are two extremes, of which examples less strongly characterized are daily to be met with. Every one is familiar with men who exhibit these traits of character, more or less strongly marked, and mingled in greater or less proportions. Every man has, in his original constitution, or, as a consequence of circumstances in his education, a tendency to one or the other of these extremes. This tendency is to be corrected by the union, in due proportion, of scientific and practical knowledge,—by an education compounded of the influences of the laboratory and the workshop, or of study and practice. We accordingly find, that the men who afford to us the best specimens

of science applied to useful purposes, are those whose early education has been practical, whose first steps in life have been experimental, and who, when they engage in scientific inquiry, have thus always at their command a storehouse of actual experience, by means of which they are at once able to foresee the consequences of a too precipitate and exclusive application of scientific results in practice.

But no where, I believe, is the balance between these extremes so likely to be preserved as in our profession, and the truth of the remark is most distinctly seen in the character of its members. The study and practice of medicine form an occupation essentially philosophical. No pursuit seems better adapted to the cultivation of the best and most useful faculties of the mind, and to the maintenance of that proper proportion between its different parts, which is so necessary to its perfect development. The life of the physician is spent in the observation and examination of facts, in scrutinizing their evidence, analyzing their character, determining their relations, and coming to a practical decision founded upon them. This whole operation, concluded by an act of judgment formed under a very high responsibility, he goes through many times every day. There is no more improving exercise to which the mind can be subjected. Our lives are, in effect, occupied in a constant inquiry after truth, in examining the evidence by which it is supported, and in coming to a decision in actual practice, founded on the process through which we have gone.

Hence it is, and I may be permitted to express it as the result of no very short or limited observation on this point, that, as a class, the members of our profession have no superiors in the qualities of mind of which I have been speaking. Who are more competent judges of evidence,—who are more keen inquirers after truth,—who are less liable to deception,—who have a greater fund of what is commonly called good common sense, than physicians? I speak of them as a class, compared with other classes. Great deficiencies, in these points, we find in a vast majority of mankind, in all classes;—the deficiency seems to me less among medical men than among others.

One might suppose that the profession of the law, from the nature of its occupation, would have as much, or more, of this influence upon character. It has been presumed that lawyers will be the most keen and competent judges of truth, and of the evidence for truth, because their time is spent in the examination of evidence, and in coming to decisions on points into which they have inquired. But the pursuits of the lawyer differ very much from ours, in two points. In the first place, he is not employed so much in examining evidence, as testimony. He does not look at facts themselves, but at the accounts which different individuals give of facts. He is engaged in guarding against those sources of deception, or mistake, which proceed from the self-interest, the moral obliquity, the obstinacy, the falsehood, or the stupidity of mankind. This is, no doubt, an improving discipline, in a certain sense, to the character. It would be much more so,

were it not that, in the second place, the lawyer begins his investigation with a mind pre-occupied. His purpose is not to discover the truth, whatever it may be, but to establish the truth of a certain proposition, which is stated to him before the investigation begins. The physician examines the facts of the case, in order that he may learn their true character, and should be ready to follow them to the truth, whatever the truth may be. His mind should be open to conviction. The best result for him is the truth. The lawyer, on the other hand, examines the evidence of a case to elicit those circumstances from it which will favor a particular view of that case. His purpose is not to come at the truth, but to find means to make a certain view of the subject appear to be true, whether it be really true or false. That he believes himself in the right, and the view which he takes of his case to be the just one, as very commonly happens, makes no difference as to the influence exercised on the discipline of the mind, though it may make much as to the moral influence of the pursuit. No doubt, also, among medical men, especially those of a speculative turn, it often happens, that an observer has so committed himself to certain theoretical views of disease, that he approaches every case with a prejudiced mind, and looks at the evidence with the expectation, at least, if not the determination, that it shall support his particular views.

I acknowledge that the judicial office calls for an exercise of mind resembling that which has been spoken of as required in medical inquiries. The ob-

ject of the judge is the simple truth. Like the physician, he has, or should have, no bias, but be ready to follow the facts, wherever they may lead him. But this does not affect our general remark, concerning the influence of the studies and pursuits of the two professions. The judicial function terminates, instead of beginning, the life of a lawyer; and he does not enter upon its duties till his professional occupations have formed in him all the habits of mind which they have a tendency to form, and exercised all the influence which they are capable of exerting.

If this view of the influence of medical studies be correct, it follows, that what has often been uttered as a reproach on our profession, is, in truth, a very high compliment. It is a common belief, that talent is not necessary to eminence in medicine; that minds of a very humble order are competent to attain to a high rank as physicians. It is not merely meant, that men with little talent will succeed in getting business and a certain sort of *reputation*,—for this happens in all occupations,—but that they will really attain to a *character*, which, comparatively, would be beyond their reach in any other profession. Hence, the so commonly expressed opinion, that even a dunce may make a good doctor; and hence, whilst the ambitious and highly gifted young man is urged to choose the bar, the pulpit, or a political course, as best suited to the display of his powers, the less precocious scholar is significantly pointed to the dissecting-room and the hospital, as a more appropriate sphere for the exercise of his humbler capacity.

I do not mean to deny the truth of this. I take pride in *admitting* that it is true; and I regard it as an unintentional tribute to the excellence of that discipline, which medical studies, rightly pursued, enforce on the mind. Such young men *do* make better physicians than they would lawyers, or divines; ay, and further than this, they often become men of a higher character, as physicians, than others, apparently more highly gifted, do, as lawyers or divines. The cultivation of a good medical education, like good husbandry, not only extorts an abundant harvest from an indifferent soil, but it leaves the soil, itself, richer and more fertile. I have been many times astonished at the development of mind which has taken place in men of very moderate natural capacity, after they have devoted themselves to the study of our profession. In the first place, it excites interest, and often enthusiasm, in minds originally sluggish and apathetic, by the intrinsic character of its studies; and then they become enlarged, liberalized, and strengthened by the the discipline which it obliges them to undergo.

Let me not be supposed, however, to believe that medical pursuits may not sometimes exercise an unfavorable influence on those devoted to them; and it certainly becomes a duty, after drawing so bright a picture of their value, to point out the dangers, as well as the advantages, which may attend them. The study and practice of Medicine and Surgery have always been supposed to deaden the nicer feelings of our nature,—to render us callous to suffering, and destitute of sympathy with our fellow-men in seasons

of danger and sorrow; in short, by calling us into constant intercourse with the evils of our race, to render us thoughtless of their existence. That this is the effect, on a great many, is not to be denied. To study and practise the profession aright, we should keep constantly in view its double relation to humanity and to science; for, whilst there is no nobler character than that of the physician who never forfeits his philanthropy in his art, there is none more brutal, whatever be his scientific acquirements, than he who looks on his fellow-mortals only as the subjects of his art,—who sits in the dissecting-room, and pores over their dead bodies with no thought of them, but as contributing to a knowledge of anatomy,—or, walks the wards of a hospital, taking no other interest in its unfortunate inmates than as contributing to the advancement of science, by furnishing subjects for diagnosis, prognosis, and morbid anatomy.

That this danger exists, to a certain degree, is, I think, not to be denied. It exists especially in the earlier period of our studies, when the scientific interest is very strong, and the subjects with which we are brought in contact among our fellow-men, present, perhaps, little to excite or keep up a proper sympathy with their condition. To be aware of the danger, is, in a rightly disposed mind, to be prepared against it; and the means of avoiding it are to be found in that liberal and varied course of study, which it has been my endeavor to recommend.

I may have appeared to many to place too high an estimate on the qualities which our profession requires,

and on the character which it tends to form. I know there is nothing to captivate the fancy in the reputation of the physician; his sphere is almost always a narrow one; there can commonly be nothing splendid in his life, or in the name which he leaves behind him. But I think we may, notwithstanding, claim for our brethren, as a class, an equality,—I will not say, a superiority,—an equality with any class of men, in their disinterested and devoted exertions for the advancement of worthy purposes and great ends. I refer not merely to their interest in subjects connected with their own pursuits; though, even here, the amount of labor which has been, and now is, applied to investigations into every the most minute point connected with life, death, and disease, in its causes, nature, and treatment, would seem incredible to one who does not appreciate that earnest zeal, which science engenders in the minds of those who are trained to it; I refer, also, to their unpurchased love of, and search for, knowledge in every department; for, wherever you find a band of earnest inquirers, no matter in which of the natural sciences,—Botany Zoology, Geology, or Chemistry,—whether in the form of an association at home, or of travellers by land or by sea,—in frigid, temperate, or torrid zones,—you may be sure that among the most zealous, eager, and persevering, are those whose characters have been formed by the discipline of a medical education. I refer even to a still higher source of praise; wherever you find men suffering disease and death, in their most appalling forms, there will you find our brethren

foremost in works of mercy; not, perhaps, with silver and gold, for silver and gold they often have none, but with their lives in their hands, ready to spend them for the succor of their fellow-men. We are too often taught to admire the courage which leads men to brave death in war, for the sake of glory; but, to what does all their courage and all their glory amount, when we compare them with those of our medical brethren who meet death, not on the field of battle, and in sight of an applauding world, but in the obscure recesses of pestilence; in the camp, in the hospital, in lazar-houses; in dark and offensive prisons; in the encounter with those malignant scourges of mankind, fever, cholera, and plague! These are exploits which fame does not trumpet; the slain, in this warfare, are not chronicled in gazettes, but, I appeal to the better feeling of mankind, whether their courage is not as lofty, and their deaths as honorable.

Gentlemen, I have been led to enter thus, perhaps too warmly, into an exposition of the character of our profession, by the consideration that there is, at the present day, something of a tendency to depreciate its regular practitioners, to undervalue its importance to mankind, and, even among classes in society whom we should have supposed too intelligent, to desert it for new and more pretending systems, which are now, as they always have been, rising and falling around us, But there is nothing in this to alarm or discourage us. The necessity for an order of persons as physicians, in whose education, character, and responsibility, mankind can confide, has always existed; it always must exist. The principles which are to regulate the

future, are always to be found in the history of the past. For two thousand years, that class of physicians, of whom we are the legitimate successors, of whose accumulated wisdom we are the depositaries, has continued to possess the confidence of the great mass of their fellow-men, both wise and foolish; we shall continue to possess it. Inroads will be constantly made on this confidence,—sometimes to a greater, sometimes to a less extent,—but there is no fear that we shall lose it as long as we continue to deserve it. Let us be careful, then, that we do nothing to forfeit it. And, surely, we shall give reason to the world for the withdrawal of it, if it sees the standard of education, preliminary or professional, lowered; if the demands, as to study and qualifications, on those who are admitted to practice, are, from year to year, diminished; or, more especially, if it see rival schools seeking to fill their vacant seats, or swell their lists of graduates, not by an honorable competition in the excellence of their teaching and the completeness of the education they give, but by offering the honors of the profession in a shorter time, or with a lower amount of acquirement, to ardent young men, naturally disposed to hurry forward into active life. Things like these, and the too frequent exhibitions of ill-will, jealousy, and ungenerous enmity, among physicians, will do more to degrade our calling, and deprive us of the confidence of mankind, than the whole array of our irregular rivals combined, though their name were Legion. On this point I have no misgivings. Mankind will never be false to us, so long as we are true to them and to ourselves.

DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS OF PHYSICIANS.

AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

Delivered before the Medical Class of Harvard University, October 16, 1833.

We are met, this morning, Gentlemen, for the purpose of beginning a course of instruction in the elements of medical science. Of those whom I address, many, no doubt, have already made considerable progress in their professional studies; some approach the period of their termination; whilst some, on the other hand, have but just entered upon them. Still, whatever be the time, at which you severally expect to begin the active duties of life, whether it be near or remote, the minds of all are probably directed towards it, as an important era, with mingled hope and fear. Your immediate object, at present, must of course be to qualify yourselves for the station you are to hold in society, by the acquisition of a competent amount of professional knowledge; but there are many other considerations relating to the office of a physician, which should sometimes also engage your attention.

No man ought to meet with great success in the practice of medicine, unless he be actually well informed,—unless he deserve it. And few, I believe, do reach to a truly desirable kind or height of reputation without being well educated; but many, who are well educated, fail in attaining to such a reputation, and find themselves, through life, far behind many contemporaries, who have not half their talents or medical knowledge. No man, perhaps, succeeds greatly without deserving it; but many, who deserve it, do not succeed. Now what is the reason of this? It is obvious, if this statement be true, that to success as a practitioner something beside mere professional merit is necessary; that a physician must have other accomplishments than those which are strictly professional. His relation to society is something more than that of a mere investigator of the character of disease and a dispenser of the means of curing it. He must be able to do this and do it well; but he must also be able to do something more; he must have other qualifications.

It is true you have no immediate use for the qualifications of which I speak. Having no direct personal connexion with patients, you cannot exercise the accomplishments to which I refer. It is nevertheless necessary, in order that you may acquit yourselves to your satisfaction when the time comes, that you should early form just ideas of the nature of your profession, its connexion with society, the duties which it calls on you to perform, the light in which you will be regarded when you practise it, and the character

and deportment which will become you in the performance of its offices. It is only by entertaining proper views on all these points, that you will be aware of what will be expected of you on the one hand, and of what you ought to be ready to perform on the other.

I do not intend to enter into a detailed statement on this subject. A volume might easily be written upon it, and I regret that there is no such volume in existence. But you will excuse me, I do not doubt, if I devote the time, allotted to us this morning, to some general remarks on the character and relations of the medical profession, which will perhaps serve the purpose of directing your attention to the subject, and furnish you with materials, that will enable you to form for yourselves just views of the course of conduct it will become you hereafter to pursue.

There is little in the reputation of the physician which would be desirable to a man of ordinary ambition. It is not a profession suited to one who loves display,—who would live in the mouths of his fellowmen,—who would enjoy a widely extended name and influence. The physician is but little known beyond his actual sphere of practice, and this must be, from the nature of the case, extremely narrow. However he may be esteemed and even venerated in the community in which he resides, his worth can rarely be made known beyond it. No man's services are more valued in private life, no man is more important to families and individuals as such; but he forms no part of the public apparatus of the community;—

all its machinery goes on as well without him as with him. His duties are performed to individuals, and not to bodies of men. He is obliged by a sort of physical necessity to revolve in one single circle, and that of very small extent.

This is true, not only of physicians in general, but of some of those who have distinguished themselves as philosophers and reformers in the profession. It is true, in great measure, of those who have displayed talents and exercised an influence, which, in any other department of science or any other walk of life, would have made their reputation co-extensive with the civilized world. In point of fact, how little is known, except by medical men themselves, of the great lights of our profession, either of this or of former ages. Compare the fame of Harvey, for instance, with that of Newton. I would not place the discoveries of the former on a level with those of the latter, either in respect to their intrinsic importance, or to the qualities of mind indicated in the individuals who made them. Yet there are some points of resemblance in their labors, which afford a reason for ranking them, as discoverers in science, in the same class. The discovery of the circulation of the blood by Harvey was not less fundamental, or essential to a right understanding of the science of life, than that of gravitation by Newton was to the right understanding of all physical science. In the two great divisions of the creation, animate matter and inanimate matter, they were the discoverers of the principles or laws, with which all subsequent advances in knowledge have been con-

nected, and on which they have been in some measure dependent.

Yet how different is the reputation they have enjoyed, not only in kind, which was perhaps to be expected, but in degree and extent. Who hears the name of Harvey uttered beyond the limits of our profession? Who knows any thing of his life or labors? How little do men estimate the value of his discovery, or the influence it has had on a science, to which they are notwithstanding daily looking for aid and comfort? Who does not hear the name of Newton? It is equally in the mouth of the philosopher and of the school-boy. It is associated in every man's mind, throughout the civilized world, with the laws of the universe which he inhabits.

Compare Bichat with Davy. They were men strongly resembling each other in genius, in an early development of talent, and in the commanding influence they exercised over the sciences to which they were respectively devoted. Each too arrived in early youth at an eminence in his separate sphere of exertion, which is with most men the reward of many years of unwearied toil. But how different the rank which they hold with the world at large! The anatomist, the physiologist, looks up to Bichat with an admiration approaching that which the chemist feels in regard to Davy. But ask the man of letters, the man of the world, the politician, the lawyer, what he knows of the two philosophers, and you will find a striking and truly mortifying difference.

To take a still stronger example; suppose that the

great founder of modern surgery, John Hunter, had been a lawyer or a statesman, and had applied to his pursuits the profound sagacity and unequalled industry which he bestowed on anatomy and physiology; he would have acquired a reputation equal to that of any individual of the age in which he lived. We should have heard of him in the same breath with Mansfield, Burke, and Johnson. But what does the world know of him now, or what did his contemporaries know of him then? Little more than that he was a very respectable surgeon, which, in comparison with the actual character and desert of the individual, is much as if one were to say of Lord Mansfield, that he was a respectable lawyer.

Not that the world is disposed to deny the praise of greatness to men eminent in our profession. The truth is, that their claims are not, and cannot be, fairly brought before it. It does not understand the measure by which their qualifications are to be estimated. Few, except physicians themselves, are capable of appreciating the merits of a medical man; and, more than this, his talents are exerted in a field so remote from common observation, that the materials for a judgment are not readily afforded even to those capable of judging. This is no ground of complaint. It is no injustice. We perceive no disposition to rob members of our profession of their due share of fame, whether contemporary or posthumous. We state merely the fact, that they do not attain to that reputation, which the same talents, industry, and success would have ensured to them in other walks of life. This fact

grows out of the nature of the duties and of their relation to society.

But there is some compensation for this in the nature of the estimation which they enjoy in the sphere in which they do move. No confidence is so implicit as that which is reposed in a physician of good character, by the community to which he belongs. His character and connexion with society are such, as to invite an undoubting reliance upon him, not only in his particular vocation, but in all circumstances which require fidelity and intelligence. The authority acquired by some physicians over the minds of their patients has been very great. The affection with which they are sometimes regarded is not less remarkable. No man probably has a strong hold on the affections of so many individuals, as an amiable and skilful physician; there is none, not even the minister of religion, whose connexion with families is so intimate and so domestic, and none whose loss is more deeply felt.

This sort of reputation, this interest in the feelings of mankind, we must take, I say, as a compensation for the absence of those means of rendering ourselves known to the world, which are possessed by men of other occupations. We cannot, like the preacher, the lawyer, the legislator, acquire reputation co-extensive with our country or the world; but we may secure, by a diligent performance of our humbler but not less useful duties, an interest in the hearts of a smaller circle, which may be far more gratifying than the cold applauses of a whole people.

This strong interest with which physicians of proper character are regarded, grows out of the peculiar nature of the connexion that exists between them and their patients. Our attention is not often directed to this point, and probably neither physicians nor patients are always aware of the full extent of the relation subsisting between them, although they may strictly perform all the duties which grow out of it. They are unconscious of the precise character, or at least of the whole character, of the services which they are receiving and rendering. Thus, if any man be asked, why he confides in and has an affection for his physician, he readily answers you, that it is because he believes him to be skilful in his profession, and has been faithfully attended by him in sickness. But this, I apprehend, is not the only, if it be indeed the principal source of that reliance on physicians, which is felt by those who are laboring under disease, or the friends by whom they are surrounded. What other source, then, does exist?

Every one who has experienced it, knows very well, and others hardly can know, how distracting is that anxiety which we undergo during the dangerous illness of ourselves or our friends; how much it prostrates our self-control and self-reliance; how it fills the mind with doubt; what terrible suspense consumes our days, and what images of horror visit our sleeping hours. It is from this state of mind that mankind seek and find at least temporary relief, in the presence and counsel of the physician. They need some one on whom they may lean, some one upon whom they can

throw the feeling of responsibility, from whom they may expect an opinion which shall either destroy their hopes or banish their fears, and thus at any rate diminish that greatest of trials to the mind, suspense. In all seasons of danger and dismay, we derive inexpressible, and perhaps unaccountable, satisfaction from the simple presence of an individual who is known to understand and appreciate the nature of the evils which threaten us, even should we know that the danger itself is in no degree lessened by his presence or his counsel. This is peculiarly the case in sickness. No danger so unsettles the self-command of even the firmest minds, because there is none of which the nature and degree are so little understood. In proportion to the uncertainty and suspense which exist, will be the relief afforded by the calm, steady, and unruffled deportment, which it is the part of the physician to display under circumstances the most embarrassing and uncertain. If the danger itself be not diminished, the apprehension of it, the suffering of fear, is greatly taken away. So astonishing is sometimes this influence on the feelings of friends and of the sick, that their first impression seems to be, that the danger itself has vanished. This is observable even in cases where the presence of the medical adviser only serves to confirm the worst fears and to extinguish the last hope. How often is it said to us on such occasions,—"We are thankful to know the worst; we know that you can do nothing; but when you are here, we feel safe." So preferable is certainty to suspense; so much better can we bear to know

that nothing can be done, than to be in doubt what should be done.

The service which a physician renders in this way is not, indeed, independent of, but wholly in addition to, that which consists in the administration of the resources of the healing art. It is a moral influence derived from and founded upon a general confidence in his knowledge and skill, but not at all connected with the belief, in each particular case, that his skill will be of any avail. His presence and support are not less sought for, and are not less efficacious in soothing the anxieties of patients and their friends, in cases necessarily mortal, than in those which are simply dangerous. The comfort of a decided state of mind and of a freedom from responsibility is what the friends of the sick crave. They yearn for some strong arm on which to rest the harassed mind. Hence the so common desire, particularly among those of little firmness, that we should fly to our patients even when the hand of death is upon them,—not that we may minister to their sufferings,—but that our presence may serve as a stay and support to their friends.

I do not know that I have been successful in exactly defining the nature of the services which are thus rendered by physicians; but many, I presume, may find a confirmation of my remarks and an illustration of them, if they will analyze the state of their own minds in times of danger and anxiety. They may perceive, that there is a relation between the physician and his patients distinct from that which

consists in the administration of the resources of art, though ultimately growing out of a belief in his knowledge and skill in that respect,—a relation contributing not a little to the comfort and satisfaction of the sick and their friends, and well worthy to be borne in mind and understood by those who are entering on the study of medicine.

Some men have doubted, whether the art of medicine be capable of doing any thing toward the cure of diseases directly; whether it be in our power, by medicinal applications, to control in any measure those processes of the system in which disease consists. This is an excess of skepticism in medicine, though there is really some ground for the suspicion, that, taking the practitioners of medicine in a mass,—the skilful with the unskilful, the educated with the ignorant, the prudent with the rash, the wise with the stupid,—nature would do as much for the cure of diseases as art does. But even on the supposition that medicine is of no efficacy in the way commonly supposed, still, with the present belief and feelings of mankind on the subject, the profession would be of incalculable value, as a benevolent institution for alleviating the anxieties and assuming the responsibility of sickness. And yet further, were there no such faith among mankind as now exists concerning the powers of the healing art,—still, if there were a class of men who made the history of the human body and its diseases their study, and who were able, in consequence, to give correct opinions concerning the nature, the danger, and the probable course and result

of a disease, I believe that their presence and their opinion would be sought with eagerness, and would essentially contribute to the alleviation of human suffering.

It would seem, then, that the profession of the physician is made necessary by the refined moral feelings of mankind, as well as by the desire of relief from pain and the removal of disease. In accordance with this remark, it is to be observed, that the demand for medical attendance, and more especially for peculiar moral qualities in those from whom it is sought, increases with the increasing civilization and refinement of society; still further, that it is much greater in the higher and more refined classes of a community, at the same time, than it is in the lower.

It is from the nature of this relation, in part at least, that confidence in physicians is of so slow and gradual growth. No doubt the well-founded opinion, that experience is essential to excellence, contributes much to the same effect; but, independently of this, long personal intercourse is necessary to give patients that entire and undoubting reliance, which is so often felt by them. It is frequently regarded by us, when young in practice, as a hardship, that confidence is yielded to us so slowly and reluctantly;—that we are obliged to wind our way so gradually into public esteem, and consequently so often to pass the flower of our days, either without employment, or in employment which scarcely yields to us any thing but the hope of something better. But I am not sure that this is so great an evil as it appears. Confidence

which is easily gained, is easily lost. It is confidence reposed in his elders, which makes it, for the young man, a thing so difficult to attain. The same cause will continue to him hereafter that which he has once acquired. Could he easily supplant his seniors in public esteem when young, what assurance has he that he will not be himself supplanted when he is old?

The truth is, that physicians acquire that confidence of which I have spoken, only by growing up with a generation. It is rarely felt by patients towards one whom they have newly adopted, or transiently employed. It is constantly remarked by those who have from early life been conversant with one physician and have afterwards lost him, that no one is found to make his place good. The art of making one's way in the world, of passing for more than one is worth, of dazzling the sober sense of mankind by a glare of false pretension, will sometimes acquire for a physician a degree of notoriety, but seldom a permanent reputation. Even rare qualifications of nature and education, except under circumstances uncommonly favorable, make but gradual progress. It was remarked by Dr. Baillie, that he had never known a physician, who, from any cause, acquired business rapidly in the city of London, who permanently retained it; and this corresponds well with the remark we have here made. If it be rapidly acquired, this must be accomplished by means independent of those which give a firm hold on the confidence and affections of patients; for they cannot at once be displayed, nor can they at once have their full operation.

There are many advantages in this gradual growth of reputation, accompanied no doubt by some disadvantages. It makes the profession progressive during the active part of life; it affords a constant motive for activity; it stimulates us to continue our exertions to deserve, in order that we may attain to an increase of reputation and emolument. It is apt to be destructive to one's spirit of improvement, to have arrived early in life at eminence in his profession,—to have enjoyed in youth the regard and confidence which are usually the privilege of riper years. Ambition is cloyed; the love of distinction is sated; and the desire of improvement is deadened. It is a most difficult task to keep possession of an eminence thus gained; whilst, at the same time, the motive to the requisite exertion is feeble and constantly diminishing. Hence premature reputation, even with a competent share of merit, is seldom permanent. But where public confidence is slowly yielded, and yielded only on the assurance of sufficient desert, the motive to improvement is constantly operating; and, as a necessary consequence, the satisfaction arising from this source is always new and never exhausted.

This leads me to make some remarks on the principles, which should guide us in the means we employ for the acquisition of business. I have already observed, that the success of men is not always in proportion to their professional merit, but that other circumstances contribute to it. A physician's first object should of course be to qualify himself for the treatment of disease; but, whilst he does not fail in

this, it is right for him to cultivate such other qualifications as shall promote the final object of his entrance on the profession.

The measures, to which men have had recourse to get medical business, have so often been mean and dishonorable, as to have become almost proverbial. A celebrated physician, noted for his coarseness, brutality, and profaneness, once remarked to a beginner in practice, that there were two ways of getting into business; one by bullying, and the other by cajoling, mankind. "I," said he, "have succeeded very well with the first, and you may perhaps do well to try the second." Gentlemen, if I believed that there were no way of rising to notice in our profession, but by the adoption of the mean arts and paltry tricks which are implied in this advice, I would at once advise you to turn your backs upon it, as a calling unworthy of an honorable man. But I know that this is far, very far, from being true. There are means of gaining the confidence of mankind which we can exercise without degrading ourselves; and we may always be assured, that, if we maintain a course and character by which we forfeit our self-respect, we shall sooner or later lose that of our fellow-men.

I do not here speak of the sudden acquisition of business; this, where there is any competition, can only be the result of art or accident; but of that honorable and substantial reputation, which alone is worth having. In what I have already said, I have alluded to some of the principal circumstances which will ensure it. But I may remark, in addition, on a few

points which should distinguish the character of the physician.

He should show that his profession is the great object of his life, and consequently of his thoughts;—and it should be so. Yet I would not have him withdraw his attention from all other studies, nor all other pursuits. This would be to narrow his mind, and to render him less intelligent even in his own department. Neither would I have him needlessly intrude his knowledge of medicine or his devotion to it, at all times, on those in whose society he is placed. He should embrace every reasonable opportunity of making known his attainments; but let him avoid that boasting and conceited style of conversation with regard to himself, which, however it may for a time impose on the credulous and the weak, does in the end lessen a man in the esteem of others, as it ought to do in his own.

The physician should be devoted to the welfare of his patients, and his manner should be such that they may feel that he is so. One man may really be willing to do as much for the sick as another, he may feel the same interest in the case, he may give it the same attention, and succeed as well in its treatment; yet he may appear to the patient cold, heartless, and indifferent. Now I would not recommend the expression of any mawkish sensibility at the bedside of the sick; neither is the physician called to the direct utterance of any words of sympathy with the sufferings of those whom he attends. But he is bound to the exercise of a uniform kindness, gentleness, and

tenderness of manner, from which nothing should induce him to deviate. And if I were to name any one thing more than another, which, within my own observation, has contributed to the success of physicians, it would be such a manner and management in the sick room as indicate regard for the welfare of their patients, consideration for their feelings, a due appreciation of their sufferings, not so much manifested by actual expression, as by an earnest attention to the nature of their case and a careful application of the means of relief.

It is unquestionably often a hard task to maintain such a deportment towards the sick and towards their friends. We are often exposed to causes of great irritation. We are annoyed by unreasonable expectations and strange perverseness on the part of patients, and tormented by the insatiable inquisitiveness of their friends. Then we are forced to maintain a firm and tranquil demeanor when we are tortured with anxiety; to seem decided and confident in order that we may impart confidence, when we are distracted by doubt and uncertainty; and to appear cheerful, when we are depressed by witnessing suffering and distress, and the defeat of our best endeavors for their relief.

We are apt to complain of the unreasonableness of patients and their friends, and we perhaps suffer ourselves too often to be betrayed into expressions of irritation and disgust at what appears to be an ungrateful and unfounded want of confidence on their part, though it really is not meant as such. We are not

always so considerate in these cases as the circumstances demand. We do not make allowance enough for the effects produced by sickness on the mind; for the irritability and feebleness which are its consequence; for the impatience often manifested at delays and discomforts, which seem but trifling to us, who do not endure them, and who know that a little time will remove them; but which appear serious evils to those who suffer them, and who do not know but they may portend some serious disaster. Neither do we always consider, that ignorance, more than wilfulness or malice, leads to those officious interferences, which so often perplex and harass us, and that the rule of morality, as well as of sound policy, should prompt us to forbear any expression of the annoyance which we may feel.

But it is useless to go through with all the details which present themselves on this subject. I can recommend but one general rule, which is of universal application, and by the faithful observance of which, one cannot fail to attain that species of address in his intercourse with patients which will ensure him their confidence and affection. Let him really feel an interest in their welfare, as well as assiduously endeavor to understand and treat their diseases; let him check in himself all impatience and irritation at unreasonableness or ingratitude on their part; let him always cultivate, as a duty, kind and charitable feelings towards them; and there is no fear but that he will manifest this state of mind in his conduct.

These are the most important moral qualities which

the physician must exhibit in his character, considered in the point of view in which we are now looking at the profession. But there is another, which, though perhaps less absolutely necessary to success, is of great importance; I mean that usually known by the phrase, *decision of character*. I know that many regard this as a quality inherent by nature in some, and denied to others; and, undoubtedly, men differ in the degree in which they possess it. Some are originally fickle, vacillating, and undecided; others are self-confident and firm in opinion and action. But I believe that the sort of character necessary to gain confidence, in the physician, may be obtained by any man of tolerable sense, who can fully comprehend what it is, and will constantly act with reference to its acquisition. It consists in calmly making up his mind, on every occasion, from the best lights which he can bring to bear upon the case,—making up his mind distinctly as to the course which it is proper to pursue, and then steadily and undeviatingly pursuing that course, without shifting it, from day to day, to gratify any transient whim of the patient, or in consequence of some trifling change of symptoms. Not that one should obstinately persevere in any course, when circumstances decidedly show it to be a wrong one;—the proper character is shown by not making up one's opinion, in the first instance, without strong reasons and sufficient consideration,—and in not acting afterward without the same. I am ready to say, that, in most instances, it were better to persevere in a plan of treatment which is not the very best the case ad-

mits, than lightly to change it, from day to day, with the chance of sometimes hitting upon a better, and sometimes on a worse.

Our art is so imperfect, and so much conjecture interferes with correct judgment in medicine, that the mind of the physician must necessarily be left in many cases,—nay, in a majority,—in a state of some uncertainty with respect to the character of the disease he is to treat, and the best course to be pursued in its management. Now, as something must be done, and he is to act according to the best judgment he is able to form, the uncertainty which he feels should never appear in his language or manner. He may feel, for instance, in some hazardous case, that a powerful remedy is on the whole advisable, yet that there is some question whether it may not in the end retard recovery, protract the disease by exhausting the strength, or turn the scale against the patient's life by interfering with a salutary natural process, which would carry him through, if left to itself. All this may pass through his mind, and require to be weighed before he comes to a decision. But when it has been weighed, and the decision made, none of the doubts which hang over the matter should be suffered to appear to the patient. He cannot say to him,—"I am going to bleed you, but, after all, the effect of the remedy cannot be foreseen; it may give you temporary relief, it is true, and thus appear to you to be beneficial, but in the end it may be prejudicial, and perhaps cost you your life." It is very clear, that to hold such language could never be advantageous

either to the physician or the patient. No; whatever we decide to do, we must do as if it were the very best thing that can be done, and as if we had no misgivings about it. There is no deception in this. It is the principle on which we act in all the concerns of life.

I am desirous, when speaking of decision of character, to warn you against an error into which physicians sometimes, and the public very often fall. When they speak of decided practice, they commonly refer to the employment of powerful remedies; and a decided practitioner in their eyes is one who is bold and daring, who would carry the system by storm, and drive disease out of it by main force. But this is a wrong use of the term, and one may be misled by it into dangerous habits of action. A decided practitioner is one who does that which the case seems to him to require, steadily and undeviatingly, whether it be much or little. As much decision may be shown,—nay, I think much more,—in doing nothing, than in doing a great deal. Patients and their friends are seldom uneasy, when they see a great many means put in requisition for their relief; but it requires a rare combination of intelligence and moral force to keep them quiet, and to keep one's self also composed, when, amidst danger and pain, and perhaps the fear of death, we feel ourselves called upon to adopt only palliative or negative means.

There is one other consideration relating to the formation of the medical character, to which also I wish to call your attention. At the present day, a

new and strong impulse has been given to the investigation of medicine as a science. New and more accurate methods of studying the history of disease have been put into practice. Nothing can be more desirable than that each one, according to his opportunity, should devote himself to this species of study. But there is apt to exist in the mind, when it becomes deeply interested in such pursuits, a tendency to confine the attention to the investigation for its own sake, without sufficient regard to the ultimate purposes for which it has been undertaken. Thus, the botanist becomes engaged in examining and classifying plants, and feels no interest except in studying them as parts of a certain system of arrangement. It is the same with the entomologist and the mineralogist. And so, too, the physician may get engaged in the study of disease, solely as a branch of natural history. He may come to look on patients, as the botanist does on his plants, or the entomologist on his insects, merely as objects whose characteristics he is to investigate, and not fellow-beings whose diseases he is to treat. There is, I say, a tendency to this, which every man feels more or less, when he becomes deeply interested in the study of the history of disease. He almost learns to feel,—indeed he may, unless he guard against it, quite learn to feel,—as if the sufferings, the health, and even the life of the patient were of secondary importance, when compared with the success of his investigations. It surely seems as if some men would be chagrined by a recovery, which should falsify their prediction as to the result of a case, or de-

prive them of the means of determining the accuracy of their diagnosis. It is, no doubt, desirable that medicine should be thus studied. It is in the power of those who apply themselves to the natural history of diseases strictly, to confer great benefits on the profession by the treasures of knowledge which they accumulate, and which can be only thus accumulated. But though all may make an approach to the same method of observation, yet all cannot do it to the same extent, nor ought any one to do it at the sacrifice of the more pressing duties which belong to his calling. It is well that one should look at diseases, and study them as objects of science; but the sick must not be treated so as to feel that they are regarded only in this light. He ought never to forget the higher duties which he owes them, as fellow-men laboring under sufferings, which they believe him able to relieve. Nothing will more certainly deprive him of their confidence, and prevent his gaining their affection, than the exhibition of a spirit of this kind. Patients often evince much tact in fathoming the motives by which we are actuated in our treatment of them. And although they would, other things being the same, confide most in him who seemed to study most deeply their case; yet, did they imagine that the interest was of a purely selfish and scientific kind, suspicion would take the place of confidence, and they would apprehend that they were to be made the subjects of experiment, and not of a rational mode of treatment.

The considerations I have presented, have grown out of the remark made at the outset, that medical

success is not uniformly in proportion to medical desert, and that various other circumstances contribute to the progress made by an individual in medicine, considered as an art, or profession. It might now perhaps be asked, if these circumstances contribute so much to success, why should we devote so much toil and time to the acquisition of medical knowledge, which, after all, is of so little avail? I answer, in the first place, that we have ourselves to satisfy as well as the public; and this we cannot do without understanding thoroughly the science which we profess. But, in the next place, I would repeat a remark already made, that, although many men fail who are, professionally speaking, well qualified, and many acquire practice and notoriety who are but indifferently qualified, yet none arrive at a truly desirable and permanent reputation who are not well versed in the knowledge of their profession.

The reason of this is, that such a reputation must be conferred on a man by the voice of the members of the profession, who alone are competent judges of the merit of a medical practitioner. The public are no judges of this merit. They have none of the materials for judgment. It is truly astonishing to find how strangely ignorant of the first principles of medicine, and especially of medical evidence, are a large proportion, I do not know but I may say, are all men out of the profession, even the most intelligent and learned. A celebrated writer on Education, has remarked in substance, that all men are competent judges of the character of a physician, because any

body can tell whether his patients lived or died. There is a great want of judgment in this remark. The physician himself, if he observe with the caution of a philosopher, may pass many years of careful observation without being able to determine with regard to the success of his practice in any one disease or with any one remedy. Nothing is more difficult than to form such an estimate, either concerning ourselves or others. But it were idle to exhibit the absurdity of the remark. When men form their opinion of a physician's character, they derive their materials from two sources. First, they judge of his capacity and attainments in medicine, by their observation of his capacity and attainments in other things. If they find a man exhibiting good sense and sufficient information on subjects with which they are acquainted, and observe him, at the same time, to be devoted to the business of his calling, they conclude very reasonably that he will employ the same qualities there; and they accordingly give him their confidence, although they are no judges whether he proves deserving of it or not. Secondly, they judge of a physician's character by the standing which he maintains among his medical brethren. The effect of this is not always obvious, especially at first. But you may depend upon it as true, that few or none will rise to high and permanent reputation as physicians, who do not maintain a good standing with other physicians, and who have not their confidence. A man's permanent reputation must be given to him by the profession. No other is worth having *alone*.

This brings me to invite your attention to a few observations respecting the deportment of physicians toward each other. We are mutually dependent for our character and reputation. It is in our power to do much to exalt or debase others. What then should be our feelings, and what the principles which regulate our conduct, in this respect?

The occupation of medical men, and the nature of their connexion with families and individuals, bring them constantly into immediate personal competition. Hence bad feelings are often excited, and we experience a frequent disposition to detract from the merit of those who have succeeded to our exclusion. Whether this, however, be the cause, or not, certain it is that a jealous and contentious spirit among rival physicians has been so common as to be almost proverbial. They are constantly guilty of the most illiberal judgment of each other's principles, knowledge, and practice. Probably no where else would the profession, in this respect, bear so favorable an examination as in the city and community in which we live; yet how much room is there for amendment even here.

What, then, should regulate our conduct toward each other? We should consider the nature of the art we profess. At best it is involved in many uncertainties and difficulties. We know a little,—we guess a great deal. Of course we are liable to constant mistakes. Every man makes them, and makes them often. I would require no more certain sign of the insufficiency of a man's professional knowledge, than

the boast that he was free from them. Now our constant tendency is to overlook our own, and dwell with complacency on those of others. We ought to do precisely the opposite. From a contemplation of our own mistakes, we may learn much. It is in fact the basis of experience. From dwelling on those of others nothing results but an exaltation of our own pride, at the fancied debasement of another. Where all are liable to err, charity and liberality of judgment are as politic as they are moral. We should neither disseminate nor dwell upon the slanders uttered against others, for we know how prone men are to misstatements; and the illiberality we exercise toward them may in turn be exercised toward us,—as unjustly and uncharitably. It is enough that we are liable to be mistaken and misapprehended by the rest of the world. Our reputations are assailed, our feelings wounded, by the careless, and unthinking, and sometimes perhaps the malevolent conduct of those with whom we are conversant. Our motives are often misjudged,—even our honesty doubted, our skill and knowledge habitually called in question. Men, women, and children, whose utter ignorance is shown by the very fact that they do not know they are ignorant, are ever ready to pass judgment upon the conduct and management of able and experienced physicians. It seems to be supposed the easiest matter in the world to form an opinion on a medical subject; and it would be sometimes amusing, were it not so embarrassing, to have the opinion of some nurse, or old woman, gravely

quoted as ample authority against us in a case of life and death.

It is enough, I say, that we are liable to all this;—let us not augment the evils of our calling by pursuing the same conduct toward one another, which we complain of the world for exercising towards us. We are apt to judge our brethren, in cases where we have really as few of the materials for a correct judgment, as the world has for forming its opinions concerning us. It is not uncommon to hear peculiarities of practice, which happen to differ widely from the notions which the speaker entertains, branded as the result of gross ignorance, or perversity of intellect, or even of absolute dishonesty. When shall we learn, in this world of ignorance and darkness, where the best lights which any of us obtain, serve but to render us sensible how little we know, and how little way we can penetrate into the truths of nature,—when shall we learn to admit difference of opinion, even on the most important points, to be no proof of ignorance or wilful perversity? When shall we learn that candor, liberality, and forbearance in our judgment of the opinions and of the conduct of others, are the surest evidence of elevated attainments on our part? The truly enlightened are always the most candid; for none are so entirely aware of the amount of our ignorance, even on those subjects which we know best.

I have but one farther remark to make on the character at which we should aim, and the principles which should govern our conduct, when we enter on our

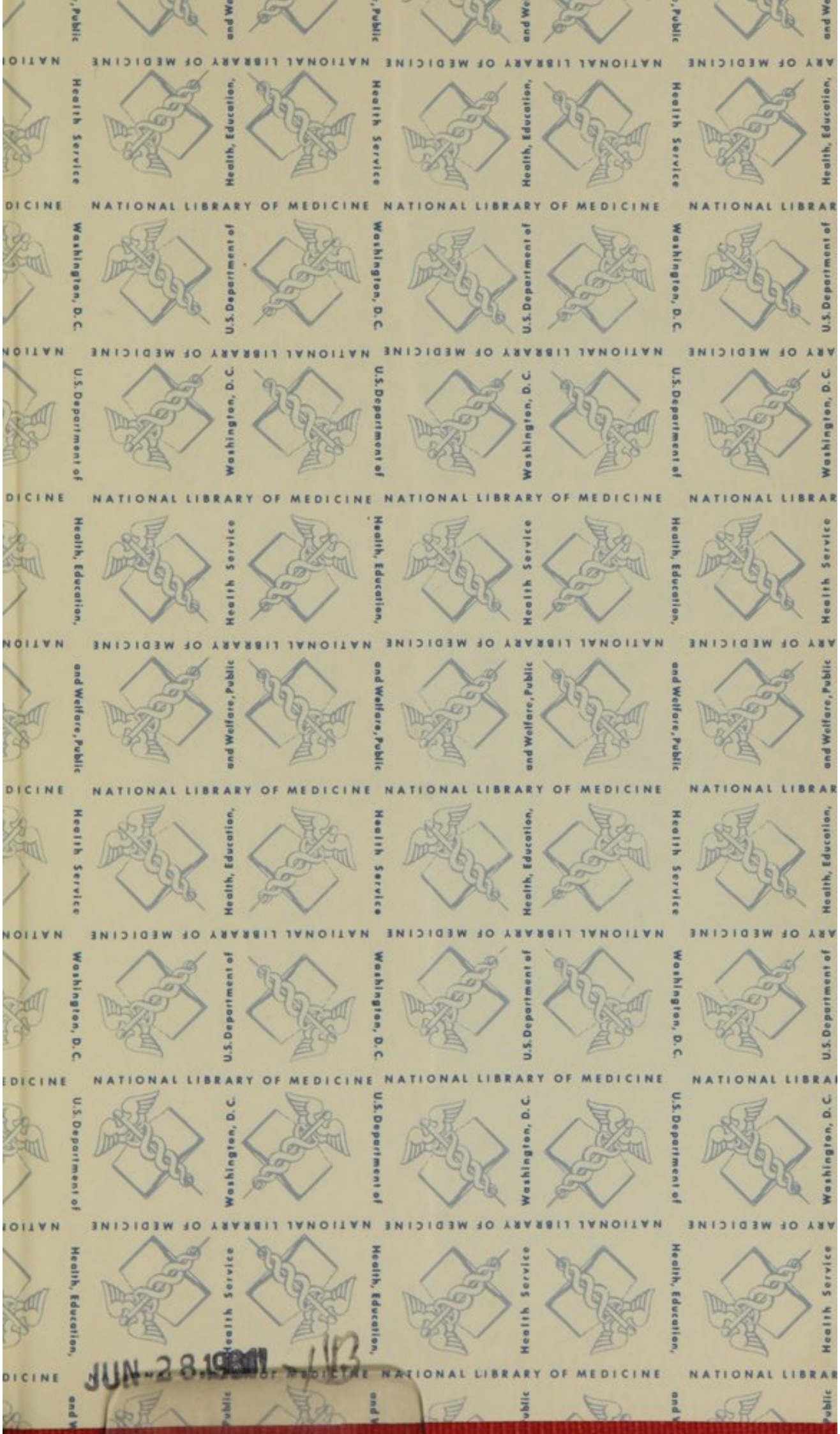
professional career. It embraces a consideration which should be strongly impressed upon us. The physician should consider the place he fills or may fill in society, and the influence he is capable of exerting on the community to which he belongs. Human society, and the influences which form the minds of men constituting it, are made up of a great variety of elements, and not the least among these is the character of individuals. A person of even an ordinary station, not unfrequently, by some peculiar strength of character, gives a tone to the society of a place, either for good or for evil. Much more may this be the case with those whose education and occupation naturally turn men's attention to them with confidence and respect. We have, in this country, no permanent class of men who hold a certain rank and influence from birth or office. The corresponding place here is held by those whose profession or character gives them standing and importance. Hence, we enter society at an advantage; our very calling predisposes mankind to give us their confidence. It is our duty to see that we do not abuse it.

Now it is very obvious, that an enlightened physician may do much to promote religion, morals, and the cause of education. He may, by his example and that of his family, aid in raising the standard of mental and moral cultivation, wherever he may happen to be situated. He may contribute to the general improvement in taste and the arts. This is obvious enough. But I would dwell particularly on one cir-

cumstance in the professional character, which is not so commonly taken into consideration. Physicians are, among us, the only men, who as a class, have a scientific education. They are, by their business, men of science; men, whose habits of investigation and thinking are, or ought to be, of a philosophical character. The study and practice of medicine has eminently a tendency to give this cast to the mind. No man can be regarded as accomplished in this profession, who does not understand the elements of Natural Philosophy and Chemistry, as well as of Physiology. In our communities, the physician is the scientific man of the place. It is his duty, therefore, to keep up his acquaintance with science as he advances in life, and to promote the dissemination of scientific knowledge among his neighbors. The greatest deficiency in the character of men in general is the want of that power of judging with good sense, and of weighing the value of evidence, which is especially imparted by scientific pursuits. This deficiency is to be gradually removed by disseminating among them this kind of knowledge;—and we may do much directly and indirectly toward promoting this result. It is often urged as an objection to this attempt, that a little learning is dangerous. It is not true. A little learning is not dangerous on any subject, if it be truly elementary, if it be complete as far as it goes, and if its possessor be fully aware that the first and most important step, in the acquisition of knowledge, is to learn distinctly the limits of knowledge;

and, as we go on acquiring it, to be able to measure exactly the progress we have made, and the uses to which we may be able to apply it.

I have, thus, Gentlemen, made such remarks on the conduct and character which become us in our professional relation, as appeared to me worthy of your serious consideration, and calculated to aid you in establishing in your minds the principles which are hereafter to guide you. There are many others of the same kind with those adverted to, which time does not permit us here to consider. There are also many important views relating to the mode in which we are to proceed in the acquisition of medical knowledge, the objects at which we are to aim, and the means of attaining those objects, which it would be desirable to impress on your minds. But, on these subjects, it is less likely that you will fail in acquiring the necessary rules for your direction, than on those which I have selected for your consideration. And I have been influenced in this selection by the reflection, that, without a due regard to the principles of conduct which I have endeavored to enforce, professional qualifications alone neither will nor ought to conduct you to the eminence to which you no doubt aspire.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