

**The annual address to the candidates for degrees and licenses, in the  
Medical Institution of Yale College, January 20, 1847 / [Rufus Blakeman].**

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Blakeman, Rufus.  
Yale College (1718-1887). Medical Institution.

**Publication/Creation**

New Haven : W.H. Stanley, 1847.

**Persistent URL**

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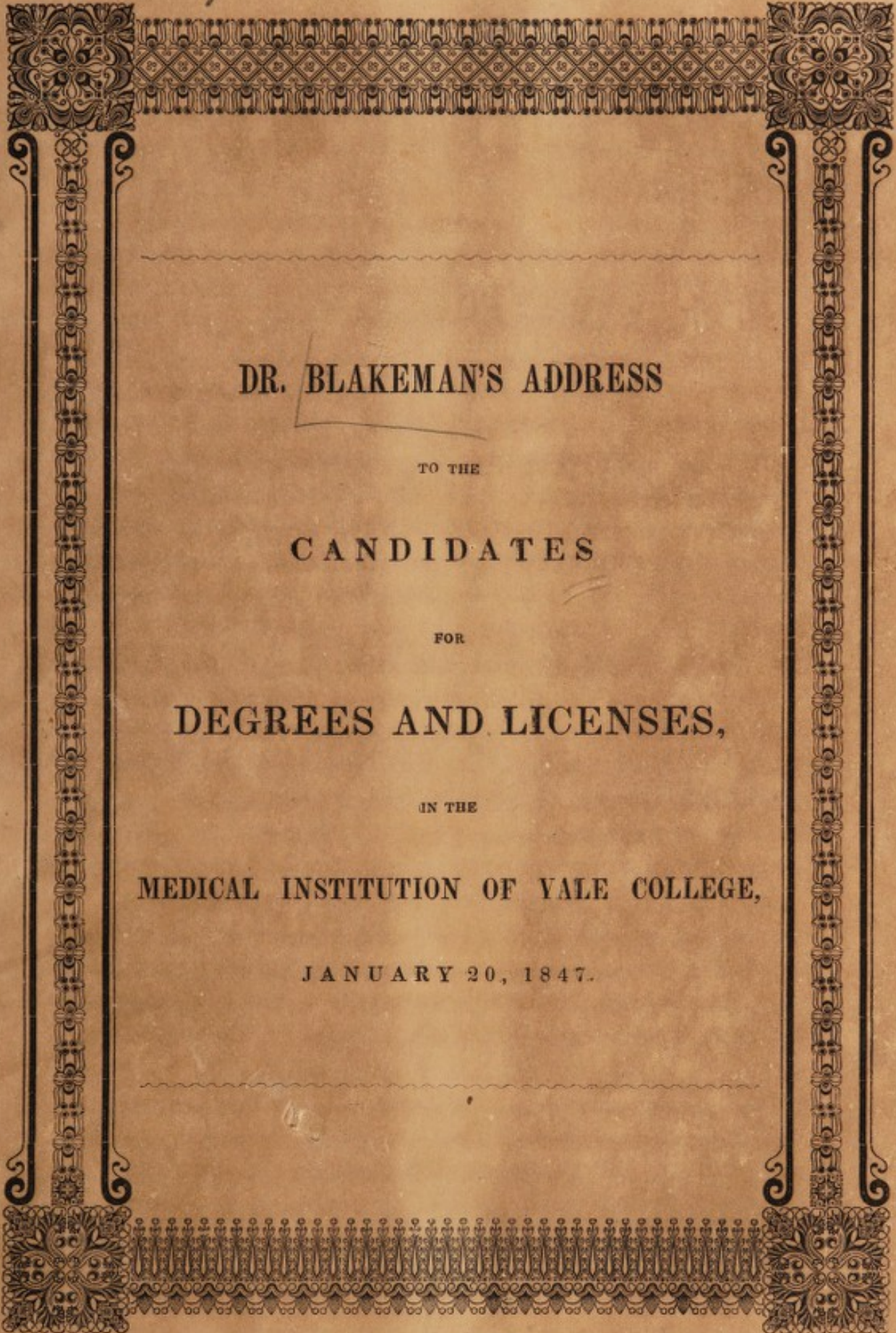
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DR. BLAKEMAN'S ADDRESS  
TO THE  
CANDIDATES  
FOR  
DEGREES AND LICENSES,  
IN THE  
MEDICAL INSTITUTION OF VALE COLLEGE,  
JANUARY 20, 1847.



ANNUAL ADDRESS

CANDIDATES

DEGREES AND LICENSES

MEDICAL INSTITUTION OF YALE COLLEGE

BY BERT D. WALKER, M.D.

THE  
ANNUAL ADDRESS  
TO THE  
CANDIDATES  
FOR  
DEGREES AND LICENSES,  
IN THE  
MEDICAL INSTITUTION OF YALE COLLEGE,  
JANUARY 20, 1847.

~~~~~  
BY RUFUS BLAKEMAN, M. D.,

MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS.  
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NEW HAVEN.  
WILLIAM H. STANLEY, PRINTER.  
1847.

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BY JOHN BURNHAM, M. D.  
NEW HAVEN  
WILLIAM F. STANTON, TRUSTEE  
1917



## ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN:

I am called to address you at a period of your lives, probably more interesting and momentous than any through which you have as yet passed. Hitherto your career has been circumscribed within that vestibule of life, which leads to the more exciting scenes, in which you will soon mingle and participate. You have now arrived at that threshold, from which another grade will introduce you as actors on a stage, of which you have been only spectators. Although you have doubtless been occasionally associated with the actors in these scenes, yet their cares and responsibilities were not yours; nor were the difficulties, which occasionally perplexed and embarrassed them, sensibly felt by you. It is not to be presumed that during such intercourse, you could have acquired that discipline, which a more immediate interest would be likely to impart, or such as emergencies, to which you will now be subject, must necessarily impose upon you. It is incident to your present stage of professional life to be buoyed up by the confidence of hope, and many of you may regard success in the untried field before you as hardly problematical. Such zeal and confidence, when predicated upon a just estimate of character and qualification, afford a guaranty of success. But in connection with these buoyant anticipations let it occur to you, that many have commenced their professional career with hopes equally sanguine, who have failed to reach their anticipated goal. They encountered difficulties, which their fancy sketches



failed to delineate, and which therefore became stumbling blocks, over which their hopes were prostrated. It is therefore no unfriendly hand that points you to these difficulties, that you may be prepared, if not to avoid, at least to meet and encounter them without being disconcerted.

Permit me then, as having preceded you, to allude to some of the embarrassments which are (I may say) the natural offspring of the medical profession; while at the same time I suggest the kind of preparation which is required successfully to meet the emergencies incident to its practice. Your time has hitherto been employed in preparation for the extended theatre before you. Your associates in similar pursuits have been the indulgent spectators of your actions and progress. You have been employed in the investigation of the intricacies of organic structure, with its wonderful manifestations. Its derangements, constituting the greatest variety of diseases with their causes, have been portrayed, their different phases noted by the delineation of the symptoms characterizing each; and your attention has been directed to the agents reputed as efficacious for their removal. In your progress thus far, you have had as ready counselors, the illustrious dead, and the distinguished living, to aid and direct you in the difficulties occurring in the investigation. But far different are the relations which you are hereafter to assume. Notwithstanding the same aids may be accessible, emergencies will not unfrequently occur, to meet which all your acquirements will need to be available. Cases will often present, where neither books nor counselors will be at hand to direct or sustain your decisions. In such cases the spectators of your actions will most probably be, either those having the deepest interest in their results, who will be ready to bestow applause or censure, as they may judge your conduct merits, or a more indifferent public, who will scrutinize all your acts, with the view to determine whether you are entitled to their confidence and support. Occasions will occur, when it may be in your power to exhibit the tri-



umphs of science in its contests with disease, and the consequent alleviation of human suffering. In such case you will obtain a rich reward, as well from the indulgence of your own benevolent emotions, as from the tribute of gratitude which both patient and friends will most likely bestow. But alas! on the other hand, you will too frequently meet with instances, where with all the resources of the healing art, you will be able to impart to the sufferer and solicitous friends little beyond the melancholy solace, that your utmost efforts will probably effect no more than a prolongation of diseased existence, or an alleviation of suffering during an inevitable progress to the tomb. Occasionally diseases will embarrass you, by the complexity or obscurity of their symptoms, such as your reading or knowledge of the animal functions will afford but an imperfect guide for the development of their character or location. In such cases you will be compelled to a prompt investigation of temperament, idiosyncrasy, or the peculiarities of nervous structure on the living page before you, for a satisfactory explication of their phenomena. Not unfrequently will all your resources be taxed, and the moral and physical energies of your character be called in requisition, in cases of imminent peril to your patient, where anxious friends are noting each word and action of your features, to derive therefrom your decision, upon which impends either hope, or despair. In such emergencies your embarrassment will generally be proportionate to your available resources. But previous to the acquirement of a degree of discipline, which experience can alone impart, (unless endowed with an overweening self-confidence, which is indicative of superficial acquirement,) they will tend to discourage and disconcert you.

You hardly need to be informed that the public, upon whose opinion you are more or less dependent, have a deep interest in your character; nor that their confidence will be cautiously bestowed in a matter of such vital concernment as that of life and health. All candidates for public



favours, in their novitiate, encounter obstacles from this source; but lapse of time is sure to remove them, where adequate genius and qualifications are not wanting. The young artisan must expect to witness a preference manifested by the public, to the more experienced in his occupation. In the learned professions, the young legal practitioner is constantly reminded that public confidence is bestowed upon his seniors in experience; and in the clerical profession, although the youthful preacher often by his powers of eloquence, attracts popular applause, yet in matters of more grave interest, a preference is usually manifested for the counsel of the more experienced divine. If therefore, in the arts and the other professions, experience is the passport to public confidence, you need not be surprised or disappointed, should it be cautiously extended to the young and inexperienced physician, however extensive may be his acquirements. While such embarrassments await the young beginner in other professions, as well as the medical, it is not to be concealed that they attend the latter in a far greater degree. This is unquestionably to be explained, as well from the vital interest which the public have in the results of medical practice, as from the abstruse sciences which constitute the basis of our profession, of the undefined character of which they are not without some knowledge. It is an undoubted fact, that while the professions of law and theology are based upon principles which are obvious to the reason and common sense of mankind generally, those on which physic is founded, are in a great degree undefined deductions from the vital and physical laws, the intricate nature of which is too subtle for complete comprehension by the human mind, even in its most mature state, and which at most, are discoverable only in their *a posteriori* results.

While therefore, in common with other professions, you are to expect difficulties which await youth and inexperience, there are those which are the specific offspring of medical science, which will frequently perplex and embarrass you.



It has ever been the misfortune of the medical profession, that the laws governing the animal economy are less susceptible of definition, than those regulating inorganic matter. Notwithstanding a profound intricacy veils the intimate character of the latter, yet such is the uniformity of their phenomena, that the physical sciences dependent upon them have been made to attain a comparative degree of exactness, while those of life, upon which medical science is based, have not hitherto yielded a like uniformity in their results. The principles therefore governing medical science, must be considered as deductions from long observation, rather than from an intimate acquaintance with the laws of the animal or organic economy. While affinity, gravitation, electricity, &c., have each yielded, in a degree, their phenomena to the philosopher, the principle of life evades pursuit, by its ever varying and novel operations. Although many of the important laws of life have been revealed, still, the nature of life itself remains obscure and incomprehensible. Were the manifestations of life as simple and uniform, as are those of the physical laws, the physician might now boast of principles as exact as those claimed by the chemist, and natural philosopher. But in view of all the multiplex varieties presented by organic nature, it is hardly to be presumed that its intimate relations will ever be thus accurately unfolded, or be made the subject of exact demonstration.

Such being the state of the medical profession relative to the sciences upon which it is founded, it is not surprising that the principles by which it is governed should be less definite than those of the other professions; nor that the fluctuations to which it has been subject in the different eras of its history, should have occurred; or even that the unblushing pretensions of empiricism should mislead the public mind, in a science which, least of all, it is adequate to comprehend. It is this subject of *medical principles*—those principles which are recognized by every honorable and well



educated physician—which I would here strenuously urge as worthy your attention, especially at a time like the present, when the public mind, perhaps more than at any other period, is distracted by the various systems presented for its consideration. We have too frequently been stigmatized by those possessing a limited acquaintance with medical science, (yet of some standing in literature,) as a profession wanting those standards, by which those receiving a medical education are enabled to regulate their practice, with all the precision and uniformity of the other learned professions. However unjust this charge, its effects have been to depreciate legitimate medicine in public estimation, and to lessen that confidence to which it is justly entitled, and through which alone its greatest usefulness can be attained. This would be an unsuitable occasion, even were it not unnecessary, for those (like yourselves) who have acquired medical science, to attempt its vindication from such unfounded charges; yet to repel the odium, it is proper to state, what no one acquainted with its true character will deny, that medical science is based upon principles, which, if not as exact, are nevertheless received, recognized and relied upon, by learned physicians, no less than are those of the other sciences. It would seem, at a time like the present, when empiricism in every shape is obtruding its hydra forms, for the purpose of deluding the ignorant and the credulous, that a necessity exists for our profession to unite in support of its recognized principles, in order to establish a character, by which the public may be able to discriminate between legitimate medicine, and the baleful systems of empiricism, which like the famous misletoe, their authors strive to sustain, by obtaining an adhesion to the sturdy trunk of medical science.

For the purpose therefore of fixing your attention on these important facts, and thereby securing your concurrence in a work so important to the reputation of our profession, I will refer you to its history for proof, that at no period has



the general character of true medical science been subject to the vacillations, by which its traducers labor to disparage it. Such history will show, that a uniformity of principle and practice has characterized the medical profession, throughout the different ages, from that of Hippocrates to the present period. The venerable father of physic was led by inductive reasoning, as strenuously to embrace the antiphlogistic treatment of febrile diseases, as do the great body of the profession at this period. His exalted reputation appears to have established this rational method among the Greeks of his own, and the succeeding ages. His writings, with the additions made by his Roman successors, Celsus and Galen, became the standards of medical literature, and were the guides of practice for a period of more than fifteen hundred years succeeding the era of the distinguished Coan.

During the dark ages succeeding the downfall of the Roman empire, in which the epidemic disorders of the imagination had operated nearly to the extinguishment of all the sciences, we find the rational system of Hippocrates preserved and practiced by such distinguished physicians as Arabasius, Numesius, Ætius, Paulus and some others.

After the entire subversion of the Roman State, medical science, less depreciated than the other sciences, passed to the Arabians, with whom the Hippocratic principles flourished, and became improved, in the hands of the distinguished Serapion, Rhazes, Avicenna, Albucasis and others. After being fostered there for a time, it found another refuge at Salernum in Naples; and on the revival of literature, it commenced a general expansion, under the influence of such Universities as Montpellier, Paris, Bologna, Padua, Milan, Pavia and Placenza. It is unnecessary to trace the course of legitimate medicine as exhibited by its history, as you are doubtless familiar with its progress in the hands of the celebrated fathers, who



cultivated and improved the science, from the seventeenth century downward.

If medical science, during the earlier eras of its history, failed to attain that degree of exactness of which it now can boast, it at least has the merit of establishing for itself *principles of practice*, which are generally recognized by the profession in its present comparatively advanced state. It is true that quackery and empiricism have ever been the baleful excrescences of the medical profession, and that they have ever beguiled the public mind, in a degree proportionate to the ignorance and superstition prevalent in the different ages, and to the character and influence of the promulgators of their systems. Thus the atomic theory was the formidable rival of regular practice in Greece and Rome, by means of the powerful influence of the Epicurian school of philosophy. The chemical theories of the fifteenth century, through the efforts and influence of the celebrated Paracelsus, Van Helmont, and others, dazzled the world for a season, and led the credulous and sanguine, even of the medical profession, to anticipate, not only that its agents would be made effective to antagonize all diseased action, but that the vital changes constituting senility were likely to be resisted, thereby acquiring for the organic fabric a degree of earthly immortality. During the depression of literature in the dark ages, astrology, by presenting a facile pathway for evading the stubbornness of reason and fact, for a time led astray a large portion of mankind, in pursuit of the illusions presented by its magic lens. But the re-actions of a rational science dissipated the dreamy infatuation, and left it existence only with the ignorant and superstitious.

The general prevalence and popularity of such systems, together with the monstrous and absurd superstitions which have occasionally perverted the religious instincts of mankind, strongly evince the existence of an element in the human mind, which leads it more readily to grasp at the



mysterious and incomprehensible, than to embrace principles susceptible of demonstration. This trait is by no means of modern manifestation, as Galen complained that his patients were more obedient to the incantations of diviners, than to his prescriptions. Pliny though not a physician, alluding to the proneness which the ignorant manifest for a belief in the miraculous powers of medicine, remarks, "*minus credunt quæ ad salutem pertinent, si intelligunt.*" We need not therefore be surprised, that in a science like that of medicine, where the manifest recedes into the unknown, and the physical become blended with the more subtle and mysterious vital laws, the unprincipled should, in lieu of the labor of attaining science, entrench themselves within the marvelous, and pander to such propensity, with the view to acquire popular fame and fortune.

Although illusion and error have thus occasionally obscured the path of true medical science, yet its undeviating progress through successive ages, and the general recognition of its merits by the intelligent of this enlightened period, afford conclusive evidence, that it is based upon that truth which it is the aim of the human mind to attain. It is only requisite therefore, to effect the suppression of empirics and their delusive systems, that its principles should be promulgated in such manner, that society may be able to comprehend and appreciate them. This allusion to medical history is made, to impress upon your minds the importance of duly estimating principles, which have been so eminently tested by time and experience; and likewise to warn you against giving heed to innovations, which pretended reformers of its elements, from motives of interest or notoriety, are perpetually laboring to establish. Such history shows that in all ages, from Hippocrates to the present time, our profession has not been without men distinguished for learning and genius, who, notwithstanding the hallucinations which at times nearly suppressed all the true sciences, sustained and transmitted the same general principles which



were deductions from their reason and experience—the same which at this period are recognized as guides to our profession, both in the investigation and treatment of diseases.

It has been stated that the antiphlogistic method of treating diseases of an inflammatory character, was that practiced by the Coan sage, and the fathers who succeeded him. It may be added that universal experience has established this as a dogma of modern practice, from which few deem it safe to depart. It is a remarkable fact, that notwithstanding the conflicting *theories* of diseases of this character, which have at different periods prevailed in the recognized schools, such as those of Boerhaave, Cullen, &c., few of their authors presumed to question the principle by their *practice*, although with individuals its application might vary in degree. The same may be said regarding the sedative, and the tonic treatment of nervous affections, and those of general debility; and if conflicting practice occurs among members of the profession at this time, such originates mostly in diseases whose causes are obscure, rather than from diverse views of treatment, where such causes and character are obvious.

I presume, gentlemen, it is unnecessary to inform you, that notwithstanding the acquirements which have enabled you to sustain the ordeal through which you have passed, a vast field still remains for you to explore. It will still require much patient industry to acquire the mass of facts, which your predecessors have stored for your benefit; and it is likewise due the profession to which you belong, that you direct your investigations to the further discovery of the still intricate laws of life, and their manifestations both in health and disease. I have remarked that it is scarcely to be hoped, that a complete knowledge of the vital agencies can ever be attained, for the reason that their subtle operations cannot be made objects of sensible demonstration. But the improvements in this field already made, admit a hope that the day is not far distant, when the physician will be able as rationally to define the general laws which con-



trol his prescriptions, as the chemist to define the physical agencies which regulate the affinities of inorganic matter. It is not however contended, that the same uniformity of results can probably be obtained from the operation of the vital, as the physical laws, in consequence of the complicated nature of organic structure, and the combined influences which these laws exert upon it. But in view of a field so manifestly susceptible of improvement, it becomes the duty of all, whose qualifications fit them for the task, to withhold no efforts which may lead to new and valuable discoveries in this science.

Your advancement to membership in the profession evinces that you are esteemed adequate to the assumption of its duties, and that you are adjudged competent counselors to your fellow men, in matters pertaining to life and health. Your professed avocation will hereafter be to labor for the preservation of the vital machine, when assailed by the perils of disease to which it is made subject. These trusts and responsibilities you cannot possibly discharge, nor can you even escape the charge of criminal delinquency, without incessantly laboring to acquire, and make available, all the means which science has furnished for the attainment of this important object. It is a lamentable fact, that success in the medical profession is not always proportionate to the qualification of its professors. But notwithstanding, I will venture to affirm, that no conscientious member, possessed of an ordinary knowledge of the vital fabric, with its complicated structure, can with confidence hold himself out to the public as a practitioner, without being furnished with the ordinary means, which modern science affords, for the correction of its derangements. It may be, and doubtless is true, that a public unenlightened in medical science, may not be able to detect the deficiencies of the physician; that it may exonerate him in cases of evil inflicted by his misjudgments, or even applaud where censure would be justice. But let it be borne in mind by you, that while the intelligent



hold such unmerited laurels in derision, a scrutinizing moral sense within will not fail to scourge such delinquent, for grave errors, which result from a want of that knowledge, which industry might have supplied. Ever then bear in mind, (and this I would address as well to the undergraduates as to the graduates,) that hours spent in untimely amusements, by the student or practicing physician, will not only be the subject of future regret, but must be attended with danger to those whose lives may be entrusted to their charge.

Such then are the relations and responsibilities which you assume, by the reception of the honors of this Institution. It may not therefore be deemed inappropriate, particularly to define some of your implied obligations and duties, which you owe both the public, and the profession of which you are now members. By these honors the public are virtually informed, that you are worthy of their confidence and patronage in your profession, and that you possess a moral character to which they may with confidence entrust their dearest interests.

But, gentlemen, permit me to admonish you, that this announcement to the community will not be realized, that its vital interests will be hazarded, and that you will bring dishonor upon your instructors, and those who have decided favorably of your attainments, should you permit your industry, in the field of science, to terminate with your pupilage. It is not to be presumed, however arduous may have been your efforts of investigation and research, that during this short period, all the archives of medical literature could possibly have been explored, and made available. Nor was this made the condition upon which your present advancement was to depend. The object designed by such term of preparation is rather the acquirement of the principles of medical science, and their application to its practice, than the accumulation of all the facts and phenomena upon which they are based. With



such essentials it is decided that you are furnished. But as before stated, it will be deemed a culpable dereliction from that duty, which you owe the public, the profession and your own reputation, should your opportunities not be devoted to the increase of your stock of knowledge from such books as embrace the mass of experience of your predecessors and cotemporaries, and also by a patient analysis of such diseases and their phenomena, as your own observations may supply, to endeavor to advance the interest of your profession, and likewise that of the public, whose welfare is in no small degree connected with your improvement.

No individual physician, however great his abilities and acquirements, can without culpability disregard the principles of practice generally recognized by the profession; nor can essential innovations be adopted, without hazard to his reputation, and peril to those who may be seduced by his novelties. It becomes every physician to reflect, that his limited observation and experience are not adequate authority to allow a habitual disregard of general medical opinion, relative to the investigation and treatment of disease. This is a prerogative, which all pretenders to the healing art assume, and which unrivaled they should be permitted to enjoy. It is to be regretted, that the medical profession numbers among its members, those who arrogate the introduction of new principles in medicine, which are claimed as deductions from data supplied by individual experience and observation. These often announce themselves to the public as reformers of the elements of medical practice. But the object of such cannot be problematical, nor can the position of that physician be an object of envy, who can descend into the arena with the quack, and basely contend with him for the prize, which awaits superiority in the art of deluding the ignorant and credulous. It is such recusant members of our profession, and not the mere pretenders, who most degrade the medical profession in the estimation of the community.



The intelligent portion of the public are, for the most part, inclined to vindicate medical science, and to give their influence to its support. Although not intimately acquainted with the elements of the science, they are enabled, from analogies supplied by the sciences with which they are familiar, to appreciate the advantages of a medical education. But when such witness individuals possessed of these advantages, disclaiming its essential principles, and rearing new dogmas of their own, upon which their novel practices are based—their confidence in the healing art becomes essentially weakened, and empiricism is too often charged by them upon the entire profession. It is not surprising therefore, that with such views and opinions, their labors and influence should be less active in our behalf, than they would be, could there be witnessed a union of all educated physicians in the support of principles, by which all unswerved by interest are governed. Such evils too manifestly exist, for which no other remedy will be adequate, but that of a united effort of the honorable portion of the profession, with the view to effect a divorce from the unprincipled, who have unfortunately gained a nominal rank among them.

I confidently trust that I now address no individual, so wanting in self-respect, as to permit any temporary interest whatever to seduce him to the repudiation of principles, eminently established by time and the experience of the illustrious of our profession. But permit me to reiterate the too obvious fact, that the standard of professional character is essentially depreciated with the public, by the conduct of such unworthy members, who in their practices vie with the ignorant pretender, in the arts of chicanery, for the base purpose of reaping the fruits which popular credulity proffers to such recreancy. Although exceptions of this character exist, yet the body of the profession, with which you have, in a degree, embarked your fortunes and your reputation, is honorable and high-minded.



These will cordially greet you as brethren, and will readily proffer their aid in promoting your professional interests, provided your characters are such as to gain their confidence in your professional integrity.

Our profession claims a rank equal with the other learned professions. For the purpose therefore of securing such rank with the community, it is requisite that a professional self-respect be manifested, by exhibiting to it evidence, that honor with integrity is the governing principle among its members. It has been remarked, that the nature of medical science is such, that the public cannot be expected fully to comprehend its elements. It can hardly be hoped therefore, that their confidence and respect can be secured for its professors, unless they harmoniously unite in the support of the principles, upon which they claim their profession is based. Should all, who like yourselves are in the incipient stages of professional life, resolve to effect such elevation of the standard of medical character, the work at no distant period would with certainty be accomplished, and it is even probable that most of you would live to enjoy such auspicious result.

In view of these facts, it will become you at all times, in your professional intercourse, to act with circumspection before a public, which is liable, from mis-conception, to mis-construe your actions and motives. While you discard those members of the profession, who become recreant to its principles and honor, you ought to observe a caution, lest such differences of opinion as may occur on minor points, in your associated practice, be so mis-construed as to appear the result of a science, which affords no fixed data for the guide of its professors.

Medical science is for the most part based upon the experience of the past and present generations of physicians. Consequently a medical education is the acquisition of the facts thence derived. But a caution is requisite, that reputed facts be not too hastily received, however confidently ad-



vanced, or however distinguished may be the authors advancing them. The physician who hastily embraces novel theories or opinions, or who is ready to abandon remedies tested by time and experience, for reputed improvements, the merits of which are known only by the confidence with which they are exhibited by their authors, must expose his patients to the hazards of a desultory practice, and also his own reputation to the charge of instability and indecision, which if less odious, is little less dangerous than confirmed empiricism.

I would by no means urge upon you the necessity of being bound implicitly by the trammels of authority; for in a science like that of medicine, in which so much remains to be discovered, it is your duty, as its cultivators, patiently to explore its fields for their hidden resources, and cautiously to adopt whatever you may discover as valuable, or whatever may have been tested as such, by the investigations of your collaborators in the same interesting field.

I would be understood in the preceeding remarks as strenuously urging, that in all your investigations and practice, you ought to bear in mind, that you are devoted to a science having recognized principles, whose dictates you cannot habitually disregard, without incurring the charge of temerity towards those entrusting life to your care, or without derogation from the character of the profession, whose honor and interests you are bound in all your conduct to sustain.

You require not to be reminded, that your honorable competitors have rights, which in all circumstances it is your duty to respect. Nor, that in the conflicting interests which will occasionally occur between you and them, professional honor ought ever to be held sacred and inviolate. By adopting this as a principle, you will ensure the respect of all honorable brethren; which, in addition to a profitable and elevated social intercourse, will acquire for you their valuable assistance and counsel, in emergencies where such may be required.



It is remarked by Berkely, that "few men think, yet all have opinions." There is no condition in which men are ordinarily placed, where thought is more requisite, than it is for the physician, whether engaged in reading, in the investigation of disease, or in his medical prescription. No physician is justified in prescribing energetically for a malady, without an opinion formed of its seat and character; which opinion ought to be a well grounded deduction from a thoughtful investigation of its phenomena. Not unfrequently diseases, especially those of organs more intimately connected with life, by reason of the extent of their sympathies, will assume a complexity which is embarrassing, rendering accurate diagnosis extremely difficult. But in the present advanced state of pathology, there are comparatively few affections, whose origin and character may not be discovered by the intelligent and observant physician. He who, without such careful analysis of the phenomena of diseases of this description, as may enable him to judge of their nature, shall resort to the exhibition of the heroic class of remedies, will often have occasion to repent his rashness, by being compelled to witness results detrimental to his patients, and which will be likely to prove disastrous to his reputation and mental quiet.

Chomel remarks, that "to do good is the second law of therapeutics, the first being not to do harm." This remark is worthy of adoption as an axiom for the profession, as expressive of its chief object, which should ever be borne in mind by the physician, in his administrations for health and life. In all cases of doubt and perplexity regarding perilous disease, let me counsel you, to permit no unworthy pride to conceal, from those interested in the result, your embarrassment; nor let the jealousy, lest a professional competitor should share with you the credit of a contingent favorable termination of a case, restrain you from obtaining such as a counsellor. Although in case of a happy issue, such may share with you the laurels, yet in the event of an opposite



result, he will afford you relief, by assuming a portion of the responsibility. That pride is reprehensible which would conceal from your patient, or his friends, your perplexities, lest their acknowledgment should expose your professional fallibility; and that selfishness is most unworthy of professional character, which permits a grudge, should a professional brother participate with you the credit, and happiness, of having contributed to the alleviation of human suffering.

As the possession of elevated principles of honor, and the attainment of a respectable degree of science, can alone entitle a physician to the favorable consideration of his brethren of the profession; so an irreproachable moral character is requisite to secure for him the respect and confidence of the community, upon whose esteem he is at all times dependant. It is incident to the medical man to witness more of the phases of human character, than falls to the lot of the generality of men. Disease is an agent which divests character of the artificial disguises which conceal it, in a degree, from the public view. With such divestment it is presented to the observation of the physician. In such condition his relations to the afflicted and distressed often constitute him a ready and suitable confidential counsellor, in matters other than those of a professional nature. But that physician is unfit for such associate office, who is deficient in any considerable degree in the moral virtues.

No scientific attainments will compensate for the want of correct moral principles. Without these, you cannot acquire that entire confidence of the community, which will enable you to develop a character for usefulness, or attain that rank which the public are ever ready to award to cultivated intellect. Your advantages have been such, that more will be required of you by the community, than from those who have been less favored. Your foibles, if such exist, will be more severely discussed and criticised; or on the other hand, your virtues, if made active, will not fail to exercise



a more general influence with the society of which you are members.

Permit me then to enjoin upon you, that while you cultivate science with the view to alleviate physical evil and suffering, you do not neglect that moral discipline of yourselves, which is requisite, not only to make you the physician, with whom the public may with confidence entrust their health and their lives, but also upon whom they may rely as safe counsellors, in all matters which concern their private interests, or the good of civil society.

Although you are to assume your station in society as physicians, and in that capacity to perform the specific duties of medical men, yet the public will have other claims upon you, which you are at no time to disregard. You will be presumed competent advisers in matters relating to the general welfare of society, and your standing will require that such aid be cheerfully rendered in all cases where it may be required.

The peculiar intercourse, which the physician holds with the various ranks of the community, qualifies him often to render more efficient aid in matters pertaining to its welfare, than can possibly be effected by others. His necessary education, his more general acquaintance, and the confidence ordinarily reposed in the medical adviser, naturally acquire for him an influence, which others, though possessing superior endowments, rarely attain. The duty then will devolve upon you, on passing the threshold where you now stand, to assume, not only the responsibilities of the physician, whose professed avocation is the preservation of health and life, but you are also to become the citizen, whose duty it ever is to be vigilant for the civil welfare of the community; and to render assistance in sustaining its institutions and burthens, to a degree proportionate to your ability and qualification.

You are, gentlemen, about to embark your fortunes with that of a profession, such as I have attempted to portray



to you; which if it presents occasional perplexities and embarrassments, also commends itself to your consideration, as honorable and elevated in its general character and objects, and as possessing an interest with the public, unequalled by any other, holding temporal relations. If its professors have not awarded to them that degree of honor and emolument, which some in other learned professions often acquire in civil society, they at least may be assured of consideration with all ranks of the community, at times when disease and suffering render apparent the futility of all conventional distinctions. A writer of note remarks, "the medical man is indeed a guardian angel of a family, a deity of health. If the profession is not a lucrative one, it is a divine one." Cicero says "nothing brings men nearer the Gods, than by giving health to their fellow men."

It is a profession (I may almost say) to which the instincts of man, have ever resorted for relief from bodily pain and infirmity, and upon which the hopes of humanity ever cling, when assailed by the imminent perils of disease. It is a profession which can boast of more cultivators of the natural sciences than all the others, and which acknowledges no superior in its contributions to general philanthropy. Sir William Blackstone remarks "the gentlemen of the faculty of physic have the character of general and extensive knowledge, a character which their profession, beyond others, has remarkably deserved."

With this profession, your interests, your reputation and your honor, are in a degree identified. Of its renown, or its obloquy, you will more or less participate. It becomes you, therefore, ever to be vigilant for its welfare and its honor; and while you have a care that it receives no derogation from your conduct, your efforts ought ever to be exerted to correct its imperfections, and to elevate its reputation. Bacon says "I hold every man a debtor to his profession, from the which, as men of course do seek to receive



countenance and profit, so ought they of duty to endeavor themselves to be a help and ornament thereto.”

You are, gentlemen, about to dissever connections, which, as the product of an innate principle of human nature, cannot be effected with indifference. You will soon bid adieu to these quiet and venerable halls of science, for which some of you have acquired attachments, from long and interesting association, to a degree that memory will hold them in affectionate regard, to the latest period of your lives. You are about to proffer the parting hand to your distinguished preceptors, who have assiduously labored to elevate you to your present position. To these you have incurred a debt of gratitude, which, if coin cannot cancel, it is in your power to discharge, by a career of professional usefulness and respectability. You leave behind your junior confreres, with whom you have long held pleasant social intercourse, who have yet to toil through the labyrinth which you have passed. These will not fail to be watchful of your progress, for the purpose of directing their own course, when advanced to the position which you now occupy.

Your associates of childhood, to whom you are attached by the more indelible ties of that susceptible and disinterested period, you will exchange for others formed in your new position, whose professions you can alone test by the lapse of time, and the influence of those conflicting interests which characterize a busy and selfish community. But above all, most of you will necessarily separate yourselves from the domestic altar, where the germs of your character received development; where the holy instinctive affections, which originate parental and filial ties, became ripened into those rational attachments, which no lapse of time, or vicissitude of life, will be able to extinguish. From this shrine, where you have derived so much, and participated so long, of the purest sympathies of the human heart, you turn to reciprocate comparatively cold formalities with a society,



whose greetings and professions are mostly but the effusions of the selfish passions by which it is characterized.

To such a crisis in your lives have you now arrived. You pass hence to assume your new relations, and to act a part in society, for which the past has been a term of preparation. The option is yours, whether that society, with which you are to be associated, is hereafter destined to hail you as its benefactors; or whether, in consequence of evils which it may receive from your hands, it shall have occasion to deplore the connection, and to repudiate you as detractors from its happiness and welfare.

Go then, young gentlemen, to your respective theatres of action; and may prosperity attend you in all the contingencies which await you in the unrevealed future. May your career in life be such, that when near its termination, you may enjoy the retrospect of having lived for the benefit of your generation. May the cheering prospect then be yours, that for the good you have achieved in the field of science, your names will ever be held in grateful remembrance by those who succeed you.



