

SMITH (R.K.)

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

TO THE

Clinical Course

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HOSPITAL,

FOR THE WINTER OF 1855-6.

BY

DR. ROBERT K. SMITH,

Chief Resident Physician and President of the Medical Board of the Philadelphia
Hospital, Blockley.

OCTOBER 10th, 1855.

PHILADELPHIA:

KING & BAIRD, PRINTERS, No. 9 SANSOM STREET.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

West Philadelphia, Oct. 15th, 1855.

DR. ROBT. K. SMITH.

DEAR SIR:

At a Meeting of the Guardians of the Poor this afternoon, the following Extract from the Minutes of the Medical Board of the Philadelphia Hospital was presented:

Philadelphia, Oct. 10th, 1855.

At a Special Meeting of the Medical Board of the Philadelphia Hospital, on motion of Dr. Caspar Morris, the following Resolution was unanimously adopted.

Resolved, That we have listened with great satisfaction to the *highly interesting* and *appropriate Lecture* of Dr. Robt. K. Smith, introductory to the Clinical Course of instruction, and respectfully recommend to the Board of Guardians, the publication of the same, for distribution among the Medical Classes of our City.

J. L. LUDLOW,

Secretary of Medical Board.

The Communication was referred to the Hospital Committee, with authority to publish. You will therefore please furnish the manuscript.

Very respectfully, yours,

JAS. N. MARKS,

Chairman Hospital Committee.

Philadelphia, Oct. 10th, 1855.

TO THE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, &C.

GENTLEMEN :

By order of the Medical Board, and with great personal gratification, I have the honor to transmit to you the following *Resolution* of the Board, passed at a Special Meeting, held October 10th, 1855, at the Hospital.

Respectfully, your Obedient Servant,

J. L. LUDLOW,

Secretary of Medical Board.

Resolved, That we have listened with great satisfaction to the *highly interesting and appropriate Lecture* of Dr. R. K. Smith, introductory to the Clinical course of instruction, and respectfully recommend to the Board of Guardians the publication of the same, for distribution among the Medical Class of our city.

J. L. LUDLOW,

Secretary of Medical Board.

GUARDIANS' ROOM, No. 36 }
NORTH SEVENTH STREET. }

Philadelphia, October 15th, 1855.

At a Stated Meeting of the Board of Guardians, held this day, the following, among other proceedings, were had, viz. :

Resolved, That the Communication from the Medical Board of the Philadelphia Hospital, be referred to the Hospital Committee, with authority to have the Lecture of Dr. R. K. Smith, President of the Medical Board, printed for distribution, as recommended in said communication.

S. SNYDER LEIDY,

Secretary.

Philadelphia Hospital, Oct. 16th, 1855.

DEAR SIR :

In transmitting to you the manuscript of my Lecture for publication, permit me to say, that the flattering testimonial of the Medical Board, and the complimentary action of the Guardians of the Poor, in responding so promptly to their recommendation, demands a ready compliance with your request.

These evidences of good-will on the part of those with whom I am officially connected, I shall ever remember with pleasure, and hope that nothing may occur to mar or disturb those friendly relations to which, in some degree, I may be indebted for this gratifying mark of your approbation.

Very truly, Your friend,

ROBT. K. SMITH.

TO JAS. N. MARKS, ESQ.,

Chairman Hospital Committee.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN :—

I offer you a cordial greeting ; and in the name of the Managers and Board of Instruction, welcome you to the Wards and the Lecture Room of the Philadelphia Hospital.

The custom which prevails at the commencement of every course of instruction—indeed I may say of every lecture—of receiving the lecturer with noisy demonstrations of applause ; I feel, in this place, constrained to condemn. Need I say to you, gentlemen, that the sick, the suffering, and excitable surround you ? That the patients of the clinic, and the insane ; those whose ears are painfully acute, and who are tremblingly alive to every thing that disturbs the order and monotony of their lives, are within the sound of my voice ? And need I tell you more than this to induce you to withhold, in this place, every boisterous evidence of your approval or condemnation ?

We are now entering upon a course of instruction which has for its object, not only the preparation of the student for the honors of the doctorate, but also his fitness for the performance of the arduous and responsible duties of his future professional career. That student whose ambition is limited to the attainment of his degree, and who does not earnestly desire, and labour to perfect himself in those qualifications which must ensure success and usefulness in his profession, may no doubt realize his anticipations, without the opportunities that are now offered to you. But depend upon it, gentlemen, the man who

does not avail himself of these advantages, must, in the earlier years of his practice, want that clearness of discrimination ; that confidence in his own judgment ; and that firmness of purpose ; which such instruction, and such experience, alone can give.

The teaching of the schools and of the bed-side, go hand-in-hand, and are equally indispensable in forming the thoroughly practical physician. The schools confer a knowledge of the history, description, and classification of disease in all its forms. There the material is furnished, and the foundation laid, upon which the whole structure of your professional ability must rest. It matters not how much may have been your practical advantages, or how large your experience ; without the training of the schools ; the acquisition of the rudimental branches of the science ; the theories and doctrines of the profession ; and the discipline, which must prepare your minds for a proper exercise of judgment, and appreciation of all the various relations and phenomena which exist in the derangements of disease ; I say without this basis, your practice must be empirical, and success an accident. On the other hand, where clinical instruction has been neglected ; the mind may be stored with the rich treasures of medical literature ; the memory strengthened by its constant exercise in grasping the almost numberless truths which are daily presented ; and when the day of trial comes, by unwearied diligence, the persevering student may even attain the most brilliant prizes in the honors that await him, yet without the experience which is only to be obtained at the bed-side of the patient, he must realize in the stern realities of the sick room, that he is in theory a physician, but in practice a bungler.

Rational and empirical physicians have existed from the earliest days of medicine. By the combination of theory and experience, and by applying them in the investigation of every medical fact, the rational physician has succeeded in securing for the science that high and honorable position it now so proudly occupies : while at the same time, the empiric has pursued his onward

course of experience, unaided by the ground-work of a medical education ; unable to found correct reasoning upon his collected facts ; incapable of deducing from them fixed principles for his guidance, and so totally powerless to employ this experience in the augmentation of either usefulness or knowledge, that the name has become a by-word and reproach to the profession.

It is to make you safe and efficient *practitioners*, that the teaching of the schools and the hospitals are united. In the practice of this hospital it is our object to give you the most ample opportunities for observation. We expect to be able to show you, during the present course, nearly every form of disease you may be called upon to attend. Those cases which are of most frequent occurrence, and are consequently of most importance to you—in a practical point of view—will be most frequently presented ; we intend to exhibit to you the various changes that take place in the same cases, that you may be able to trace step by step their vicissitudes, whether they result in death or recovery, and enable you to decide upon the usefulness of the agents employed, from your own experience.

In this way, it is our object to pursue a rational course of instruction. You are not to expect at every succeeding visit here, to see an entire change in the programme of performance, in order either to amuse or astonish you. Ours is a plain and practical school of experience, where there are no jealousies, and no rivalry ; except that rivalry which seeks the elevation of the science of medicine, and that jealous care of the suffering, that tends to the alleviation of human misery.

It may, however, be argued, that the Clinics established by many of the colleges, anticipate for the student every advantage and opportunity the Hospital presents ; and that every argument in favor of hospital attendance applies with equal force to the clinical lectures of our city schools. This argument, so far as the *dazzling operations* in surgery which may take place in this amphitheatre, are concerned, may be a valid one ; and I am not unwilling to admit that all such operations, whether they be performed in your presence, here or elsewhere,

are equally meritorious. But, gentlemen, let me assure you, that whilst there is in the system of Hospital teaching, nothing else, that the most zealous friend of the College Clinic can seize upon as an apology for this fungous growth upon the legitimate province of such institutions; there is at the same time nothing else in the College Clinic, that is not deserving of the severest reprobation. You are to remember, that the schools offer you the Clinic, as a substitute for the Hospital: you are called upon to consider whether they are coincident in point of practical advantages. You are to investigate the pretensions of these school exhibitions, with a view to their utility; and you are to decide whether these "Glorious Operations," with the attendant display that surrounds them; this grand feature and ultimatum which is to give eclat and attractiveness to the institution; and which almost bewilder you in contemplating the danger, temerity, and skill involved in their performance; can by any possible contingency, afford you the knowledge which the plain every day duties of your profession must necessarily demand. I do not say, gentlemen, that these capital operations in surgery are unimportant or unnecessary; they are neither the one nor the other; and you should as well be instructed in them, as in every thing else appertaining to your profession; but I do say, that such clinics can never be successfully substituted for the practical teaching of the wards of the Hospital.

Have you never reflected, that such cases will be to you, in the beginning of practice, "like angel's visits;" and that some stern necessity, or sudden emergency, only, could induce you to attempt their treatment. Have you not discovered that it is the common and daily cases of the acute form of disease, that you will most frequently be called upon to see, and that with you, it is only in the Hospital that this kind of experience can be best obtained? And have you never observed, that in the clinics of the schools, the transitory cases presented, are such, as are generally unusual in appearance, and chronic in their character? How then can you in justice to yourselves,

and the profession you have chosen, rest satisfied with this defective and miserable substitute.

I have thus far, confined myself, to the Hospitals, as an important element in practical medical education; and it may not be improper in this connection, for me to say something, of the one over which I have the honor to preside.

The Philadelphia Hospital and Lunatic Asylum have an average population of about nine hundred, and contain about one thousand beds for the reception of patients. The number of patients now occupying beds in the institution is eight hundred and eighty. The Hospital proper in the men's department, is divided into the surgical; black and white venereal; black and white medical; drunkards; and eye wards. In the women's we have the black and white surgical; black and white medical; black and white obstetrical; drunkards; and venereal wards. There is also the children's department; comprising the nursery and children's Asylum; where diseases incident to infancy and childhood, receive attention. In addition to these is the Lunatic Asylum; where the insane sick are treated; and beyond the enclosure, is the Small Pox Hospital. Belonging to the institution, is a library of rare and valuable medical works, many of which are no where else to be found in this country. It is to be regretted, that, in an institution like this, so rich in material, no pathological museum has been established; and I am at a loss to account for this oversight on the part of its former medical officers, unless it be upon the supposition—which I am free to confess is a selfish one—that in the insecurity of the position, they might be deprived of enjoying the fruits of their labors. It is my purpose, however, with the assistance of my colleagues, and the generosity of the Board of Guardians, to commence its foundation; and I firmly believe, that with the facilities at command, in a very few years, such a cabinet would be unsurpassed by any other in the Union. There is, notwithstanding this absence, no scarcity of pathological specimens, from the recent subject; and the board looking to your special improvement, will avail themselves of everything in this department

that will afford you a useful lesson. You must perceive, gentlemen, that in the constitution of the present medical board the interests of no particular school have been consulted. And I would have you bear in mind that this Hospital cannot be made an instrument for the advancement of any one institution above another. Students will meet here on terms of the most perfect equality, and they will be entitled to the same consideration and advantages, whether they come from the oldest or youngest school in the country. My colleagues in the clinical board, have been selected by the managers with a view to the best interests of this Hospital, and the cause of medical education. They are known to most of you, as gentlemen distinguished in their respective departments of the profession, and entitled to your confidence and respect. The terms of service, and the hours for lectures, have been so arranged, as to secure efficient teachers, and not disturb the ordinary routine of other studies. Besides the usual clinics, it has been decided by the board, that a series of lectures shall be delivered upon disorders of the mind, in order that the subject of *insanity* may be brought before you in a more practical light. There is no question, gentlemen, but that mental diseases, are in this country, rapidly on the increase. The number of cases to be met with in private practice; the accumulation of public institutions, for the reception of such cases; and the well filled wards of this asylum, loudly attest this alarming truth. Few opportunities are presented, under the present system of education, for you to become acquainted with this class of diseases; the importance of which, you will most certainly realize in the prosecution of your profession. We propose, for the first time in this country, to show you, practically, all the different varieties of mental aberration. Not only to investigate the phenomena of insanity, but to illustrate the subject from the wards around you. We trust, that by these means, you may become acquainted with the diversified aspects of this alarming malady; and that an impulse will be given to a more careful and studious examination, and rational

treatment of such cases. There is near us another institution, devoted to the insane, which you would do well to visit. I refer to the Lunatic Department of the Pennsylvania Hospital. Its plan and arrangements, and the rational principles upon which this class of patients are there treated will afford you an instructive lesson. The views and suggestions of its experienced superintendent, are worthy of your serious consideration, and you ought by no means to allow the opportunity for making a personal visit to pass, without embracing it.

The diseases of children, the department of obstetrics, and the sexual diseases of women; have also a place in the clinic of this hospital. A portion of your time will therefore be occupied with these branches of study, and every facility compatible with a proper regard, to female delicacy, *and the necessities* of such cases; will be afforded you for their investigation.

From what has been already said in this description of the institution, and the arrangements made for your benefit, you will be able to decide, upon the comparative advantages we offer; and to understand what it is you are to expect from us, in the relations we sustain to each other, as teacher and pupil.

And, gentlemen, you are to remember, that there is also on your part, a duty to be performed.

The profession to which you have devoted yourselves, demands the exertion of the highest faculties you possess. To excel in it, every hour must be diligently employed, and every opportunity improved. You who are already familiar with its elementary departments; who have, in the schools and dissecting room, acquired a knowledge of anatomy and physiology; who understand the healthy organization and functions of the body, are prepared to appreciate the diseased, to follow the surgeon's knife, and to read in the dimmed eye the pallid cheek, the disturbed pulse, the unsteady hand, and the rattling lung, *a living lecture*.

Disease may exist, and continue to undermine the health, yet show to the inexperienced observer, no outward sign. But when the man of experience examines the pulse and the tongue;

the condition of the skin; the expression of the face and the eye; the posture of the body; the respiratory sounds; and a variety of other circumstances affecting the hidden malady; he sees by these unfailing lights every point and position he is required to assail. To do this, gentlemen, you will be required to examine with the most careful scrutiny, every probability that may be suggested as likely to control or modify the usual progress of disease. You must fix upon the memory, by the most watchful attention, every principle developed in the theory, the practice, and pathology of the science. In the hospital and dead house, this vigilance is especially desirable. It is there that the lessons of the schools are to be applied, and a comparison made, of the doctrines and precepts you have been taught, with the facts as they exist. Without this vigilance, the labours of the teacher for your improvement, will be of little value. To realize the full benefit of his instruction, there must be on your part, earnestness of observation, economy of time, indefatigable industry, and a systematic arrangement of studies.

The intelligent application of the principles of medicine, is not the mere administration of certain remedies to different disordered conditions of the system, which may be easily ascertained, and which pursue in analogous diseases, the same unvarying course. Were this the case, a preparation for the duties of the physician would be a comparatively easy task. The human body obeys natural laws, and is not often subject to abrupt transitions. Disease is induced by unsuspected causes; and often exists entirely unobserved, until some palpable result demands a remedy. Every deviation from health is a condition of disease; which may be aggravated, modified, mitigated or removed, according to the circumstances by which it is surrounded. These varying conditions and circumstances may require your interposition; and it is of the utmost importance that clear discrimination, and intelligent reasoning, should direct every professional act. The chief end in view, in your visits here, should be to attain this ability.

If you carelessly stroll through the wards, for the gratification of an idle curiosity; if you indifferently follow your teacher to the bed-side, with a disposition simply to perform an irksome but compulsory duty; if you listen to the elucidation of the cases that are brought before you, with languishing attention; and suffer your minds to be diverted from the practical points which these cases exhibit; you may rest assured, that these unimproved opportunities, and mis-spent time, will be to you in after life, an unceasing source of regret. No student can be called to the bed-side, and have an exhibition of all the positive, tangible points of the case clearly demonstrated to his fixed attention, without an awakened interest; and no student can leave that bed-side, whose disposition has been teachable, and who has exercised his powers of observation, without profit. It is well, then, to impress upon you the importance of these visits, and the necessity for a methodical and carefully digested arrangement of all the facts subjected to your scrutiny. The impressions left upon the mind must be something more than a mere unarranged and confused mass of incidents, that have served to amuse and while away an hour, or your hospital experience will be productive of no permanent good; and when you desire to apply it, of no practical value. When you come into practice, you will meet with cases that are described in no text books; you will be called upon to administer aid in emergencies, for which the lecture-room has not prepared you; and amid the thousands of human ills, you must necessarily find complications and difficulties to be encountered, that no system of teaching, and no human foresight, could anticipate. It is then, that a ready adaptation of the knowledge you have acquired will be called into play; and the exercise of plain, practical good sense, fortified by study and experience, and quickened by the vigilant employment of your faculties, will relieve you in every embarrassing position.

Gentlemen, you may talk learnedly of the science of medicine; you may be familiar with all its most gifted authors; you may see in the phenomena of the diseases subjected to your

care, clear and beautiful illustrations which confirm some favorite theory; and when death comes to your patient, you may be able to select and prepare from the disease, which you have watched in its uninterrupted course, rare and valuable specimens of morbid anatomy; but remember, gentlemen, that in all this, there is more of the naturalist than physician. The first care of the physician is to interrupt and arrest this morbid action; to give back to his patient that which has been lost; and to employ whatever real science he may possess, not simply in verifying his own peculiar views, in tracing the order of symptoms he has been taught to expect, or in the pursuit of an abstruse philosophical inquiry for his own benefit, but to restore to health and usefulness, a fellow being. Another point in this connection, to which I would especially direct your attention, is the propriety of impressing indelibly upon the memory, the symptoms and phenomena which are the *usual* characteristics of disease. Look well to every condition that exhibits an indication of the *peculiar* morbid action; examine carefully all the *ordinary* and *prominent* features of the case that establish a diagnosis, and study with interest every evidence upon which a rational opinion of its character, progress, and probable termination may be founded. The more common the disease, the more careful should be the scrutiny; and although you should not permit those extraordinary traits, to be found in many cases, to escape your observation, you should be careful in investigating them, not to lose sight of such as are of more importance. Avoid every specialty in the classification of symptoms that would tend to limit the various diseases to any one set of organs or functions; but examine the whole from a stand point that will include every derangement, and every morbid action that is developed.

Gentlemen, your pursuits and opportunities in an institution like this—a receptacle for every disease incident to the indigent and depraved population of a great city—must necessarily render you familiar with many of the most humiliating and revolting phases of human life. Do not permit these exhibi-

tions of debasement to diminish the respect you owe to your fellow men or yourselves, to extinguish your feelings of commiseration for the unfortunate, or to dry up those fountains of sympathy which should ever flow towards those, who by the reverses and vicissitudes of fortune, are subjected to your care and compassion.

The instruction which they furnish is not simply the amount of scientific information to be acquired, but practical lessons of morality, of far greater value.

Some of you, gentlemen, are probably for the first time, exposed to the allurements and temptations which a large city so freely presents. Remember that these living monitors warn you of danger; they witness that the fruits of unlawful pleasure and vicious habits, are poverty and disease; and they serve as beacon lights to guide you in the paths of virtue, to future usefulness and peace.

Remember that parental affections, and earnest friendly solicitude are hopefully clustering around you. Do not disappoint the fond hearts that so ardently yearn for your prosperity and happiness. Do not betray the confidence that is reposed in you; but by faithfulness in the performance of duty, devotion to study, and uniform good conduct, enable your friends to realize, that the sacrifices, the anxiety, and care for your welfare, have been abundantly rewarded.