

**A biographical memoir of Samuel George Morton, M.D : prepared by appointment of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, and read before that body, November 3, 1852 / by George B. Wood.**

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Wood (Geo. B.)

A

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR  
OF  
SAMUEL GEORGE MORTON, M.D.,

PREPARED BY APPOINTMENT OF THE COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA,

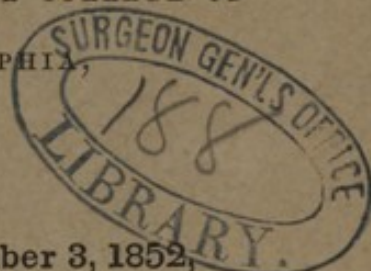
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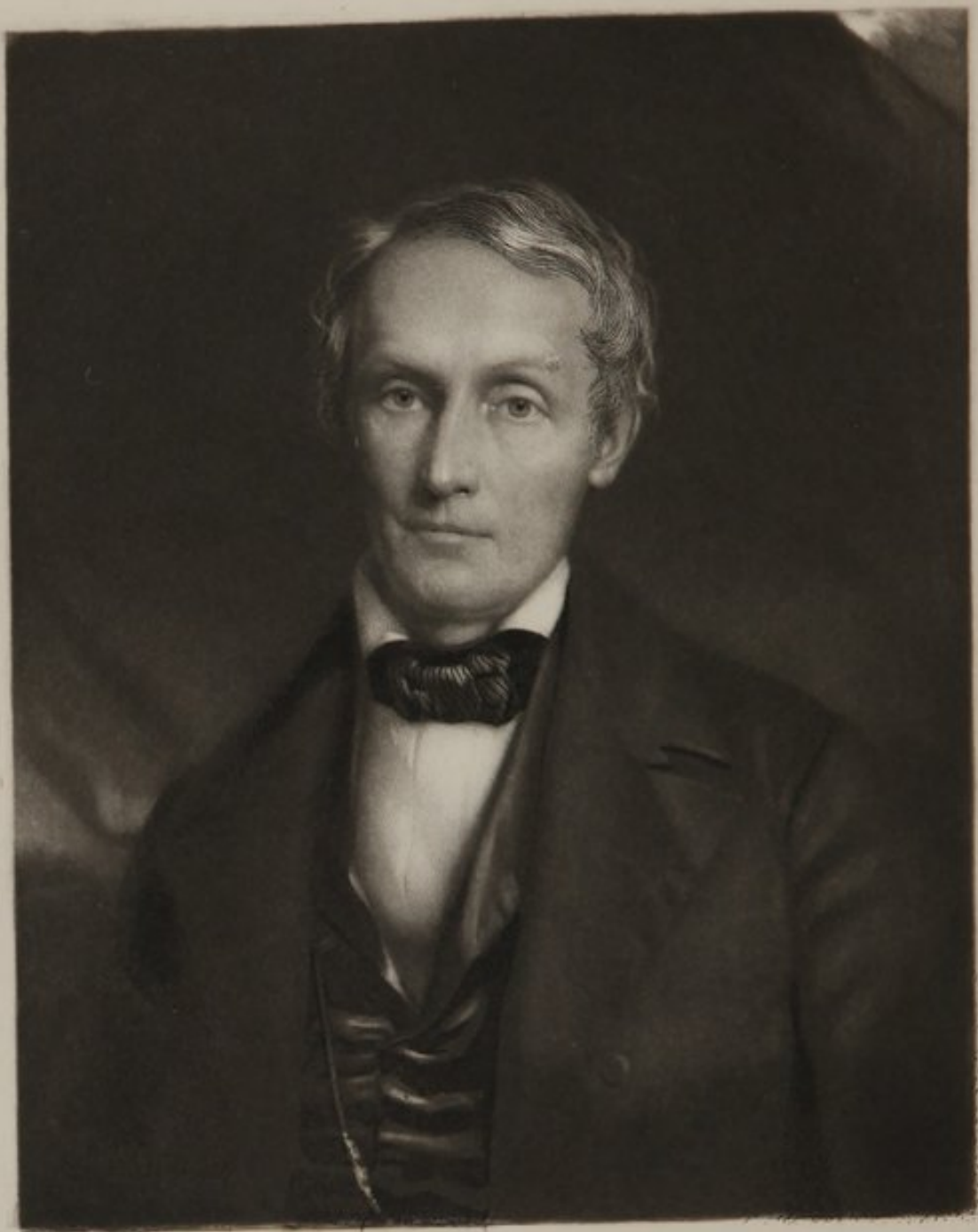
Read before that Body, November 3, 1852,

BY

GEORGE B. WOOD, M.D.,  
PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.

PHILADELPHIA:  
PRINTED BY T. K. AND P. G. COLLINS.  
1853.





Samuel George Morton

AN ANNUAL MEMOIR

SAMUEL GEORGE HOUSTON, M.D.,

PREPARED BY APPOINTMENT OF THE BOARD OF  
PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA

Read before that Body, November 2, 1852,

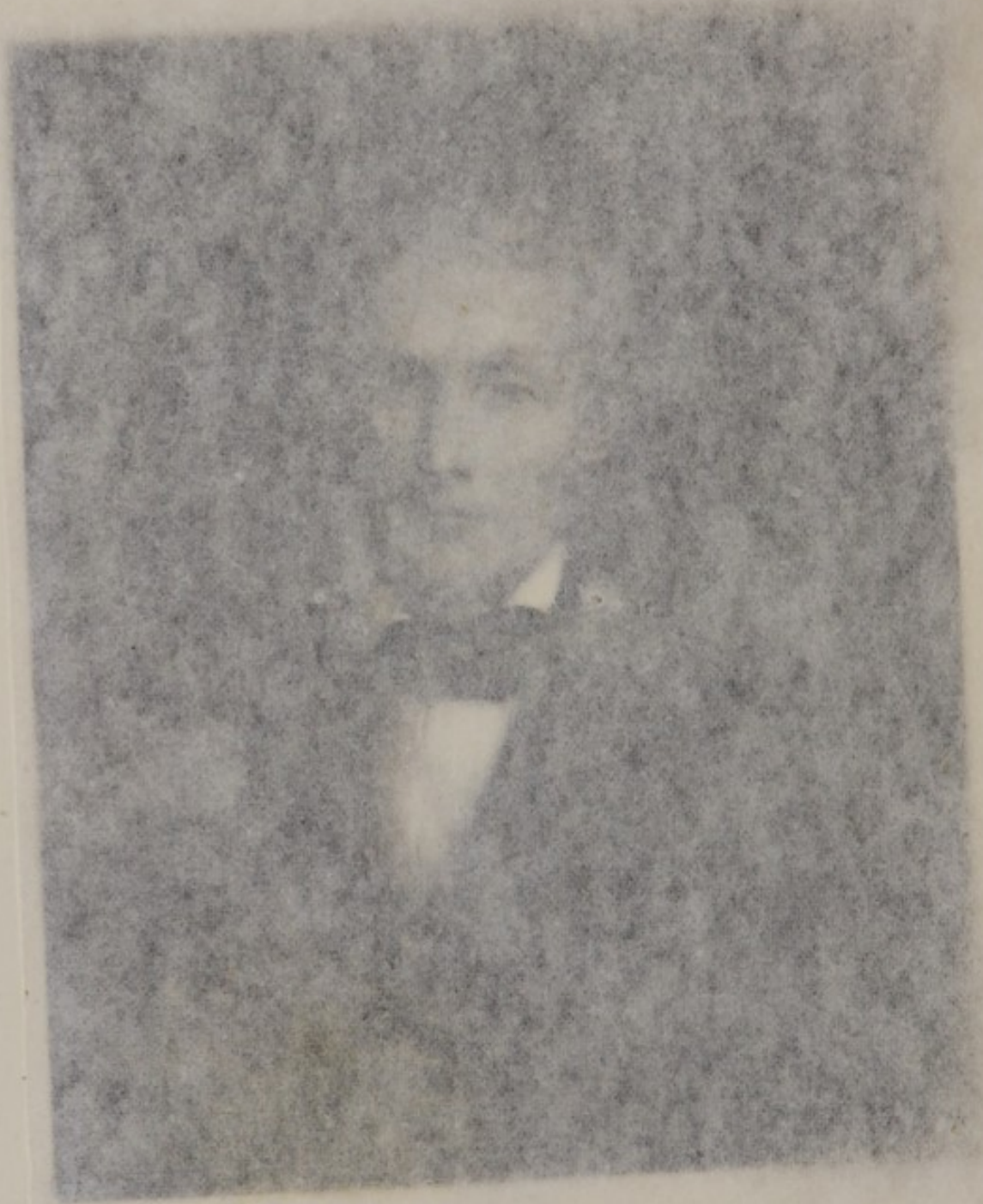
BY  
GEORGE B. WOOD, M.D.

LECTURER ON THE CLINICAL



PHILADELPHIA:  
PRINTED BY T. K. AND P. G. COLLINS.  
1853.





Samuel G. ...

A

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

OF

SAMUEL GEORGE MORTON, M.D.,

PREPARED BY APPOINTMENT OF THE COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA,

AND

Read before that Body, November 3, 1852,

BY

✓  
GEORGE B. WOOD, M.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.



PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY T. K. AND P. G. COLLINS.

1853.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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## MEMOIR, ETC.

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IN accepting the appointment with which the College honored me, of preparing a biographical sketch of our late Fellow, Dr. Samuel George Morton, it may be remembered that I requested indulgence on the score of time ; as the urgency of my then existing engagements rendered immediate attention to the duty impossible. The delay has been longer than I could have wished ; but, happily, there was little occasion for haste, as the Academy of Natural Sciences, with which, through official position and long co-operation, Dr. Morton was more closely connected than with any other public body, had already provided for that commemoration which society owed to him, as to one who had faithfully and honorably served it. In what manner this duty was fulfilled need not be told to those who have perused the memoir prepared by Dr. C. D. Meigs, so characteristic of the author in its easy and copious flow of expression, its genial warm-heartedness, its glowing fancy, and the cordial, unstinted appreciation of the merits of its subject. It may be proper to mention here, that to this memoir I am indebted for many of the following facts. Having been prepared under the auspices of an association devoted to the natural sciences, though treating of our departed colleague with greater or less fulness in all his relations, it very appropriately directs a special attention to the scientific side of his life and character. With equal propriety, as appears to me, a professional body like the present may expect a particular reference to his medical history ; and I shall, accordingly, endeavour to place him before you rather as a physician than as a man of general science. It was in the former capacity that Dr. Morton was best known to the writer, who had the honor of aiding in the conduct of his early medical studies, was afterwards for a time associated with him as a medical teacher, and, through-



out his whole professional life, maintained with him a frequent and friendly intercourse.

The delineation which follows is necessarily in miniature ; for, independently of the comparatively short time which can be devoted to such communications in the business of the College, the pages of our journal, to which it is customary in the end to consign them, are too limited to receive in its fulness a portraiture which might readily be made to occupy volumes. I shall, however, endeavor, by excluding irrelevant commentary, and by expressing myself as concisely as possible, to introduce within the limits assigned the greatest practical amount of biographical matter.

Dr. Morton sprang from a highly respectable family, residing at Clonmell, in Ireland. His father, George Morton, the youngest of four brothers, emigrated at the age of sixteen to this country, with another brother somewhat older, who soon afterwards died. He settled in Philadelphia, and, having acquired the requisite experience in a counting-house in a subordinate capacity, afterwards engaged in mercantile business on his own account. Here he married Jane Cummings, a lady having a birthright in the religious Society of Friends, which, according to a well-known rule of that Society, she lost upon her marriage with one who was not a member, Mr. Morton belonging to the English Church. He died on the 27th of July, 1799, leaving his widow with three children, a daughter and two sons, the youngest of whom was the subject of the present sketch, and at that time an infant in arms. The older boy, James, was soon afterwards sent to an uncle in Ireland, who adopted him ; but he died before maturity. The sister still survives to lament the loss of both her brothers.

Dr. Morton was born on the 26th of January, 1799, and was consequently about six months old at the death of his father. In her bereavement the widow sought consolation in religion, and still entertaining the faith in which she had been educated, applied for restoration of membership in the Society of Friends, and was received. With a view to be near a beloved sister, she removed from Philadelphia to West Chester, in the State of New York, but a few miles from the metropolis, where her sister resided. Wishing that her children should be brought up in her own religious faith, and surrounded in early life by those safeguards which are eminently provided by the discipline of Friends, she sought for their admission



into the Society ; and they were accordingly received as if members by birth.

Custom, if not positive rule, requires among Friends that children should as far as practicable be educated in schools under the care of the Society, so that their tender years may be protected until their principles shall have sufficiently taken root to resist the seductions of the world. As no school of this kind existed in her immediate neighborhood, Mrs. Morton felt herself compelled, when no longer satisfied with her own tuition, to send her young son from home ; and, for several years of her residence at West Chester, he was placed in one or another of the Friends' boarding-schools in the State of New York, where he acquired the usual rudiments of an English education.

At this early age, the boy evinced a literary turn of mind, being extremely fond of historical reading, and frequently trying his hand in writing verses, an exercise very useful to the young by giving them a command of language not so easily attained in any other way. I am told that his bent towards natural science was also received at this period. Among the visitors of his mother was Thomas Rogers, a gentleman belonging to the Society of Friends living in Philadelphia, who had a great fondness for mineralogy, and imparted a portion of the same fondness to the young son of his hostess, whom he delighted to take with him in his exploratory walks in the neighborhood.

The visits of Mr. Rogers resulted in his marriage with Mrs. Morton, and her return with him to Philadelphia along with her two children, whom he loved and treated as if they were his own. Dr. Morton always spoke in the kindest and most affectionate terms of his step-father. He was about thirteen years old when this change took place.

After the removal to Philadelphia, he was sent for a time to the famous boarding-school of Friends at West Town, in Chester County, Pennsylvania ; and subsequently, in order to complete his mathematical studies, to a private school in Burlington, New Jersey, under the care of John Gummere, a member of the Society of Friends, and eminent as a teacher.

Having remained for one year under the instruction of Mr. Gummere, he left the school, in the summer of 1815, and entered as an

apprentice a mercantile house in this city, in which he continued until the death of his mother in 1816.

His heart was not in his business; and, though there is no reason to believe that he neglected the duties of his position, he devoted most of his leisure hours to reading, and gave his thoughts rather to history, poetry, and other branches of polite literature than to mercantile accomplishment.

The last illness of his mother was protracted, requiring the frequent attendance of physicians; and several of the most distinguished practitioners of Philadelphia were in the habit of visiting her professionally. Drs. Wistar, Parrish, and Hartshorne, were men calculated to impress favorably the mind of a bright, and at the same time thoughtful youth; and the attentions they paid to him, elicited no doubt by their observation of his intelligence and studious tendencies, had the effect of greatly strengthening the impression. His respect and affection for these eminent physicians naturally inclined him to their profession, and suggested the wish that he might be prepared to tread in their footsteps. This, I am informed, is what first directed his thoughts towards the study of medicine; though, as stated by Dr. Meigs, it is not improbable that the reading of the published introductory lectures of Dr. Rush may have been the immediate cause of his change of pursuit.

In the year 1817, being in the nineteenth year of his age, he entered as a pupil into the office of the late Dr. Joseph Parrish, then in the height of his practice, and distinguished as a private medical teacher. It was here that I first formed his acquaintance, being about to close my pupilage under the same preceptor, when he began his. As I was, soon after graduation, engaged by Dr. Parrish, to aid him in the instruction of his rapidly increasing class, I had, both as a companion and teacher, the opportunity of witnessing the industry and quick proficiency of the young student, and formed a highly favorable opinion of his general abilities. He attended the lectures in the University of Pennsylvania regularly, and, having complied with the rules of the institution, received from it the degree of Doctor of Medicine, at the commencement in the spring of 1820.

During the period of his medical studies, he continued to reside with his step-father, and to this association probably owed in part his continued predilection for the natural sciences. It was to be



expected from such a predilection, that he would give especial attention to Anatomy, which, indeed, he cultivated with much diligence and success. Similarity of taste and pursuit in this respect, led to a friendly association, about this period, with the late Dr. Richard Harlan, who superintended the anatomical studies of Dr. Parrish's pupils, and subsequently became distinguished as a naturalist.

Soon after his graduation, Dr. Morton became a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences, thus commencing his professional career as a member of that body, over which he presided at the time of his death.

Having been pressingly invited by his paternal uncle, James Morton, of Clonmell, before commencing the practical duties of life, to pay a visit to his relatives in Ireland, and eager to improve both his professional knowledge and his knowledge of the world, he concluded to make a voyage to Europe, and accordingly embarked for Liverpool in May, 1820. On arriving in England, he proceeded immediately to Clonmell, where he spent about four months in a delightful intercourse with friends and relatives proverbially hospitable, improving in manners through the polishing influence of refined society, and cultivating his taste by varied reading. It is probable that, in this association, whatever bent his mind may have received from early education towards the peculiarities of Quakerism, yielded to the influences around him; for though, throughout life, he reaped the advantages of that guarded education in an exemplary purity of morals, and simplicity of thought and deportment, he connected himself subsequently with the Episcopal Church, to which his forefathers had been attached.

The uncle of Dr. Morton very naturally valued a European degree more highly than an American, and was desirous that his nephew, before entering on his professional career, should obtain the honors of the Edinburgh University. The Doctor yielded to his wishes, and left his Irish friends to enter upon a new course of medical studies at the Scotch capital. In consequence of exposure, in his journey from Dublin to Belfast, on the top of a coach, he was seized with an illness, believed to be an affection of the liver, which confined him for some time to his bed in Edinburgh, and probably served as the foundation of that delicacy of health, which attended him for the rest of his life. On his recovery, he com-



menced an attendance upon the medical lectures, and at the same time upon those of Geology, by Professor Jamison, thus showing that his attachment to natural science still continued.

Another attack of illness, early in the year 1821, interrupted his studies. Recovering from this, he made an excursion into the Highlands of Scotland, and afterwards returned to the relaxation and enjoyments of a residence among his friends at Clonmell.

In the autumn of the same year, he made a journey to Paris, where he spent the winter very profitably in the prosecution of his studies, and in improving his knowledge of the French language.

In the following spring, he left Paris upon a tour through France, Switzerland, and Italy, in which he consumed the summer.

In the autumn of 1822, we find him again at Edinburgh, where he continued through the winter, attending lectures, making up for early deficiencies in classical education by the study of Latin, and otherwise preparing himself for graduation. Having written and presented a thesis in Latin, *De Corporis Dolore*, and undergone satisfactorily an examination on medicine in the same language, he received the honors of the University in August, 1823.

He had thus been six years occupied, more or less steadily, in the study of medicine, carrying on, during the same period, a process of self-education, which more than compensated for the deficiencies of his early life, and attaining a proficiency in various branches of natural science, which contributed greatly to his future eminence.

In June, 1824, he bade farewell to his friends in Ireland, and, returning to Philadelphia, immediately engaged in the practice of his profession.

His success was gradual. Young physicians are apt to complain of their slow progress in a remunerative business; but what they consider a misfortune, is in fact, if properly used, a blessing. Their early years have been devoted to the acquisition of elementary knowledge, their later will be occupied by practical duties. It is in the intermediate period that the opportunity is offered of extended research into the records of science, of confirming or correcting the results of reading and study by observation, of making original investigations into the worlds of matter and of thought, and thus bringing forth to the light truths which may benefit mankind, and at the same time serve as the basis of honor and success to their discoverer. He who leaps at once from professional study

into full professional action, finds all his time and powers occupied in the application of the knowledge already attained, and seldom widens materially the circle of science, or attains higher credit than that of a good, or a successful practitioner. It was undoubtedly fortunate for Dr. Morton's reputation, that his time was not, at the outset, crowded with merely professional avocations. He had thus the opportunity of going out into the various fields of natural science; and, while he neglected none of the means requisite to the honorable advancement of his business as a physician, he pushed his researches and labors in those fields to the most happy results.

As an aid and stimulus to his researches in this direction, he entered at once into hearty co-operation with his fellow members of the Academy of Natural Sciences, and took an active part in the affairs of that Institution. He was almost immediately made one of the auditors; in December, 1825, was appointed to the office of Recording Secretary, which he held for four years; served actively for a long time on the Committee of Publication; aided materially in increasing and arranging the collections; delivered before the Academy lectures on Mineralogy and Geology during the years 1825 and 1826; drew up a report of its transactions for these two years; and began a series of original papers upon various subjects of natural science, which have contributed greatly to his own credit, and that of the Institution.

His first medical essay was on the use of cornine in intermittent fever, and was published in the *Philadelphia Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences* (XI. 195, A. D. 1825). Under the name of cornine, a material had been given to him, purporting to be an alkaline principle extracted from common dogwood bark, and, having been used by him in several cases of intermittent fever, proved to be an efficacious remedy. Dr. Morton was responsible only for the correctness of his own statements as to the effects of the substance given to him, and not for its chemical character, which must be admitted to be at best doubtful. Positive proof is still wanting of the existence of any such active alkaline principle.

His first strictly scientific papers were two in number, both read on the 1st of May, 1827, before the Academy of Natural Sciences, and afterwards printed in the *Journal of the Academy*. They were entitled respectively, "Analysis of Tabular Spar, from Bucks



County, Pennsylvania, with a notice of various minerals found at the same locality," and "Description of a new species of *Ostrea*, with some remarks on the *Ostrea convexa* of Say."

These were followed in rapid succession by other scientific communications; and the *Transactions* of the Academy continued to be enriched by his labors from this date till within a short period before his death. There were not less than forty of these contributions, besides others to the *Transactions* of the American Philosophical Society, and the *American Journal of Science and Art*, edited by Professor Silliman. They were on the various subjects of mineralogy, geology, organic remains, zoology, anatomy, ethnology, and archaiology; and, by their diversified character, richness in original matter, and accuracy and copiousness of description, speak more strongly than could be done in mere words of the industry, scientific attainments, powers of observation, and truthfulness of their author.\*

But, in this slight sketch of his contributions to periodical works of science, I have been anticipating the course of his life, and must return to a period but shortly subsequent to the commencement of these labors.

He had at that time considerably widened his social circle, had formed intimacies with many persons of distinction in science and in the common walks of life, had become favorably known in the community at large, and was rapidly extending his business as a practitioner of medicine. Only one thing was wanting to give permanence to his well-being, by affording a point towards which his thoughts and energies might ever tend, as the centre of his life. This want was supplied by his marriage, October 23, 1827, with Rebecca, daughter of Robert and Elizabeth Pearsall, highly respected members of the Society of Friends, originally of New York, but at that time residing in Philadelphia. This connection was, in all respects, a most happy one for Doctor Morton. He secured by it not only a devoted companion, who could appreciate, if not participate in, his pursuits, and lighten by sharing with him the burthens of life, but the blessing, also, of a loved and loving family, which gave unwearied exercise to his affections, and sus-

\* For a catalogue of these and of the other works of Dr. Morton, the reader is referred to the Appendix of the Memoir prepared by Dr. Meigs.

tained a never-ceasing strain of grateful emotion, that mingled sweetly with the toils, anxieties, and successes of his professional career, and gave an otherwise unattainable charm to his intervals of leisure.

It is reasonable to suppose that his professional business was increased by his marriage. That he possessed, in some measure, the confidence of the public as a practitioner, is shown by his appointment, in the year 1829, as one of the physicians to the Philadelphia Almshouse Hospital. Here he enjoyed ample opportunities for pathological investigations, of which he availed himself extensively, especially in relation to diseases of the chest, towards which his attention had been particularly directed by attendance on the clinical instructions of Laennec, during his stay in Paris. The fruit of these investigations will be seen in a work which will be more particularly noticed directly.

In the year 1830, Dr. Morton added to his other duties those of a medical teacher. A brief notice of the association with which he was connected may not be amiss; as it was one of the first of those organizations, now familiar to the profession in Philadelphia, in which a number of physicians unite in order to extend to their private pupils advantages, which, separately, it would be impossible for them to bestow. It is quite unnecessary that I should speak of the benefits which have accrued from this plan of instruction to the profession in this city. Most of those who now hear me have, I presume, been taught under that system, and some are at this moment teachers. You can, therefore, appreciate its advantages; but it is only the older among you who can do so fully, as it is only they who can compare it with the irregular and inefficient plan of private tuition that preceded it. Another incidental advantage has been the training of a body of lecturers, from among whom the incorporated schools have been able to fill their vacant professorial chairs with tried and efficient men, and thus to sustain, amidst great competition, the old pre-eminence of Philadelphia as the seat of medical instruction.

The late Dr. Joseph Parrish, from the increasing number of his office pupils, was induced to engage the services of a number of young medical men, to aid him, by lectures and examinations on the different branches of medicine, in the education of his class. This arrangement was in efficient operation for several years, but was at



length superseded by another, in which all the teachers were placed on a footing of perfect equality, the private pupils of each one of them being received on the same terms, and those of other private teachers, not belonging to the association, being admitted on moderate and specified conditions. It was in January, 1830, that this little school was formed. In accordance with the simple tastes of its most prominent member, it took the modest name of "Philadelphia Association for Medical Instruction," a title which still survives in a highly respectable existing summer school, though the original association has long been dissolved. The first lecturers were the late Dr. Joseph Parrish on the practice of medicine, Dr. Franklin Bache on chemistry, Dr. John Rhea Barton on surgery, Dr. Morton on anatomy, and myself on *materia medica*. About the same time, another combination of the same character was formed, denominated, I believe, the "School of Medicine," in which Dr. C. D. Meigs taught midwifery. By an arrangement, mutually advantageous, the services of Drs. Bache and Meigs were interchanged; the pupils of the "Association" attending the lectures of the latter on midwifery, and those of the "School of Medicine" the chemical instructions of the former. Dr. Morton continued to deliver annual courses on anatomy in this association for five or six years, when it was dissolved. His instructions were characterized by simplicity and clearness, without any attempt at display, and, so far as I have known, gave entire satisfaction both to his associates and pupils.

On the 28th of November, 1831, he was chosen Corresponding Secretary of the Academy of Natural Sciences, and was thus brought into official communication with many scientific men in Europe and America.

Reference was a short time since made to a work based mainly upon his pathological investigations in the Almshouse Hospital. It was denominated "Illustrations of Pulmonary Consumption," was printed in the early part of 1834, and contributed no little to the increase of his reputation as a practitioner. The work is an octavo of about 180 pages, treats of phthisis in all its relations, and is illustrated by several painted plates, executed with skill and accuracy. At that time little was known in this country of the admirable work of Louis on Consumption, and the book of Dr. Morton no doubt contributed to the spread of sound views, both pathological and therapeutical, upon the subject. He particularly



insists on the efficacy of exercise in the open air in the treatment of the disease, following in this respect in the footsteps of his preceptor, Dr. Parrish, to whose memory great honor is due for his successful efforts to revolutionize the previously vague and often destructive therapeutics in phthisis.

Very soon after the publication of this work, in the year 1834, Dr. Morton had an opportunity of making a voyage to the West Indies, as the companion and medical attendant of a wealthy invalid. On this occasion he visited several of the islands, making observations as he travelled in relation to their geological structure, and at the same time investigating, with peculiar attention, the influence of their climate upon phthisis, and their relative fitness as places of resort for consumptive patients from colder regions.

Some time after his return from the West Indies, he edited an edition of Mackintosh's *Principles of Pathology and Practice of Physic*, adding explanatory notes, and making numerous additions to supply deficiencies in the original work. A second American edition was published in 1837, under his supervision.

When it was that he began to turn his attention especially to ethnological studies I am unable to say; but it is probable that the idea of making a collection of human crania, especially those of the aboriginal races of this continent, both ancient and modern, originated soon after he entered into practice, if not even previously; and among the earliest recollections of my visits to his office is that of the skulls he had collected. It is well known to you that much of his time and thoughts, and not a little of his money, were expended in extending and completing this collection, in which he was also materially assisted by his own private friends, and the friends of science in general, who were glad to contribute their aid to so interesting an object. The cabinet thus commenced was gradually augmented, embracing the crania of the lower animals as well as those of man, until at length it grew to a magnitude almost beyond precedent; and, at this moment, it forms one of the greatest boasts of our country in relation to natural science. It is ardently to be hoped that means may be found to secure its retention here, and that it may ever continue to enrich the varied collections of our Academy, among which it has been deposited.\*

\* I have been informed, on the very best authority, that, independently of all the assistance in making the collection afforded by others, it cost Dr. Morton somewhere between ten thousand and fifteen thousand dollars.



The possession of such materials naturally led to the wish to give diffusion and permanence to the knowledge which they laid open. Hence originated Dr. Morton's great work on *American Crania*, in which accurate pictorial representations are given of a great number of the skulls of the aborigines of this continent, with descriptions, historical notices, and various scientific observations; all preceded by an essay on the varieties of the human species, calculated to give consistency to the necessarily desultory statements which follow. The preparation of this work cost the author a vast deal of labor, and an amount of pecuniary expenditure which has never been repaid, unless by the reputation which it gained for him, and the consciousness of having erected a monument to science, honorable to his country, and likely to remain as a durable memorial of his own zeal, industry, and scientific attainment. It was published in 1839. It is due to Dr. W. S. W. Ruschenberger to state, that the work was inscribed to him by Dr. Morton, with the acknowledgment that some of its most valuable materials were derived from his researches in Peru.

In September, 1839, Dr. Morton was elected Professor of Anatomy in the Pennsylvania Medical College, the duties of which office he performed until November, 1843, when he resigned. In this Institution he was associated with the late Dr. George McClellan, who may be looked on as its founder, and for whom he formed a friendship which ended only with life.

On the 26th of May, 1840, he was elected one of the Vice-Presidents of the Academy of Natural Sciences, in which capacity he very often presided at its meetings, in the absence of the President.

He was engaged about this time in preparing a highly interesting memoir on the subject of Egyptian Ethnography, based mainly upon the observation and comparison of numerous crania, in the collection of which he was much aided by Mr. George R. Gliddon, whose residence in Egypt gave him opportunities, which an extraordinary zeal in all that concerns the ancient inhabitants of that region, urged him to employ to the best possible advantage. This memoir was embraced in several communications to the American Philosophical Society, in the years 1842 and 1843, which were published in the *Transactions* of that Society (Vol. IX., New Series, p. 93, A. D. 1844), and also in a separate form under

the title of "*Crania Egyptiaca, or Observations on Egyptian Ethnography*," with handsomely executed drawings of numerous skulls derived from the pyramid of Saccara, the necropolis of Memphis, the catacombs of Thebes, and other depositories of the ancient dead in that region of tombs.

In January, 1845, Dr. Morton was elected a Fellow of this College. That we did not more frequently see him among us, was probably owing to the unfortunate coincidence, at that time existing, of the meetings of the College and Academy, which would have rendered necessary a neglect of his official duties in the latter institution, had he attended at the sittings of the former. It may be proper here to mention, though not in strict chronological order, that, by the appointment of the College, he prepared a brief biographical sketch of Dr. George McClellan, which was read in September, 1849, and published in the *Transactions* of that date.

In the years 1846 and 1847, he prepared essays "*On the Ethnography and Archæology of the American Aborigines*," and "*On the Hybridity of Animals and Plants in reference to the unity of the human species*," which were read before the Academy, and afterwards published in the *American Journal of Science and Arts* (III., 2d ser., A. D. 1847). In these papers he advanced opinions upon the origin of the human family, which led to an unfortunate controversy, that, with his delicacy of feeling, could not but have in some measure disturbed the tranquillity of the latter years of his life. It is due to Dr. Morton to say, that he did not consider the views advocated by himself as conflicting with the testimony of Scripture, or in any degree tending to invalidate the truths of revealed religion.

During the year 1848, much of his time was devoted to the preparation of an elementary work on "*Human Anatomy, Special, General, and Microscopic*," illustrated by a great number of figures, and aiming to be an exposition of the science in its present improved state. Among his inducements to this work, not the least, as he states in the preface, was the desire to be enrolled among the expositors of a science that had occupied many of the best years of his life. Though laying no claim to originality in its facts or illustrations, the treatise cost him a great deal of labor, not only in the arrangement of the matter, the care of the engravings, and the superintendence of the press, but also in the



verification, by microscopic observation, of the accuracy of the pictorial representations of minute structure in which it abounds. It was issued from the press early in 1849; but, even before its publication, he had begun to feel the effects upon his health, never robust, of the toilsome task he had undertaken, in addition to professional and official engagements, which alone would have been sufficient for the wholesome employment of his time and energies.

Scarcely had his last duties in connection with this work on Anatomy been performed, when, in December, 1848, he was attacked with a severe pleurisy and pericarditis, which brought him into the most imminent danger of life, and from the effects of which he never fully recovered; for though, after a long confinement, he was enabled to go about, and even to resume his professional duties, he was left with great and permanent derangement of his thoracic organs.

The very obvious depression of his left shoulder, and the falling in of the corresponding side of the chest evinced, at a glance, that with the absorption of the pleuritic effusion the lung had not expanded; and the loud murmur, obvious upon auscultation over the heart, proved to his professional friends that this organ had not escaped without serious injury. Notwithstanding, however, the amount of local derangement, his system rallied, and after an absence of some weeks from the city, he returned so much improved in health and strength, that he felt himself authorized to resume his active professional avocations and general previous course of life, though with some abatement of his labors in the fields of original investigation and of authorship.

Could his sense of duty at this period, and the disposition to strong mental activity, which had probably become by habit almost a necessity of his nature, have permitted him to withdraw from all vigorous exertion, and to devote his time for the future rather to quiet enjoyment than to laborious effort, it is not impossible that his life might have been considerably prolonged. Such was the advice of some of his medical friends; but stronger influences impelled him to exertion; and, like most men who feel themselves irresistibly drawn into a certain course of action, he succeeded in reconciling this course not only to his general sense of duty, but even to his views of what was required under the particular circumstances of his health. He was convinced that by active bodily exertion he should



be most likely to bring his defective lung back again to the performance of its function; and certainly, for a time, his improving appearance and increasing strength under exercise seemed to justify the system he had adopted.

Before adverting to the closing scene, let us stop for a very few minutes to take a view of his character and position at this period, which, if the consideration of his health be omitted, was the most prosperous of his life.

His election to the presidency of the Academy of Natural Sciences, which took place December 25, 1849, had given him an official position than which he could not expect to gain one more honorable, and than which society in this country have few more honorable to bestow. Of an amiable and benevolent temper, indisposed to give offence, or to wound the sensibilities of others, he had conciliated general good-will; while his affectionate disposition, his deep interest in those to whom he was attached, and his readiness to serve, secured him warm friends, especially in the circle of his patients, who in general had much affection for him personally, as well as great trust in his skill. Powers of quick and accurate observation, and a sound cautious judgment were perhaps his most striking intellectual characteristics, and naturally led him into those departments of science where they could be most efficiently exercised.

By strict attention to his professional duties, even in the midst of his scientific researches, by an affectionate interest in his patients, inspiring similar sentiments on their part, and by a system of cautious but successful therapeutics, he gained a large, and for Philadelphia, a lucrative practice, which, with some income derived by inheritance from an uncle in Ireland, enabled him to live handsomely, and not only to entertain his scientific friends and associates on frequent occasions at his house, but also to extend hospitalities to strangers whom his reputation attracted towards him upon their visits to our city. His friends will not soon forget the weekly *soirées*, at which they enjoyed the pleasure of combined social and scientific intercourse, and had the frequent opportunity of meeting strangers distinguished in the various departments of learning and philosophy.

His extensive professional relations, and his reputation both as a practitioner and teacher of medicine, attracted to his office many

young men disposed to enter into the profession; and he usually had under his charge, towards the close of his life, a considerable number of private pupils, to whom he devoted much time, and his most conscientious endeavors to qualify them to be good physicians.

Numerous learned and scientific associations in different parts of America and Europe had enrolled him among their members, and perhaps few men in this country had a more extensive correspondence with distinguished individuals abroad.\* To be praised by the praised is certainly a great honor; and this Dr. Morton was happy enough to have won in no stinted measure.

With these meritorious qualities, these well-earned distinctions, and these diversified sources of comfort and enjoyment, with the crowning pleasures, moreover, of domestic confidence and affection, and bright hopes for a rising family, our late friend and fellow-member may be considered, at this period of his life, as one of the most happy of men in all his exterior relations. The only drawback was the uncertain state of his health.

From early manhood he had been of delicate constitution. Two attacks of severe hæmatemesis had on different occasions threatened his life; and for a long time he suffered much with excruciating attacks of sick headache, which most painfully interrupted his scientific and professional avocations, and not unfrequently confined him for a time to his bed. For many years of his earlier life, his pale complexion and spare form indicated habitually feeble health; but at a more advanced period he seemed to have greatly improved in this respect, exhibiting a more healthful color and more robustness of frame; and, but for the terrible attack which prostrated him in the winter of 1848-49, there seemed to be no reason why he should not live to a good old age. But the fiat had gone forth; and, though a respite was granted, it was destined to be short.

A painful incident which happened about this time may possibly have had some effect in aggravating the morbid tendencies already unhappily strong. I refer to the illness and speedy death, in May, 1850, of an affectionate, dearly loved, and highly promising son,

\* For a list of the societies of which he was a member, see the Appendix to Dr. Meigs's Memoir.



to whose future he was looking forward with much, and apparently well-founded, confidence.

Perhaps at no time was Dr. Morton more busily occupied in practical duties than during the year or two which preceded his death. He was indefatigable in attendance upon his numerous patients, devoted no little time to the instruction of his private pupils, and never voluntarily omitted the performance of his academic functions. In the midst of this career of usefulness, he was seized with an illness, which, commencing on the 10th of May with a moderate headache, became more severe on the following day, and, though afterwards relaxing so much as to give hopes of a return to his ordinary health, ended in an attack of stupor and paralysis, which proved fatal on the 15th, the very day upon which, one year previously, he had witnessed the death of his son.

Dr. Morton was considerably above the medium height, of a large frame, though somewhat stooping, with a fine oval face, prominent features, bluish-gray eyes, light hair, and a very fair complexion. His countenance usually wore a serious and thoughtful expression, but was often pleasingly lighted up with smiles during the relaxation of social and friendly intercourse. His manner was composed and quiet, but always courteous, and his whole deportment that of a refined and cultivated gentleman.

He left behind him a widow and seven children, five sons and two daughters, several of whom have advanced to adult age, and are engaged in active life. In the remembrance of the virtues, the attainments, the fruitful labors, and the well-earned reputation of the husband and father, they have a legacy far more precious than the gifts of fortune; an inheritance which no mischances of this world can impair, and which will be handed down as a priceless heirloom to their latest posterity.



