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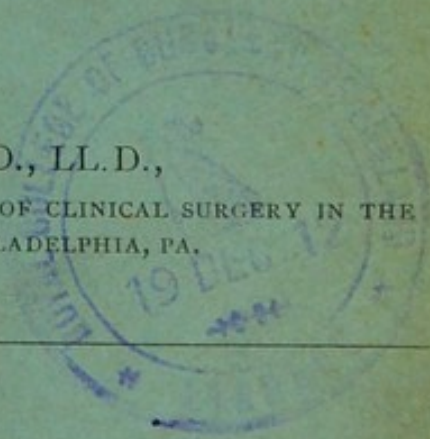
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*Address on the Unveiling of the Bronze
Statue of the Late Professor Samuel
David Gross, in Washington, D. C.*

BY

WILLIAM W. KEEN, M.D., LL.D.,

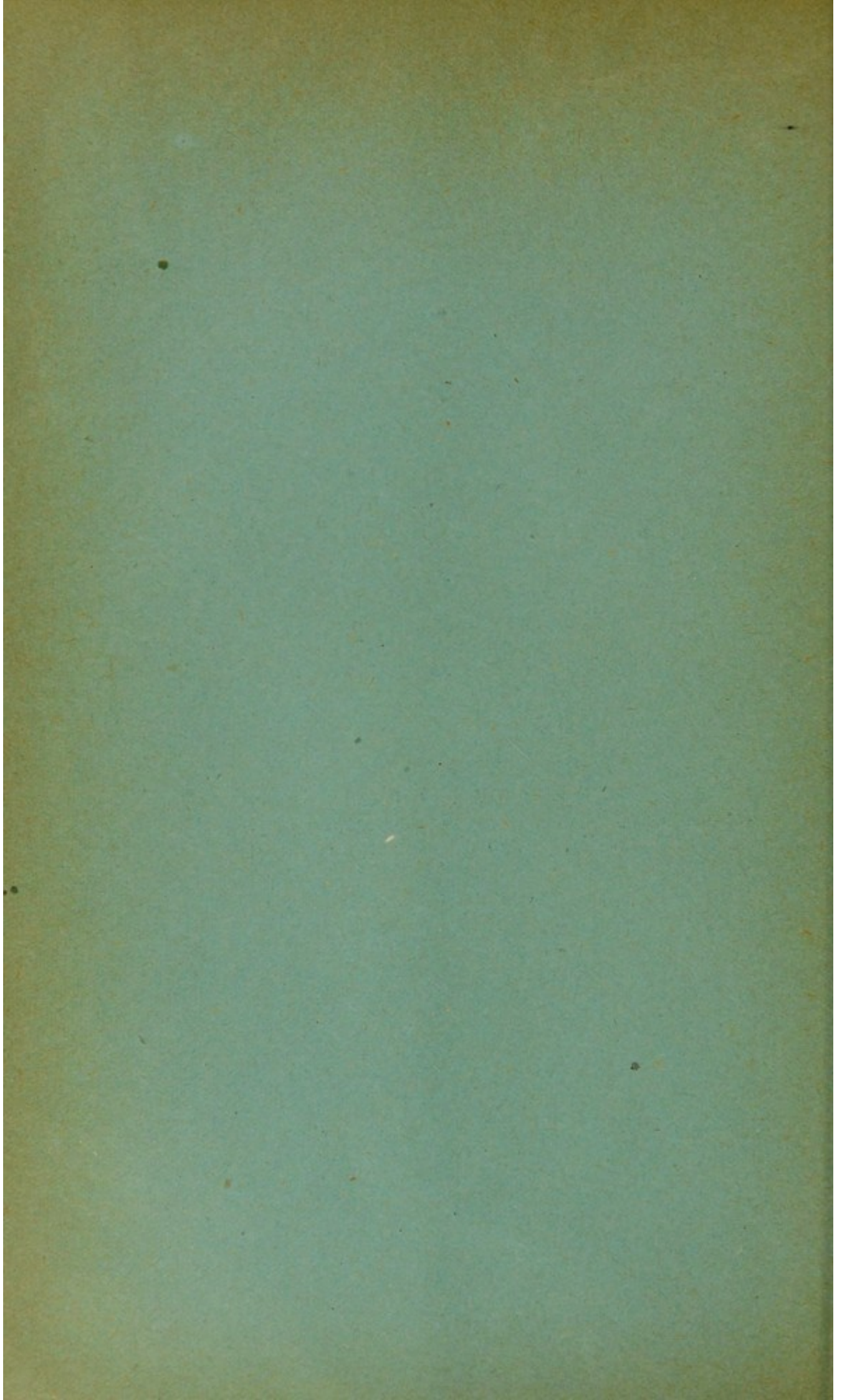
PROFESSOR OF THE PRINCIPLES OF SURGERY AND OF CLINICAL SURGERY IN THE
JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE, PHILADELPHIA, PA.



FROM

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THE MEDICAL SCIENCES,

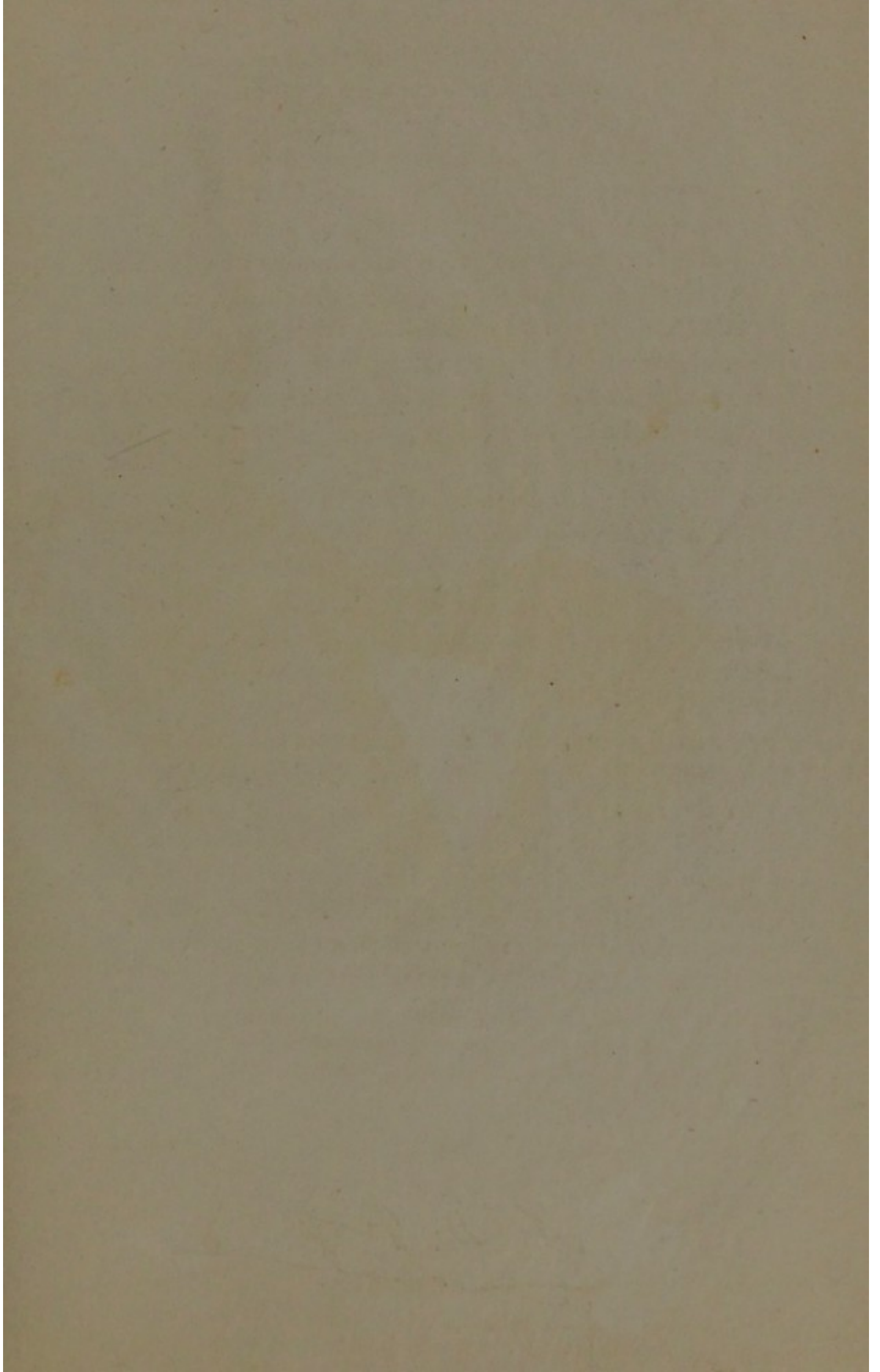
JUNE, 1897.

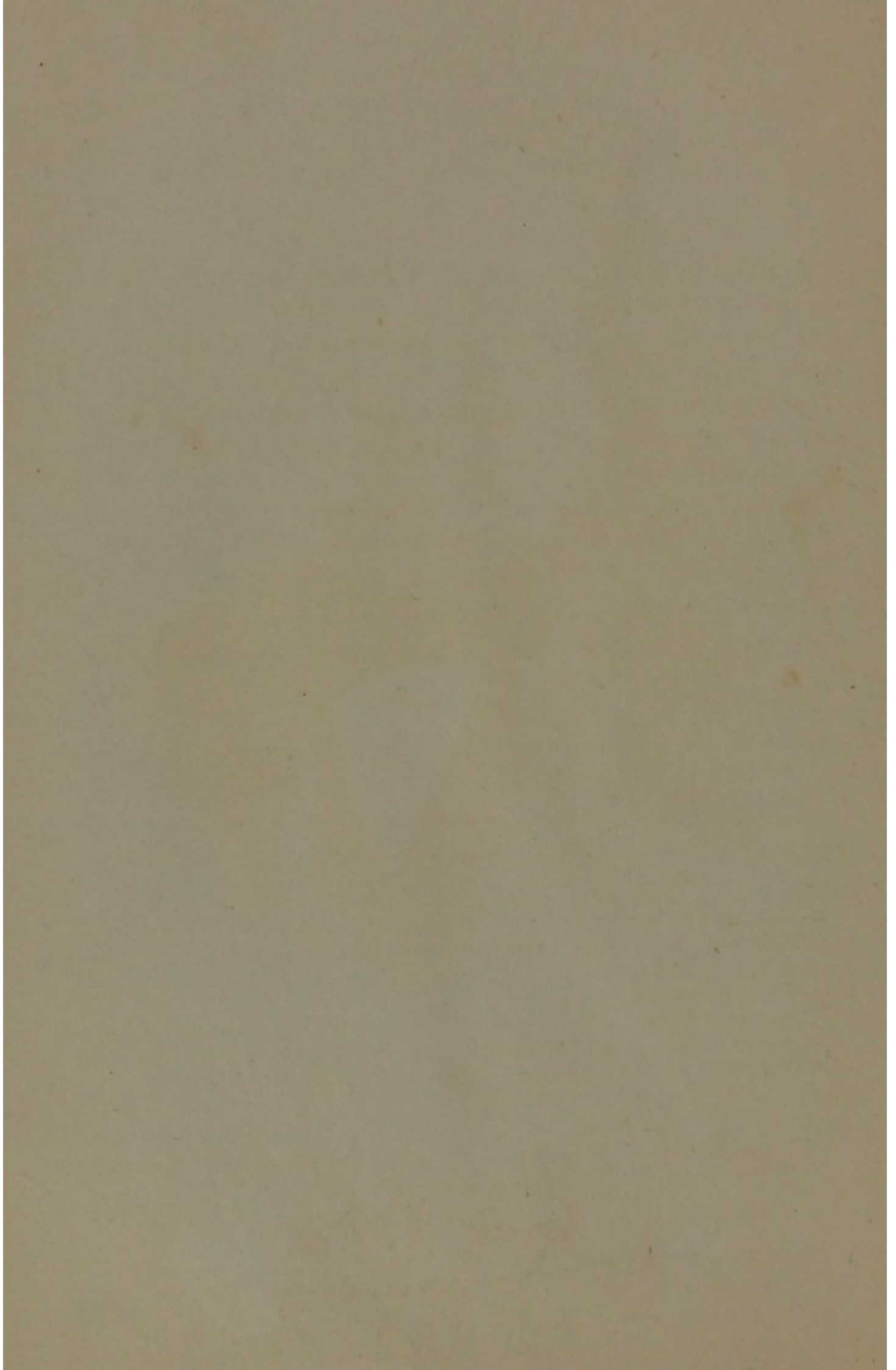






A. D. Gropf.
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ADDRESS ON THE UNVEILING OF THE BRONZE STATUE OF
THE LATE PROFESSOR SAMUEL DAVID GROSS,
IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY WILLIAM W. KEEN, M.D., LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THE PRINCIPLES OF SURGERY AND OF CLINICAL SURGERY IN THE JEFFERSON
MEDICAL COLLEGE, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

FELLOWS OF THE AMERICAN SURGICAL ASSOCIATION; MEMBERS
OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE,
AND FRIENDS: Go with me, your spokesman, to-day to the Wood-
lands Cemetery—that “God’s Acre” or “Court of Peace,” as the
Germans so poetically call it—which holds the dust of so many of the
best dead of Philadelphia. Upon an urn there treasured you will read
the following:

IN MEMORIAM.

Within this urn lie the ashes of

SAMUEL D. GROSS,

A Master in Surgery.

His life, which neared the extreme limits of the Psalmist, was one unbroken
process of laborious years.

He filled chairs in four Medical Colleges, in as many States of the Union,
and added lustre to them all.

He recast Surgical Science, as taught in North America, formulated anew
its principles, enlarged its domain, added to its art, and imparted fresh im-
petus to its study.

He composed many Books and among them

A SYSTEM OF SURGERY,

Which is read in different tongues, wherever the Healing Art is practised.

With a great intellect, carefully trained and balanced, he aimed with undi-
vided zeal at the noble end of lessening human suffering and lengthening
human life, and so rose to the highest position yet attained in science by
any of his countrymen.

Resolute in truth, he had no fear; yet he was both tolerant and charitable.

Living in enlightened fellowship with all laborers in the world of Science,
he was greatly honored by the learned in foreign lands, and deeply loved at
home.

Behind the Veil of This Life There is a Mystery Which He
Penetrated on the

SIXTH DAY OF MAY, 1884.

HIS MEMORY

Shall exhort and his Example shall encourage and persuade those who
come after him to emulate deeds which, great in themselves, were all crowned
by the milk-white flower of

A STAINLESS LIFE.

Who and what was the man of whom this is said?

Samuel David Gross was born near Easton, Pennsylvania, July 8, 1805, and died in Philadelphia May 6, 1884, having nearly completed his seventy-ninth year.

His early years, under the wise training of a good mother, to whose memory he rightly pays a just tribute, were spent amid the rustic labors and healthful pleasures of a Pennsylvania farm. This gave him a strong and vigorous body, without which he never could have performed a tithe of the labor which pre-eminently distinguished his long life. Before he was six years old he determined to be a surgeon, and early in his professional studies to be a teacher. Yet when he was fifteen he knew scarcely any English. Brought up among the sturdy, honest, laborious Pennsylvania Dutch, he could speak that curious English-German. But his English, of which he became so fluent a master, and even pure German, which he began to study at the same time, were learned almost as foreign tongues and as a result of his appreciation at that early age of his need for a better and wider education. Even a still more striking evidence of the early development of the innate strength of his character and indomitable will is a story told in his autobiography. While a boy he became expert in playing cards; but finding he was becoming so much fascinated by them that he replayed his games in his dreams, he resolved—fancy this in a boy not yet fourteen!—to abstain from the game for twenty years—a vow he religiously fulfilled.

At seventeen he began the study of medicine as the private pupil of a country practitioner, but after learning some osteology with the aid of that tuppenny little compend, Fyfe's *Anatomy*, and a skeleton, he gave up in despair, for again he found his intellectual tools unequal to his work. The little Latin he had was insufficient, and to understand the technicalities of medicine Greek was a *sine qua non*. "This," he says, "was the turning-point of my life. . . . I had made a great discovery—a knowledge of my ignorance, and with it came a solemn determination to remedy it." Accordingly he stopped at once in his medical career and went to an academy at Wilkes-Barre. He studied especially Latin and Greek, the latter by the use of Schrevelius's lexicon, in which all the definitions were in Latin, and Ross's grammar, constructed on the same principle. But to a master will like his even such obstacles were not insuperable. To Greek and Latin, English and German, later years added also a knowledge of French and Italian.

At nineteen he began the study of medicine again—a study in which for sixty years his labors never for a moment ceased or even relaxed.

In 1828, at the age of twenty-three, he took his degree in the third class which was graduated from the Jefferson Medical College. He opened an office first in Philadelphia, but soon removed to Easton. Nothing is more characteristic of the man than that, while waiting for practice, he spent hours daily in dissecting in a building he erected at the back

of his garden, and provided himself with a subject by driving in a buggy all the way from Easton to Philadelphia and back with a gruesome companion; wrote a work on descriptive anatomy, which, however, he never published, and in eighteen months after graduation had translated and published Bayle and Hollard's *General Anatomy*; Hatin's *Obstetrics*; Hildebrand on *Typhus*, and Tavernier's *Operative Surgery*—works aggregating over eleven hundred pages. His motto was indeed "*Nulla dies sine linea*." His "stimulus," he himself says, "was his ambition and his poverty."

In 1833, five years after his graduation, he entered upon his career as a teacher—a career which continued for forty-nine years, till within two years of his death. This took him first to Cincinnati as Demonstrator of Anatomy in the Medical College of Ohio. Those of my audience who left Cincinnati yesterday will be amused to learn that by stage, canal, and primitive steamboat it took him thirteen days to reach the Queen City; and all of you will admire the pluck and courage of the young man when I add that his total worldly goods on reaching there were one hundred dollars in his purse, a wife and two children in his family, but also in his breast a heart ready to grapple with any difficulties and determined to conquer them all.

In 1835 he became Professor of Pathological Anatomy in the Cincinnati Medical College, where he was a colleague of Daniel Drake, Willard Parker, and James B. Rogers, one of the famous four brothers, with a second of whom—Robert E.—he was later a colleague in the Jefferson.

His book on the *Bones and Joints* had appeared in 1830, and next, as a result of four years' study and teaching, his *Elements of Pathological Anatomy* was published in 1839. It is strange to think that in a then small Western town in America a young teacher in a new medical school should have published the first book in the English language on Pathological Anatomy. No wonder, then, that it brought him fame and practice; that its second edition made him a member of the Imperial Royal Society in Vienna; and that, thirty years afterward, Virchow, at a dinner he gave to its then distinguished author, should show it as one of the prizes of his library.

In 1840 he went to the University of Louisville as Professor of Surgery, and, excepting one year when he was Professor of Surgery in the University of the City of New York, he remained there for sixteen years, happy in his family, his students, his flowers, and his generous hospitality. He and his colleagues—Drake and Austin Flint—soon made it the most important medical centre in the West, and he was in surgery the reigning sovereign. While there he published, in 1851, his work on the *Urinary Organs*, and in 1854 another pioneer work, that on *Foreign Bodies in the Air Passages*. His fame had become so great that he was invited to the University of Virginia, the University of

Louisiana, the University of Pennsylvania, and other schools. But he was steadfast to Louisville until his beloved Alma Mater called him to the chair just vacated by Mütter. From 1856, when in his Introductory he said, "whatever of life and of health and of strength remain to me, I hereby, in the presence of Almighty God and of this large assemblage dedicate to the cause of my Alma Mater, to the interest of medical science, and to the good of my fellow-creatures," till he resigned his chair in 1882—nay, till his death in 1884—this was absolutely true. Even when the shadows of death were thickening he corrected the proof-sheets of two papers on "Wounds of the Intestines" and "Lacerations Consequent upon Parturition," his last labors in the service of science and humanity.

Three years after he entered upon his duties at the Jefferson he published his splendid *System of Surgery*—a work which, though in many respects its pathology and its practice are now obsolete, is a mine of information, a monument of untiring labor, a text-book worthy of its author, and which has been the companion and guide of many generations of students. It was translated into several foreign tongues and passed through six editions, the last appearing only seventeen months before his death. That even when verging toward fourscore he should have been willing to throw aside all his strong prejudices and accept the then struggling principles and practice of Listerism shows the progressive character of his mind and his remarkable willingness to welcome new truths.

From his removal to Philadelphia till his death, twenty-eight years later, his life can be summed up in a few sentences: daily labor in his profession, editorial labor without cessation for some years in managing the *North American Medico-Chirurgical Review*, the successor of the *Louisville Medical Review*, of which he had also been the editor; article after article in journals; address after address; twenty-six annual courses of lectures on surgery to thousands of students; labors without ceasing till he wrapped the drapery of his couch around him and calmly passed away.

In reviewing his life we may fittingly consider it from the standpoint of the surgeon, the author, the teacher, and the man.

As a surgeon he was painstaking, thorough and careful in his investigation of a case, skilful as an operator, and, having so vast an experience and equally extensive acquaintance with the wide literature of his profession, he was scarcely ever perplexed by the most difficult case and rarely at a loss as to the proper course to pursue in the most unexpected emergencies.

He was a practitioner of the old school, who always mingled medicine with surgery, and attributed much of his success in the latter to his experience in the former. In theory he sometimes clung to beliefs, which, in practice, he abandoned. In one of his later papers, "A Lost

Art," and in his lectures, he still advocated blood-letting; but in the nearly twenty years in which as a student, an assistant in his clinic, and a quiz-master I saw much of his practice, I only remember two cases in which he actually bled his patients.

His influence on the profession was marked and wholesome. For many years he was almost always at the annual meetings of the American Medical Association and the American Surgical Association, was looked up to in both as the Nestor of the profession, and his papers and his wise words of counsel moulded both the thought and the action of his brethren to a notable degree. He founded two medical journals, was the founder of the Pathological Society of Philadelphia and of the Philadelphia Academy of Surgery, the founder and first president of the American Surgical Association, and the first president of the Alumni Association of the Jefferson Medical College. It is peculiarly fitting, therefore, that these last two associations should unite to-day in erecting and unveiling the bronze statue of one who did so much for them and whom they rightly delight to honor. All who knew his tall, manly figure and his fine face will agree that it is a speaking likeness, both in pose and feature. Could I only get a glimpse of the right hand which holds his familiar scalpel I would recognize the man. *Ex pede Herculem! Ex manu Gross!*

As an author, his chief characteristics were untiring industry, comprehensiveness, methodical treatment of his subject, and a singular felicity of style, especially for one who acquired English so late and with difficulty. In fact, through life his speech, by a slight, though not unpleasant accent, always betrayed his German descent.

He "blazed" more than one new "trail" in the forests of surgical ignorance. In the early part, and even in the middle of this century, it was rare for Americans to write medical books. The most they did was either to translate a French or a German work or to annotate an English one. He was one of the earliest to create an American medical literature of importance, and his works on the *Urinary Organs*, on *Foreign Bodies in the Air Passages*, and his text-book on *Surgery* gave a position to American surgery abroad which we can now hardly appreciate; while, as already related, his *Pathological Anatomy* was the very first work in the English language on that most important branch of medicine.

His experiments and monograph on *Wounds of the Intestines* laid the foundation for the later studies of Parkes, Senn, and other American surgeons, and have led to the modern rational and successful treatment of these then so uniformly fatal injuries. He first advocated abdominal section in rupture of the bladder, the use of adhesive plaster in fractures of the legs, amputation in senile gangrene, and the immediate uniting of tendon to tendon when they were divided in an incised wound. Had he lived but a year or two longer bacteriology would

have shown him that scrofula was of tubercular origin, and not, as he so firmly believed and vigorously taught, a manifestation of hereditary syphilis.

That his eminence as an author should have met with recognition from scientific organizations and institutions of learning is no cause of surprise. It made him the president of the International Medical Congress of 1876, a member of many of the scientific societies of Europe as well as of America, and won for him the LL.D. of the University of Pennsylvania, and I believe the unique honor in America of having had conferred upon him the highest degree of all three of the leading universities of Great Britain—Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh. Indeed, it is both significant and pathetic to note that he laid down his pen just after recording in his autobiography the announcement of the honor which the University of Edinburgh intended to bestow upon him at its tercentenary celebration.

As a teacher, I can speak both with personal knowledge and enthusiasm. I can see his tall, stately form, his handsome face, his glowing features, his impressive gestures. He was earnestness itself. Filled to overflowing with his subject, his one desire was to impart to us as much of the knowledge he possessed as our young heads could hold. Repetition did not blunt the novelty nor time lessen the attraction of his theme. It always seemed as if he was telling us for the first time the new story of the beneficent work that surgery could do for the injured and the suffering. His whole heart was in his work. Especially did he inculcate the principles of surgery, for he was convinced, and rightly, that one who was thoroughly imbued with these could not go far wrong in his practice.

His own statement of one of the qualifications of a teacher is so true yet so often forgotten that, in spite of its mixed metaphor, I will quote it: "A teacher should be bold and decided in his opinions; not too positive, but sufficiently so to be authoritative. The student cannot judge for himself. The knowledge that is placed before him must be, so to speak, well digested for him; otherwise it will stagger and bewilder, not instruct him." His sense of the heavy responsibility of the teacher is well shown by the following from his autobiography: "Nothing was more offensive to me than applause as I entered the amphitheatre, and I never permitted it after the first lecture. I always said, 'Gentlemen, such a noise is more befitting a theatre or a circus than a temple dedicated not to Æsculapius, but to Almighty God, for the study of disease and accident, and your preparation for the great duties of your profession. There is something awfully solemn in a profession which deals with life and death, and I desire, at the very threshold of this course of lectures, to impress upon your minds its sacred and responsible character, that you may be induced to make the

best possible use of your time and conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the dignity of Christian gentlemen.' ”

The value of recitations in a medical course I fully appreciate and indorse. They will occupy in the future a much larger place in our medical schools than they now do. But I am equally convinced that such a voice, such a presence, such an impressive, earnest lecturer will never lose their powerful influence nor their place in instruction.

As a man, he was beautiful in his relations with his family, who were devoted to him with an affection that was unusually strong; upright in all his dealings, and despising cant and pretence and anything unworthy a true gentleman. Few men were more widely known in and out of the profession, and few ever had the good fortune to know intimately so many distinguished people of both continents. Wherever he was known he was respected, and by those who knew him intimately he was beloved.

Such, then, was the man whom we are gathered to-day to honor. The American Surgical Association, the Alumni Association of the Jefferson Medical College, and a few friends who have gladly united with us in this service of affectionate remembrance, have presented his statue to the people of the United States, to stand forever in our beautiful capital city as a mute yet eloquent evidence of our esteem for his personal worth and his professional attainments.

It is strange that the human race has failed so grievously to recognize publicly its great medical benefactors. Mr. Lecky, in his last remarkable book, in speaking of the rewards of genius in Great Britain, after enumerating the chief of the extraordinary and beneficent achievements of medical men in the present century, says, “ England may justly claim a foremost place in this noble work, and many of her finest intellects have been enlisted in its service. In no single instance has this kind of eminence been recognized by a peerage. It is clearly understood that another and a lower dignity is the stamp of honor which the State accords to the very highest eminence in medicine and surgery—as if to show in the clearest light how inferior in its eyes are the professions which do most to mitigate the great sum of human agony to the professions which talk and quarrel and kill.” (*Democracy and Liberty*, i. 429.) And yet Jenner almost saved England from extinction, and Simpson and Lister have done far more to mitigate the terrors of surgery and the pangs of maternity, to save life, and to bring health and happiness to the human race than Marlborough and Wellington and Nelson have done to destroy life and bring sorrow and pain and rapine and misery.

It is pleasant to record that England has atoned, with the opening of this year, for such long-continued neglect. In making Sir Joseph Lister the first medical peer she has conferred less honor upon Lord Lister than upon herself.

The statue of Marion Sims, not long since erected in New York, and this one of Samuel D. Gross, let us hope, are the beginning of a similar recognition of beneficent genius in our own land. Go through the broad streets of this beautiful city, and in its circles and parks and squares you will find, with singular exceptions, only the statues of statesmen and warriors—men who deserve, we all agree, their well-won honors and immortality. But, truly, "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than those of war." Though its heroes are not, it may be, portrayed in marble or in bronze, they are enshrined in the grateful hearts of mankind, immortal in literature, even the humblest of such toilers as the Gideon Grays and the Weellum Maclures that cheer and brighten the world.

And were the soldiers, whose statues one may see everywhere around us, the sole possessors of bravery? In 1832, that most dreaded of all scourges, Asiatic cholera, for the first time broke out all over this country with the greatest virulence. Easton was only eighty miles from New York, and the citizens, in terror lest the dread disease would reach their own town, appointed a young, intrepid surgeon to visit New York and learn what he could for their benefit. When others were fleeing in frightened thousands from the pestilence Gross bravely went directly into the very midst of it, reaching New York when the epidemic was at its very height. In that then small and half-depopulated town 385 persons died on the very day of his arrival—and he staid there a week in a hot July, visiting only its hospitals and its charnel-houses. What call you that but the highest type of bravery?—a bravery which Norfolk and Mobile and Memphis have since seen repeated by scores of courageous physicians ready to sacrifice their lives for their fellowmen with no blare of trumpets, no roar of cannon, no cheers of troops, no plaudits of the press! No battlefield ever saw greater heroes; no country braver men!

Yonder statue of Joseph Henry has stood alone for too many years. We have to-day unveiled its worthy companion. Both of them are memorials of men great in science, whose lives were devoted to the good of their fellow-creatures, to saving life, adding to human comfort, lessening pain, promoting knowledge, cheering the sick, and assuaging even the very pangs of the dying. We do well thus to honor in imperishable bronze the men who have won these victories of peace! To no one can the words of the blessed Master apply with greater force than to the kind surgeon whose time and thought and talents are given to humanity, and, above all, to the poor, with no payment but the grateful look of returning health and rescued life and that inward satisfaction which far surpasses all the wealth of the Orient—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."