

AN

# INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING

OF THE

**MEDICAL DEPARTMENT**

OF THE

**COLUMBIAN COLLEGE,**

Nov. 4, 1839,

BY

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PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY.

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WASHINGTON CITY, *November 11, 1839.*

SIR: We, the undersigned, have been appointed a Committee on the part of the Medical Class of Columbian College to request a copy of your Introductory Lecture for publication.

Entertaining the highest opinion of its merits, we ardently wish and sincerely hope, in behalf of the Class, that our request may be complied with.

We remain, with the highest respect and esteem, your, &c.,

J. H. MINOR, }  
A. N. BALCH, } *Committee.*  
J. F. SCOTT, }

*Dr. J. F. MAY, Professor of Anatomy and Physiology.*

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WASHINGTON, *November 13, 1839.*

GENTLEMEN: I have received yours of the 11th instant, requesting a copy of my Introductory Lecture for publication.

As it was not written for the press, I should, if I consulted my own feelings alone, refrain from making it public, being aware of its defects.

Desirous however at all times to comply with the wishes of the gentlemen composing the Medical Class, I do so on the present occasion, regretting only that the Lecture is not more worthy their acceptance.

With sentiments of much regard, I am truly yours, &c.,

JNO. FREDERICK MAY.

Messrs. J. H. MINOR, }  
A. N. BALCH, } *Committee.*  
J. F. SCOTT, }



# LECTURE.

**GENTLEMEN :**

IN accordance with the custom which, at the commencement of the scholastic session of a medical institution, consecrates, by public lectures, the inauguration of its studies, it becomes my duty to address you. We have this day assembled for the purpose of commencing our labors in the extended and interesting field of medical investigation. We are about entering its various departments, in each to separate the glowing truths of scientific research from the erring theories and false hypotheses which have been mingled with them; to unfold to your admiring gaze the beauties and the wonders of the human organization; to explain to you the aggregate of those phenomena which constitute life, and the admirable perfection and harmony of the laws which preside over and govern them; to make you acquainted with the perversion of these laws, and the various diseases which are consequent upon their derangement; to bring before you the numerous remedial agents by whose means these same laws may be readjusted, and the integrity of the organization be restored; to expound to you those conservatory principles by a knowledge of which the hand may be safely carried through parts where

lesion would be fatal, to stay the aneurismal flood, or extirpate the forming seeds of death; and to demonstrate to you the beautiful truths of that science whose laboratory though the universe itself, yet draws renovating principles from even the sponge of ocean's depths, or the fragile weed which is borne upon its billows' foam!

The occasion, then, gentlemen, which has called us together, is one of deep and peculiar interest, inasmuch as by the recent organization of a medical school in this city it is the introduction to these multiplied and important studies in which we are about engaging, and which, from their magnitude, are to call forth our best exertions in imparting to you that information, which may enable you to enter with confidence upon the discharge of the various and responsible duties of the medical profession. I embrace the opportunity thus offered me to pledge my humble yet best efforts to the support of the Chair which I have the honor to fill in this Institution, and to assure you, that my exertions, though feeble, shall yet be undivided in the discharge of its duties, and in the advancement of your medical education.

Though a trite, it is nevertheless as true a remark, that the age in which we live is one of improvement; that its great characteristic is the rapidity with which the human mind is advancing in the various departments of knowledge. It requires no deep research, no philosophical analysis, in order to be convinced that the spirit of improvement is abroad, and is steadily working great and salutary changes in the general face of affairs; and it would indeed be evincing great ignorance of the present state of medical science not to perceive that it has most deeply felt the influence of this spirit, and most extensively participated in these changes. Within less than half a

century its whole aspect has been revolutionized. Branches which formerly were unknown, have been in this short period created; and others which, although in existence, exercised but little influence over the progress of medicine, have assumed the highest importance, and become the very basis of its advancement. Physiology is no longer a useless collection of imperfect theories and fanciful hypotheses, or Pathology a meagre account of *post mortem* appearances. Materia Medica no longer consists in a "mere botanical and chemical account of drugs, with formulæ for their administration;" and the practice of medicine at the present day is something more than a simple routine of measures, subject to the visionary and ever fluctuating theories of the imagination. It has assumed in "the circle of the sciences" a high and independent station. It has become a profound philosophy, whose principles can be determined and understood only by rigid induction and untiring investigation, and which can be put into successful practice only by means of close observation, extensive information, and a well disciplined and discriminating judgment.

Do not suppose, however, that I mean to assert that medicine, as a science, is near perfection. It is far, very far from it. There is yet much work to be done, for there still "remaineth much land to be possessed." There are many of its most important principles still involved in the deepest obscurity and doubt. There are many diseases over whose treatment the dark cloud of empiricism still hangs, and there are many opprobria yet to be combatted and overcome. Notwithstanding the labor that has been devoted to it, and the time that it has been cultivated, it is yet far in the rear of that more certain condition which, in the course of time, it will attain; which it must attain, if the great principles of deductive phi-

losophy continue to be applied only to FACTS derived from careful and minute observations of disease; if those who come after us are true to their duty, and persevere in the advancement of the work, which is yet in its infancy, and is not yet sufficiently appreciated or properly cultivated in the schools of our country, and yet upon which are based the true and rational principles of all disease. This work, gentlemen, is the study of *Pathological Anatomy*, and linked, as it necessarily is, with the important branch upon which it is my duty to lecture in this school, and neglected as it has been, and yet continues to be, in most of our institutions, it may not be altogether a work of supererogation in me to endeavor to call your attention to its importance; to point out to you the influence which it has already exercised, and must continue to exercise, over the destinies of our science, and to indicate to you the light which a knowledge of it sheds over nearly all the branches that are deemed essential in the formation of a sound medical education.

Forty years have not yet rolled by, since the immortal Bichat published his treatise on the membranes, and delivered his lectures on pathological anatomy. Prior to him its study had only been prosecuted at intervals, and in the most vague and irregular manner. Bonetus, it is true, at the close of the seventeenth century, endeavored to collect, in a systematic manner, the imperfect anatomical observations which had been made up to his time, in regard to the causes and seat of diseases. But his work was filled with erroneous theories; for all that existed of Pathological Anatomy in his time were a few isolated facts, almost lost in the voluminous works of theory and error to which they had been occasionally consigned. His labors however formed a point of departure for Morgagni, who,



entering more profoundly into the views contained in them, and multiplying autopsic examinations, has transmitted to us a work replete with sound pathological remarks, drawn from the most exact observations of nature. After Morgagni, we find Walter, Sandifort, Lieutaud, Portal, Vicq D'Azyr, Baillie, and a few others, contributing, by some useful discoveries, to augment the knowledge relative to Pathology. But their works, as well as those of Morgagni, can scarcely be considered more than memoirs—the disjointed fragments of the foundation scattered about promiscuously, which it required the hand of a master to collect and cement, before the grand and systematic structure could be raised. Bichat saw this deficiency, and his vast mind, guided by the torch of physiology and inductive philosophy, classified the tissues according to their analogies, and having thus created *General Anatomy*, he sought, by continued examinations, to elucidate their pathological states. Thus he may in truth be said to be the founder of the system with whose importance I wish to impress you. What had been done before him was disjointed, uncombined and vague. His genius breathed upon the commingled elements, and system and order were produced. Like the solar lens, it drew together the few and scattered rays that were visible in the horizon, and adding to them the coruscations of his own mighty intellect, it converged the whole, until, from the intensity, light, and truth, and form and harmony burst upon the profound obscurity. But how often has science been called on to lament the evanescence of genius, and its extinction in its maturity! Why have its brightest luminaries so often been extinguished in the zenith of their usefulness and glory? Nature, alas! in the language of his biographer, sometimes “seems to take pleasure in putting

boundaries to the progress of human intellect, and condemns to a premature death the inquisitive minds of those who follow her steps too closely and with too much ardor in the prosecution of her wonderful works." Bichat, worn out by intellectual labor and the dissecting-room, at the age of thirty years, fell a martyr to his enthusiastic devotion to a science which he only lived to found, and has bequeathed to his disciples to perfect.

"T'was his own genius gave the final blow,  
 And served to plant the wound that laid him low ;  
 So the struck eagle, stretched upon the plain,  
 No more through rolling clouds to soar again,  
 View'd his own feather on the fatal dart,  
 And wing'd the shaft that quivered in his heart—  
 Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel  
 He nursed the pinion that impelled the steel ;  
 While the same plumage that had warmed his nest  
 Drank the last life-drop of his bleeding breast !"

Such was the untimely fate, and such too its cause, of the devoted founder of Pathological Anatomy. I could not call your attention to the importance of the system without first endeavoring at least to bring my feeble tribute of homage to the shrine of the immortal genius of its gifted projector.

Let us then examine in succession the application of Pathological Anatomy to the various branches that are deemed essential in the formation of a sound medical education ; and of these, there is none of greater magnitude, of more paramount importance, and which demands of the student higher considerations, than Descriptive Anatomy. It is the basis of his medical studies—the keystone of the arch, upon which the entire temple is founded, and on which every column bears ; deriving from it strength in its construction, and symmetry in all its proportions. And can you for a moment doubt the light which a knowledge of Pathological, reflects upon Descriptive

Anatomy? They have both for their object the investigation of the organization, the one in its healthy state, and the other in its diseased conditions. And if you admit the common axiom, that any subject is so much the better understood in proportion as it is viewed and considered in the various features that it may present, it is at once evident, that a knowledge of the morbid or pathological, must assist you in forming a knowledge of the healthy state. And the influence is reciprocal; for it is in proportion as you are ignorant of the normal condition of a part, that you will find the difficulty increased in ascertaining when it is diseased. To give you an example of the truth of what I advance: How would you be able to distinguish the tint which is often produced by death, in the lining membrane of the heart and arteries, from the redness which might be occasioned by inflammation in these parts, if ignorant of its appearance when inflamed, and when in health?

You are not really students of medicine until, with the scalpel in your hand, you seek at every opportunity to obtain that information which may enable you to discriminate between the dissimilar appearances which healthy and morbid structure present. "*Nocturna versari manu versari diurna.*" But, independent of the utility of such studies, apart from their connexion with our profession, they are, of all others, those which are best calculated to enlist our zeal, and to arouse our admiration. If science can excite the energies of some by the display of structure as existing in the vegetable kingdom, or even by the exhibition of dead inanimate matter; if the curiosity of the mineralogist or botanist is aroused in investigating the composition of a *stone*, or the structure of a *flower*; if enthusiasm for their pursuits awakens their feelings by the

discovery of a *pebble*, or the classification of a *plant*, what ought not to be our ardor in studying the derangements of the organization of man, the master-piece of creation, whose formation is so perfect, evincing "so much harmony in its union, so much beauty in its details!" Which caused Galen to cry out, that "a work of anatomy was the most beautiful hymn which man could chant to the honor of his Creator!"

Would you inquire if the study of Pathological Anatomy can enlighten us in regard to Physiology? Physiology makes us acquainted with the various actions and uses of those organs whose structure has been revealed to us by Anatomy. It is the natural history of the different functions and vital relations of the diverse parts of his organization in a state of health. Although a knowledge of this important science is principally obtained by an acquaintance with human and comparative anatomy, and by attentive observations of the various functions of the economy as they exist in man and the inferior races of animals, aided by vivisections, yet by these means alone, unaided by Pathological Anatomy, but one portion of the veil that hangs before many of nature's most interesting physiological laws, can be raised. It is this last, assisted by clinical observation, that informs us of the mysterious relations which are developed between the different organs of the system, by the influence of disease, and which tells us how far they may be changed by anormal action, and still be able to carry on their functions, and when they must cease to act. If an important organ is suddenly and violently attacked by disease, how frequently does the whole system become deranged, and appear to be under the influence of new and inexplicable laws? Healthy, or physiological functions, being replaced by those of a pathological nature, and parts which, when in health, gave no sign of their

existence, evincing in a short time, the most exquisite vitality. A series of new phenomena and connexions are thus suddenly developed, and symptoms which are caused merely by *sympathy*, become the most striking, and thus obscure from us the organ which is really suffering from disease. It is in the midst of this trouble and commotion, when nature is wandering from her beaten track, that the physiologist should seek to discover the effects which are developed by a departure from order and health; and afterwards, by his autopsic examinations, should endeavour to trace these effects to their proper source. It is by such means that the truths of physiological medicine must be made known: a structure which, though still obscured by the scaffolding that always precedes the new and rising edifice, rests upon the deep and firm foundation laid by the gifted genius of Broussais.

The practice of medicine, and every rational theory in regard to disease, must be derived from the cultivation of Pathological Anatomy, aided by clinical observation. Select any disease that you please, and what does it present to you? A problem, placed before you, which you are called upon to solve; and as data to enable you to do this, you have symptoms, some of which are perceptible to yourself, and others to the patient only. These symptoms are nothing more than "an expression of suffering on the part of the organ which is diseased." But in the animal economy one diseased part will frequently, by *means of sympathy*, produce a train of symptoms, in various and more important parts: sympathetic symptoms, which, as I have already told you, are often so prominent as to obscure those which emanate from the true seat of the disease, and thus completely blind you as to the nature of the affection you are called upon to

relieve. What will guide you in this chaos of symptoms, if I may so express myself, which are so confusedly blended, and which nevertheless, it is so necessary that you should understand? Will you rely upon your anatomical information for obtaining this knowledge? However precise and perfect this may be, and however important, as I have already declared, it is but a history of the relations of parts as they exist in the inanimate frame after the vital spark has fled the tenement: it is the science of the dead inanimate machine merely. It does not explain to you one single phenomenon of life. It tells you of the position, the size and the texture of the various component parts of the human body, but it does not present to you these parts acting. It does not show them to you animated, and fulfilling the various functions whose aggregate constitutes life. Perhaps then you will call physiology, or "the science of life" to your assistance. It is certain, that physiology in explaining the functions of the various parts of the economy of man, and their relations with each other, *does* throw light upon many important morbid phenomena which we could not otherwise comprehend; and thus sheds great and important light upon the practice of medicine. But it is not necessary that I should tell you that a knowledge of healthy phenomena will not always explain to you morbid phenomena. "There is a *pathological* life, as well as there is a *physiological* life;" and too surely you will find, that the truths of the latter will mislead you, when in the presence of disease. You may however think you will be able to understand the nature of the affection when apprised of the cause which has produced it; or deem it sufficient to essay your therapeutic agents, and observe the effects produced by treatment. You will find that the most

dissimilar diseases often emanate from the same causes, and you will find too, that there has always been not only discrepancy of opinion in regard to the causes of disease, but that their agency is frequently involved in the most perplexing obscurity. Etiology, or the history of causes, may often provide for you "prophylactic indications," but it will as often mislead you, if it is your only method of ascertaining the nature of disease. And if you rely upon the other means that I have mentioned, the therapeutic indications, or the effects of treatment, I have only to say that you descend at once to the level of the miserable empiric, who at hazard administers his nostrums, and blindly relies upon chance. Thus descriptive anatomy, physiology, etiology, therapeutics, and the history of symptoms will fail in a great majority of cases to inform you of the seat of disease, or the kind of lesion which has produced it. It remains for Pathological Anatomy, aided by clinical observation, to enlighten you; and let him who would doubt in the practice of medicine its indispensable necessity, its superiority over every other means of exploration, compare the mere theorist—the reasoner about morbid excitement, with the pathologist of the present day. The former creates explanations in his own mind, or from scholastic and exploded dogmas forms them. The latter, with his scalpel, goes directly to the organ or viscus that is diseased, and it is only after he has ascertained the actual seat of lesion, that he feels authorized to draw his inductions, or to form his hypothesis. The one raises a structure, whose parts may excite our admiration from the ingenuity with which they are combined, or captivate the fancy by their finished and elegant proportions; but its foundation is upon the sand, and it crum-

bles before the breath of inquiry : the billow of one age passes on, sweeping it forever from recollection, like "the baseless fabric of a vision." The other builds upon the adamant rock of *nature's* eternal laws ; his edifice may be less striking in its appearance, its form may be heavy and its architecture severe, but the changing blasts of hypothesis may roar around it, and the ever rising storm of theory may be poured upon it ; yet as the beacon light to the mariner, it will stand unmoved amid the war of such elements, defying in its strength the devastating surge of time !

If a knowledge of Pathological Anatomy is so important to the physician, it is not less indispensable to the surgeon, whose object is the study and treatment of mechanical injuries, or those of an organic nature, requiring operations. Although a familiarity merely with normal descriptive anatomy, might be sufficient to enable him to perform operations on healthy parts of the body, it would in many cases be but a fallacious guide to his knife when the arrangements of nature, by the action of disease, have been changed. How would he dare to undertake a difficult operation, if ignorant of the extent of the affection, its character, its connexion, as it might be, with another complaint, or the change of position of texture or of form which may have been caused by disease ? Refer to your books and see who have been the individuals that have thrown most light upon the intricacy of any surgical point, and you will find that they are those who have most thoroughly investigated its pathological conditions. Who, when the admirable and precious mechanism of the organ of vision has been impaired, and the light of Heaven, and the beauties of nature, have ceased to leave their impress



on its walls, have recalled its influence, and thus demonstrated the beautiful, I might almost say divine triumphs of science over disease? Is it not the Scarpas, and the Beers, and the Wenzels, and the Wares? or, in other words, those surgeons who have been most zealous in examining its pathological states? What has inspired modern surgeons with that happy boldness, which has induced them to carry the hand through parts where lesion would be fatal, even into the splanchnic cavities, and there arrest the inevitable mandate of death, by preventing the aneurismal flood? Is it not pathological knowledge, founded on anastomosis, and the dilatation of collateral branches? What has explained to us the wonderful restorative powers of nature in the reproduction of bone and the formation of callus, and thus thrown light over the immensely extended and important field of fractures? It is still Pathological Anatomy. And you may thus, gentlemen, pass over the entire range of surgical science, and at every step you will find that this great light has ever been the constant pioneer to the development of correct principles and successful practice. In studying surgical anatomy itself, we have in fact nothing more in view than its application to pathology and surgical therapeutics. If such was not the case, what interest would such points as the crural arch and the abdominal rings present to us? Why study so minutely the disposition of the *fascia lata*, or trace so closely the meanderings of the epigastric artery, if from this study we did not draw practical results of the greatest importance in diagnosing and operating for hernia? Points apparently the most trivial become the most attractive, and are the most profoundly and carefully treasured, whenever they are connected with pathological considerations.

Legal medicine, or medical jurisprudence, must necessarily be cultivated by every conscientious and well educated physician, for on his word may hang the happiness of families, the peace of domestic life. Life and death may turn upon it, in the acquittal of innocence or the conviction of guilt. Daily is he called on to say, whether lesions which have been discovered after death, have been the result of disease, or have been caused by poison, or other external agents capable of destroying life; and unless he is versed in Pathological Anatomy, his testimony may be the means of condemning to an ignominious death an innocent and valuable member of society, or of casting loose the shackles of the law from the crimson hand of the assassin. The innocent mother, arraigned on accusation of having riven nature's holiest and strongest ties, of depriving helpless infancy of the breath which she had cherished and brought into being, may by his evidence be transformed into the most hideous and unnatural monster of crime. Character, reputation, as pure as the breath of morning, and as unsullied as its limpid dew, may be rendered as foul as the blackest infamy can make it: "a fixed figure for the hand of scorn to point his slow unmoving finger at." Who that is familiar with the annals of medical jurisprudence can recall, without a shudder of horror, the recollection of the trial in which medical ignorance had consigned to the scaffold an innocent individual on a charge of poisoning, and who was actually snatched from beneath the flashing stroke of the guillotine by pathological information, communicated by Chaussier? And those who *are* conversant with these annals, will find that too often the courts of law have been disgraced by the presuming ignorance of medi-

cal testimony, and that too often by its worthless weight the scales of justice have "kicked the beam," and guiltless blood been shed.

Chemistry, by deriving from Pathological Anatomy the solids and fluids of the body, changed in their properties by disease, may extend its already diversified and beautiful domain, and at the same time throw light upon some of the most intricate points of medical science. Already have the powers of chemical analysis been applied, in order to discover the alteration of the blood in icterus and diabetes, the coloring matter found in melanosis, to test the presence of albumen in tuberculous matter and pus, to ascertain the ingredients entering into cancerous and other formations. And when animal chemistry shall have attained the same degree of perfection as mineral chemistry, we may look forward to facts, to be drawn from its application to morbid alterations, still more satisfactory and still more certain in their result.

Thus, gentlemen, would time allow it, I might go on, extending the application of this important study to almost every ramification of medical science, but I forbear. I cannot doubt that you are fully convinced of its paramount utility, and that, by your assiduous cultivation of it, you will prove it. Our profession has felt too long, and too deeply, the retarding influence of "false facts," based upon theoretical delusion; and even at the present day it numbers many minds who are never at ease unless they are in the world of abstractions: who are inspired with the pen, but lost when in the presence of disease—generalizers, who are unable, or unwilling, to endure the slow and patient march of observation, finding it easier to *invent* for nature, rather than to *learn* from her teachings.

For them an idea *a priori* is a point of departure, "and one induction, a principle demonstrated." They are in truth the *poets* of our science, and though their theories may dazzle by their brilliancy, or excite the admiration from their ingenuity, their *practical* influence in our profession is as evanescent as it is visionary. Like the phosphorescent spangles that are turned up by ocean's wave, they glitter in the track of the noble bark as it courses on, but emit no ray to warn her of the sunken rock—no light to guide her onward to the destined haven of her voyage! Let me caution you against following in the footsteps of such spirits, or of being captivated by their doctrines. Let me tell you that such are the minds who have ever been the great clogs to the advancement of our science, the *incubi* who have ever weighed it down. What lessons may the student of medicine read in the volumes of theory and error, which in former ages have successively risen and fallen under this wild spirit of speculation; teaching the principles of our science at one time by the absurd dogmas of the various schools, and at another by the physical doctrines of mechanics, or the visionary labors of the alchemists; giving rise alternately to the absurdities of humoralism, solidism, and vitalism; or, aided by superstition, seeking explanations in the wilder regions of theosophy, magic, or astrology!

Chaos of Ruins! who shall trace the void,

O'er the dim fragments cast a lunar light,

And say, "there was or is," where all is doubly night?

Though thanks to the influence of Pathological Anatomy, and the inductive character of the age, this speculative tendency is fast wearing away, its spirit is not yet crushed, and perhaps never will be in our profession. It is indeed too often manifest

in the thoughts and works of those who stand forth as the teachers and expounders of its principles; and the student too often through mere reverence for *great names* is accustomed to bow blindly, like the followers of the veiled prophet of Khorassan, and receive alike the good and the evil, the truth and the error, which is placed before him. For authority, gentlemen, when emanating from the experience of those whose labors and researches have thrown light and truth in the path which you are journeying to the attainment of your profession, you cannot feel too much gratitude, you cannot cultivate too much respect; but at the same time never *worship* authority, to the exclusion of *your own reason*, for mere *authority's sake*. Recollect that the language of nature only is oracular in medicine; and whatever principles you may see in books, whatever theories you may hear in lectures, whatever precepts you shall find advanced here in this school, test them by reflection, by experiment, by the light of your own reason; and if you cannot comprehend them, do not receive, but reserve them for closer inquiry, and for future investigation.

The advancement which is continually going on in medicine, and the reform which is taking place, will demand of you active exertions to keep pace with these improvements. From the slight requisitions which are necessary in our country for obtaining a medical degree, it is but too plain that public confidence has been shaken in regard to the education of physicians. The spirit of empiricism walks openly abroad throughout our land, scattering her delusive seeds, not only among the ignorant, but among the intelligent and educated of the community. Doctrines as absurd and wild as ever were promulgated in the darker ages, when astrology and

magic held their sway, are openly advanced and boldly maintained among us. By means of the magnetic fluid it is pretended that our bodies may be rendered diaphanous, and vision made perfect without the aid of eyes. Diseases are combated by the same causes that engender them, and death flies before the atomic infinitesimal charm of the homœopathy of Hahneman.

“Dark tangled doctrines, dark as fraud can weave,  
Which simple votaries on trust receive ;  
While craftier feign belief, till they believe.”

Our profession must be rescued from the degrading rivalry of such a spirit, and there is but one way of effecting it. In the language of a celebrated lecturer, “Physicians must cease to make *merchandise* of physic ; medicine must be taught and studied, as an *inductive science*, rather than as a mysterious medley of antiquated jargon, and disease must be studied and treated more in the spirit of enlightened philanthropy, than with the mercenary views of a hireling.” It is for the devoted and ardent lover of truth to effect this change. It should be a part of the duty of every member of our profession, to see that it comes not in contact with this degraded spirit of charlatanism, but that its standard is borne aloft above the influence of its empirical atmosphere, unblemished by its miserable pretensions, and untarnished by its dangerous effrontery.

Gentlemen, you are, some of you, now about commencing the study of one of the most important, and at the same time, when properly estimated, one of the most difficult of the practical sciences. Your aspirations are directed towards a high, a most gifted position ; for you seek to become disciples at the altar of medical science ; whose duty it is to exa-

mine, and comprehend, and regulate the delicate and intricate machinery of life. Need I tell you the responsibilities you will incur in assuming this trust are of a deep, aye, of a fearful character; for they emanate from the best interests of society, and from its tenderest relations. They spring from the hopes of friendship, from the love of parents, and from the holiest and purest affections of the domestic circle. They may be seen through the gloom of the sick room, and through the shades with which disease and suffering are encompassed. They may be heard in the awful throes of expiring life, and witnessed in the still cold features of death!

Enter then not lightly, I entreat you, upon the preparatory labors of this school, which are to qualify you for the faithful and honorable discharge of this high trust; but come fully impressed with the magnitude of the contract which will be created by it between yourselves and society, and with the determination to lay *now*, well and deeply, the basis of those studies which may enable you to meet these responsibilities calmly and conscientiously. Come with a deep sense of the high and noble nature of the profession you have chosen, and with an ardent thirst for its truths, and by patient investigation and zealous research you will obtain them: and come too in the spirit of humility, ever mindful of the immensity of Nature's works, and Man's feeble powers to comprehend them; for it was this spirit that tempered the vast and philosophic mind of even the great Newton, and taught him to say at the end of a life of toil after knowledge, that he felt like a child wandering along the shore of the mighty ocean of Truth, picking up the shells and pebbles that lay scattered at his feet.

Guided by such principles you will uphold the honor of your profession, and be rendered worthy of entering its temple: principles which glowed in the mind of the eloquent Roman when he uttered that beautiful, yet just sentence, "*Homines ad Deos nulla re proprius accedunt, quam salutem hominibus dando.*" Let your aspirations be elevated like the sentiment contained in it, and your reward will be commensurate.