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HUTCHINSON (J. C.)

*John  
Hutchinson*

AN ADDRESS

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE LATE

CHARLES EDWARD ISAACS, M.D.,

DELIVERED TO THE

Graduates of Long Island College Hospital,

BROOKLYN, N. Y.,

AT THE

ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT, JULY 14th, 1862,

By JOSEPH C. HUTCHISON, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF OPERATIVE SURGERY AND SURGICAL ANATOMY.

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Reprinted from the AMERICAN MEDICAL MONTHLY, August, 1862.

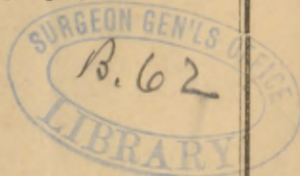
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NEW YORK :

HALL, CLAYTON & MEDOLE, PRINTERS,

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ADDRESS ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF

IT is usual on occasions like the present to employ the term "address" in a loose and indefinite way, but I shall be particular in the medical profession. I trust I shall be pardoned for drawing from this line of thought, for it has been generally observed that the medical profession is a noble one, and that the true character of the profession is the true character of the man who follows it. I trust to another year you will be able to see the true character of the man who follows it. I trust to another year you will be able to see the true character of the man who follows it.

**A N A D D R E S S**

ON THE

**LIFE AND CHARACTER**

OF THE LATE

**CHARLES EDWARD ISAACS, M.D.,**

DELIVERED TO THE

**Graduates of Long Island College Hospital.**

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GRADUATES OF THE LONG ISLAND COLLEGE HOSPITAL:

According to an agreeable custom, I welcome you into the ranks of the medical profession—a profession which, by Christian and Painim, has been esteemed one of the most Godlike of human avocations. Our relation of preceptor and pupil has terminated. Henceforth we are equals—members of the same great fraternity. You go forth honorably enrolled among the graduates of the Long Island College Hospital, carrying with you its broad seal, which, whether at home or abroad, will secure for you all the rights and privileges that attach to any similar institution in the land. Your acquirements have been tested by what may have seemed to you a rigorous and painful ordeal. But it can be scarcely less painful to you than the responsibility which the Council and Faculty feel in declaring to their fellow-citizens your fitness for the duties incident to the profession of your choice. Do not disappoint them.

It is usual, on occasions like the present, to occupy the hour with words of counsel and advice, or in indicating what are the "requisites for success" in the medical profession. I trust I shall be pardoned for digressing from this time-honored custom; for it has been generally observed that few things are so liberally bestowed, or uttered with so little effect, as good advice. I take it for granted, gentlemen, that you are aware of the true character of the profession you have selected as your occupation for life—that you have estimated its responsibilities, and the nature of its duties. I turn to another more agreeable, and I trust more profitable, theme. It was the maxim of Alphonsus of Arragon, that dead counselors are safest; and who does not know that the characters of the wise and good among the departed exert a more potent influence than the most salutary precepts or the most pathetic persuasions of the living, because free from vanity, arrogance, or superciliousness? I propose, therefore, to counsel you through the life and character of one who, by his industry, professional integrity and scientific attainments, had risen to an eminent position in our profession, and yet of whom it may be said, he left not a single enemy. I refer to CHARLES EDWARD ISAACS, M.D., who died in this city on the 16th of June, 1860.

This remarkable man was born at Bedford, Westchester County, N. Y., on the 24th of June, 1811. He was the son of William and Mary Isaacs. His father was a merchant and farmer; Charles was the youngest of the family, which consisted of three sons and one daughter. Almost from infancy he manifested an unusual fondness for books, especially the Bible, from which he frequently quoted passages and parts of chapters, and often discussed the controverted points of faith with his mother. He attended the parish school kept by Mr. Samuel Holmes, where he studied the classics; and at the age of eleven or twelve he could read the Greek Testament with facility. We are told that "he early evinced marked preferences for the natural sciences. The anatomy of insects and the lower animals was carefully studied in a practical way, and he exhibited a peculiar fondness for Botany and Geology. Even at a very early age he was accustomed to saunter in the fields and woods, gathering specimens of all sorts from the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. This striking peculiarity early indicated his choice of a profession, and his mother wisely allowed him to follow his own inclinations, his father having died when he was but seven years of age."—(*Amer. Med. Times, June, 1860.*) He commenced the study of medicine with the late Dr. Belcher, of New York, who was a relative of the family, and

attended his first course of lectures in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York. He subsequently entered the office of Dr. Graves, of New York, who afterwards removed to Baltimore, and was accompanied by his pupil. "He graduated in medicine at the University of Maryland, in 1832; after remaining in Baltimore for a short time, he went to North Carolina. During President Jackson's administration, he received the appointment of surgeon to accompany the Cherokee Indians in their removal beyond the Mississippi. He traveled extensively among the Indian tribes and through the Southern States; he entered the army in 1841; and of fifty candidates who were examined by the Army Board of Surgeons, only six passed, of whom Dr. Isaacs stood *first*. He was first sent to Governor's Island, and from thence, after a few months, was ordered to repair to Fort Kent, on the eastern boundary of Maine. There he remained about two years; and was then ordered to Copper Harbor, Lake Superior, at the time of the excitement relative to the discovery of copper mines in that region."

Dr. Isaacs left this station in June, 1845, and from thence went to Fort Niagara, Youngstown, New York. The following November, being in bad health, he obtained a furlough, and came to the City of New York for professional advice. Before the expiration of his leave of absence he resigned his office, and in connection with Dr. W. H. Van Buren established a private school for medical students in Greene Street. In September, 1847, he returned to Youngstown, and entered into private practice with his friend, Dr. T. G. Catlin. At the end of six months he left to accept the position of Deputy Health Officer on Staten Island; after being there a month he resigned, and returned to Niagara County to resume his practice with Dr. Catlin. In September, 1848, he received the appointment of Demonstrator of Anatomy in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which he reluctantly accepted at the urgent solicitation of his friends. His unwillingness to accept the position arose from his humble estimate of his ability to discharge the duties which it involved, and for which I may add his friends considered him peculiarly fitted. He retained this place for several years, and afterwards officiated as Demonstrator and Adjunct Professor of Anatomy in the University Medical College. During the intervals of the lecture term he was occasionally employed as surgeon on the European steamers. He was thus enabled to avail himself of the advantages offered by the medical institutions of the Old World, and at the same time to reinvigorate himself for the labors of the winter in his favorite department of anatomy.

During his residence in the City of New York, Dr. Isaacs was not actively engaged in practice. His time was occupied in studying the book of nature, in making investigations into the intricacies of science, and in instructing students, who eagerly sought the varied stores of knowledge which his gifted intellect was ever ready to dispense.

At the urgent solicitation of a few friends, who were actuated by a desire to promote his worldly comforts, Dr. Isaacs took up his residence in Brooklyn, in the spring of 1857. His personal acquaintance with the members of the profession here did not perhaps exceed half a dozen, and the number of his non-professional acquaintances was still more limited. He came reluctantly. He had hitherto failed to succeed in private practice, and he feared that he should have to undergo a prolonged probation before he could secure a competency. His success exceeded the most sanguine anticipations of his friends, and he at once entered upon a large and lucrative practice. You, gentlemen, who are about entering upon the active duties of your profession, perhaps among strangers, will naturally feel an interest in knowing how Dr. Isaacs' pecuniary success was so rapidly accomplished here, after years of stern conflict with opposing and discouraging fate. His personal appearance was by no means attractive or commanding. There was nothing pretentious or adventitious in his character—no pliant, time-serving falseness—nothing that savored in the most distant degree of empiricism. He would have scorned to indulge in the vulgar tricks of the trade, as they are called. Like our Rush, Physic, Nath. Chapman, Bard, Post, Hosack, Francis, and all those whose names are revered in our profession, he said in every action,

“Or grant an honest fame, or grant me none.”

Those who were instrumental in bringing him here, knew that notwithstanding his high reputation, his success in private practice within a *short* time must be through his professional brethren. The question arose, how he could be introduced personally to the physicians of the city at once and in a proper manner? The happy thought occurred to a friend whose name I would not dare mention, to invite him to deliver some lectures on Surgical Anatomy at the Brooklyn City Hospita immediately after he came here. The members of the profession attended in large numbers, for medical lectures were at that time a novelty in Brooklyn, and Dr. Isaacs at once became personally known to them. They took him warmly by the hand, received him into their hearts, and, I say it to their honor, that through their in-



strumentality he was soon inducted into a large practice. Among the many noble deeds of the medical men of Brooklyn, this one will ever stand prominent. Self-interest, envy, jealousy, and all uncharitableness were forgotten, and each seemed to emulate the other in the desire to promote the material interest of one whose exertions had been fettered and clogged by poverty and ill health; whose life had been a constant struggle with adversity.

As an Anatomist, Dr. Isaacs was not excelled in this country. Indeed, I was informed by one of his most intimate and devoted friends, himself a distinguished professor of anatomy, that in this fundamental department of medicine he had no equal in the land. He was not only thoroughly versed in all that relates to special and surgical anatomy, but in the departments of microscopic, pathological, and comparative anatomy, he was an authority. He availed himself of the ample facilities which his position as Demonstrator of Anatomy in the College of Physicians and Surgeons and in the University Medical College afforded, and the opportunities which his medical friends were but too ready to offer, to engage in the most abstruse and original investigations in anatomy, histology, and pathology; and so great was the respect for his opinion upon questions relating to these subjects, that when expressed it was considered conclusive. Dr. Isaacs' monograph on the structure and functions of the kidney, published in the Transactions of the New York Academy of Medicine, Vol. I., Part 9, is a monument of patient industry and scientific zeal worthy of imitation. "Entering upon the investigation of this subject," he says, "without any preconceived theory, it has occupied much of my attention for some years past, and for the last twelve months I have labored upon the subject almost daily, sparing neither time, trouble, nor expense, and carefully guarding against arriving at any conclusion until after long-continued and repeated examinations. The facts from which deductions have been drawn have all been obtained by the careful examination of the kidney in many animals, and especially in the frog, turtle, snake, alligator, fish, bird, mouse, rat, squirrel, cat, dog, raccoon, rabbit, hog, sheep, deer, elk, moose, ox, horse, black bear, rhinoceros, monkey, and in man." This paper attracted considerable attention in this country and abroad. It was translated and republished in the medical journals of France and Germany, and was pronounced by the ablest living microscopical anatomist, Ch. Robin, of Paris, "the most valuable contribution to structural anatomy that has been made for many years." It would be inappropriate on this occasion to refer to the original facts presented in this celebrated pa-

per. They have already been incorporated into some of your textbooks, and have become the common property of the profession.

His paper "On the Extent of the Pleura above the Clavicle," read before the New York Academy of Medicine, April, 1857, contains the result of a series of carefully conducted and laborious researches into the relative position of the pleura to the clavicle. By these investigations he settled an important anatomical fact: that the pleura extends above the clavicle to a much greater height than had been previously supposed by the best anatomical authorities. This paper is one of great importance to the physician, the surgeon, and the medical jurist, and adds new lustre to the name of Isaacs as a contributor to the advancement of his profession, and as a benefactor to his race. Another anatomical fact to which he first directed attention was, that the recto-vesical *cul-de-sac* extends downwards much nearer to the base of the prostate gland in the negro than in the white subject, and that it receded from the prostate in a regular ratio as the admixture of white blood with the negro increased. The value of this observation will be appreciated by *you*, gentlemen, and its important practical bearings duly estimated by those of you especially who come from the South.

It were not surprising that Isaacs, like Morgagni, Vesalius, Hunter, Godman, Physic, and Horner, should have been an enthusiast in that department of our profession in which he was consummately skilled, the structure of the human body; nor that he should have constantly urged upon the attention of his pupils the importance of a knowledge of anatomy; not the names, or general forms, but the intimate structure, the connections and sympathies in the normal forms and functions, and the more frequent diseased conditions of the various organs and tissues of the body. The men whose names have survived, or are likely to survive, their natural lives, have been true to their professional studies, and enthusiasts in their art.

As a Surgeon, Dr. Isaacs occupied a prominent position, and his reputation was rapidly increasing. His profound knowledge of anatomy and surgical pathology, his skill in diagnosis, his clear and comprehensive judgment, and his undaunted moral courage, all combined to fit him for the responsible duties of a surgeon. He possessed a thoughtful, contemplative and conservative cast of mind, which induced him to deliberate carefully upon all the circumstances of his cases; and having satisfied himself what course was best for his patient, he honestly and fearlessly pursued it, never shrinking from the performance of the most hazardous operation when the welfare of his

patient demanded it; nor yet was he tempted by the vain and dangerous passion for applause, the ephemeral *édlat* which a formidable operation sometimes brings, to waver between duty and expediency. He was not what is sometimes called a brilliant operator. Calm, collected, and cautious, his incisions were made with accuracy and deliberation, with no desire to excite the plaudits of his spectators, or to charm them into an opinion of his superior skill by dangerous and rapid manipulations. John Bell has well remarked: "This passion for applause, so natural to us, so subservient to our interests, so flattering to our self-love, so apt to be excited by the presence of strangers who are never to see us again, and are to judge of us by one single act of skill and courage—this selfish and dangerous passion, which every ingenuous man must confess he feels lurking within his own breast, cannot be guarded against too much! If it is ever to be extinguished, it must be by a thorough study of the principles of the science, for a perfect education will carry a man's thoughts beyond this poor ambition. A man perfectly educated, who is accustomed with dissection, and has fairly cultivated his natural powers, is occupied with higher thoughts. He looks inward for approbation, and cares not for the ignorant applause of those who estimate his talents by the rapidity of his strokes—by the movements of a stop-watch. \* \* \* He affects no masterly turns of his knife or hand, no rapidity of execution, no airs of self-approbation to extort applause; but performs his operation in that calm, solemn and impressive manner, which persuades his patient most eloquently of his deep regard. \* \* \* If he operates with confidence, it is not of that rash and headlong nature which arises from a vain assumption of natural abilities, of native courage, of address and dexterity inherited from his birth, but such as proceeds from a rational and modest study of that knowledge which is essential to success."

As a Medical Practitioner, he was remarkable for his judgment in the selection and application of remedial agents, and for boldness and decision when circumstances demanded it. He possessed a memory remarkably retentive of facts which he had observed or learned from others, and had thus acquired a fertility of expedients such as I have rarely known in any one. With a due regard for the *vis medicatrix nature*, his therapeutic resources sometimes seemed almost illimitable; and those of us who were accustomed to hear him detail his cases, were often amused as well as instructed by his enumeration of the variety of remedial agents he successively resorted to in treating his obstinate chronic cases. In such cases especially his perseverance

when others would have been discouraged, and his fertility in applying remedies, sometimes bold and often novel and striking, were conspicuously shown. Without being captivated by visionary theories, or heedlessly adopting new modes of practice of questionable utility, he was always among the first to make himself practically acquainted by cautious experiments with the reputed powers of such new articles of the materia medica and novel therapeutic suggestions as were recommended by reliable authorities. In all the departments of medicine, the elementary as well as the practical, he was remarkably well informed. In the discussions in our medical associations he was made almost the final umpire, whenever questions involving recondite and abstruse investigations were considered. He expressed his opinions with modesty and a degree of diffidence almost amounting to reluctance, even upon subjects on which he was universally regarded as an authority.

The estimate in which he was held as a practitioner of medicine and surgery was exhibited by the extent to which his medical brethren availed themselves of his services as a medical counselor. No one among us was called so frequently as a consulting physician, not by the tyro alone, but also by those of mature years, ripe experience, and rare professional skill. He was scrupulously correct in all that related to the ethics of the profession, and his intercourse with his professional brethren was marked by great suavity of manner. When called to consult with other practitioners, however humble or exalted their positions, his conduct was such as to secure their confidence and affection. There was no assumption of superiority, no attempt at dictation, nothing in his manner that could excite jealousy; but on the contrary, he manifested the most delicate regard for their opinions and professional rights, and was careful to avoid doing anything that would prejudice them in the estimation of their patients. He was ever ready to assist his fellow-practitioners by his advice and experience, whether the information desired had special relation to themselves or those under their charge; and whenever he had it in his power to render a service to a member of the profession by a word of commendation, it was cheerfully bestowed.

As a Lecturer, Dr. Isaacs was simple, natural, and unaffected; his delivery was not impassioned; he wanted more energy and vigor in his voice and composition; he aimed not at the graces and elegancies of diction, or soared into the regions of theory or fancy, yet his lectures were always interesting, abounding in stores of facts and cases, and enriched by illustrations drawn from his own experience and ob-

ervation. He possessed the happy faculty of enlivening the tedium of dry matter by some stroke of wit, a happy pun, an anecdote or quotation. His lectures upon anatomy were remarkably perspicuous and accurate; indeed, we have never listened to any teacher of anatomy whose demonstrations were so clear and impressive. So skillful and dextrous was he in performing dissections, that he often made them in the presence of his class, demonstrating, while lecturing, the different structures in succession as they were unfolded by the knife.

Dr. Isaacs fully appreciated the benefits and importance of Medical Societies, and participated largely in their proceedings. He was an active member of the Medical Society of this County, whose records abound in the results of his experience, and at the time of his death was one of its Censors. He was one of the founders of the New York Pathological Society, and contributed largely to elevate it to its present high position. In this Society he held successively the offices of President and Vice-President. Of the New York Academy of Medicine he was a zealous member; was at one time one of its Vice-Presidents, and no papers that have ever emanated from that learned body have contributed more to give it its wide-spread scientific reputation than those which he presented. He felt a deep interest in the elevation of the profession. To this end, he strongly urged the importance of elevating the standard, both of preliminary education and of the professional attainments required of candidates for graduation.

Thus far I have considered the character of Dr. Isaacs in its professional aspect; but I should do injustice to his memory did I not refer to the brilliant qualities of his heart, which so endeared him to all who were admitted into the favored precincts of his private friendship. He was my friend; but I utter not the language of friendship when I speak his praise. It is difficult to particularize excellencies in a life and character so rich in all that was noble and beautiful in human nature. He was a man without guile, affable and accessible to all; the native simplicity of his manners and his gentle feelings excited profound respect and conciliated universal esteem. He was never provoked to use a harsh expression under the most trying circumstances. He had it not in his heart to do so. An annoying circumstance which would cause others to manifest undue excitement, would call forth from him a playful, ironical remark, and then be dismissed from his thoughts. And yet his soft and gentle nature never subjected him to the imputation of weakness; in mind and eye he was every inch a man. "Experience demonstrates," says Dr. Gregory, "that a gentle and humane temper, far from being inconsistent with

vigor of mind, is its usual attendant; and that rough and blustering manners generally accompany a weak understanding and mean soul; and are indeed frequently affected by men void of magnanimity and personal courage, in order to conceal their natural defects."

He was in a striking degree unpretending and modest. These characteristics gave him a great repugnance to being brought before the non-professional public under any circumstances. When urged to make the microscopic examinations in the celebrated Burdell murder case, the darkest crime that has marred the calendar of the criminal courts of this country, he unhesitatingly declined, notwithstanding the prospect of a large fee, because, as he subsequently stated to a friend, he did not want his name paraded in the newspapers or bandied in the courts of justice. His modesty made him reluctant to promulgate his opinions, or to insist upon their correctness or importance when they conflicted with the opinions of others. And yet to those who enjoyed his friendship, the correctness of his sentiments and internal convictions, and his discriminating knowledge of men and things, were too conspicuous not to be appreciated. Selfishness and personal ambition was not a part of his nature. This was evinced by the moderate competence with which he always contented himself. His utter disregard of his pecuniary interests is not to be commended; for it often deprived him of the comforts, and even the necessaries, of life. While acting as Demonstrator of Anatomy in New York, he often had chronic cases requiring careful investigation placed under his charge by his professional brethren, which he frequently turned over to others whom he considered more competent to treat them, than himself, often against the protestations of the patient. This was at a time when his annual income was less than a thousand dollars. He had not time to make money. He was at this time wholly occupied in making investigations into the most interesting and secret departments of our science, and he pursued them with a steadfastness of purpose and industry rarely equaled.

He was eminently benevolent in his feelings, and exhibited a warm and generous sympathy for the afflicted and suffering, which at once engaged their affections and confidence. This is, in many cases, of the utmost consequence to the recovery of the patient. He had a rare fund of humor and ready wit, which, with anecdote, happily told, was judiciously used in the sick-room. His patients loved him as a personal friend. I have been surprised since his death to discover the sincere affection which was entertained for him by *all*—the poor and humble as well as the rich and influential, who enjoyed the benefits

of his professional skill. Few persons possessed in so large a degree what Shakspeare so emphatically calls "the milk of human kindness." When he had a suspicion that his patients were poor, he would, by the most delicate means in his power, and in a manner least offensive to their feelings, endeavor to avoid receiving compensation for his services, without leaving behind a sense of obligation. As an illustration of this noble trait of his character, I trust I shall be pardoned for introducing here, even at the expense of brevity, a copy of a letter which has fallen into my hands since his death.

BROOKLYN, *March 12th*, 1860.

*Dear Miss H.*—I have just read your letter containing a draft for \$100, for which please accept my thanks. You remember some months ago I told you that I would never render you a bill for medical attendance on your father; on the contrary, that you were a thousand times welcome to anything which I had done for him, and that I only regretted that it had not been in my power to have done more. I have now hesitated whether I should accept your kind present, but as you state you can send it without the slightest inconvenience, I have concluded to do so, more especially as otherwise you might perhaps (although wrongly) feel under too much of an obligation. I shall, however, devote at least the greater portion of this sum to the relief of those whom we so often meet with, who are oppressed both by poverty and disease. I beg leave, in conclusion, not only to return my sincere thanks for your very excellent present, but also for the kind expression of feeling which my poor services have elicited. I hope you will always remember that I feel a deep interest in your welfare, and that, with the highest regard and esteem, I remain most truly your sincere friend,

C. E. ISAACS.

May I not ask, in the language of Voltaire, "Is there anything in the world more estimable than a physician, who, having in his youth studied nature, and known the springs of the human body, the ills which torment it, the remedies which may relieve them, modestly practices his art; takes equal care of rich and poor; receives his fees reluctantly, and employs them in succoring the indigent?" Do not infer, gentlemen, that I have alluded to the benevolent principles of Dr. Isaacs because they are rarely met with in our profession. No, no; the exercise of the healing art by a man of noble mind makes "man approach nearer to the gods," for "of the Most High cometh healing." "I believe," says Dr. Johnson, "every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effu-

sion of beneficence, and willingness to exert a lucrative art when there is no hope of lucre." And who that is familiar with the biographies of physicians, from Hippocrates to those of our own time, cannot attest the justness of the compliment enunciated by the great moralist?

While he fully accepted the maxim of the great Boerhaave, that "the poor are the best customers, because God will be the paymaster," with those who were able to pay a pecuniary compensation for his services he deemed it a point of honor to adhere to the rules adopted by the Medical Society of the County of Kings relative to pecuniary acknowledgments, with as much uniformity as varying circumstances would admit. It was not the love of money, but "a strict sense of justice and honor towards each fellow-member of the profession, which prevented him from undervaluing his services by charging beneath the customary rate, with a view to draw patronage by exciting comparisons." He acted on the principle that "a practitioner may settle his demands with his patrons on whatever terms he pleases, but he has no right to make the law, or change any established usage to the prejudice of his brethren. The reputation of a *cheap doctor*, after all, is neither dignified nor enviable."

Dr. Isaacs was eminently social in his feelings. There was a peculiar charm about his character, which drew around him admiring and steadfast friends, and made him the delight of the social circle. With a genial nature he united wit; a jocose disposition, "for many a joke had he," and a rich and varied fund of anecdote, which made him a most agreeable companion. But never did he permit the society of his friends or the festive board to detain him from the couch of sickness, when he should be there. The faithful discharge of the duties of his profession was a part of his religion, and paramount to all other considerations.

His literary acquirements were of a high order. He possessed a knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, which unlocked to him the rich stores of information contained in the classical writings of the Grecian and Roman fathers, and he read them in the languages in which they were originally conveyed. He read and spoke the German and French languages fluently, was familiar with most of the standard works in history, romance, and poetry, and sometimes wrote verses of no mean pretensions. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Shakespeare, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and the Bible were favorite books, and he knew them almost by heart. This taste for literature served to keep his mental faculties in wholesome exercise, by re-



lieving him from the tedium of professional studies, and in enabling him

“To respite his day-labor with repast.”

Well has it been said, “that literature and science, far from injuring society, are the great instruments of ultimate refinement and exaltation, and should be universally cultivated. They lift the mind above ordinary life, give it respite from depressing cares, and awaken the consciousness of its efficacy with what is pure and noble. In their legitimate and highest efforts, they have the same tendency and aim with Christianity—that is, to *spiritualize* our nature. They carry the mind above and beyond the beaten, dusty, weary walks of ordinary life; they lift it into a purer element, and breathe into it a more profound and generous emotion. They reveal to us the loveliness of Nature, bring back the freshness of early feelings, revive the relish of simple pleasures, keep unquenched the enthusiasm which warmed the spring-time of our being, refine youthful love, strengthen our interest in human nature, expand our sympathies over all classes of society, knit us by new ties with universal being, and, through the brightness of their prophetic visions, help faith to lay hold on the future life.”

Dr. Isaacs never made a public profession of religion. But if Christianity consists in a just conformity of our actions to the relations in which we stand to the Supreme Being and to our fellow-creatures, few persons were, or endeavored to be more diligent in the discharge of its essential duties. In his latter days, he expressed a cheerful confidence in the providence, grace, and promises of God; and when the love of life ceased to be an active principle, he rejoiced in a pious trust and humble hope of mercy at the Throne of Grace. He remarked to a medical friend, “I am not anxious to live, but I would like to do some good to my fellow-men. God’s will be done! He is good, and more *wonderful* than all we have learned here!”

I have thus endeavored, gentlemen, in a plain, unvarnished, but imperfect manner, to present the lights and shades of the character of our departed friend; it needs no rhetorical embellishments. It is an observation of the younger Pliny, in his epistle to his friend Tacitus, that history ought never to magnify matters of fact, because worthy actions require nothing but the truth. This rule I promised myself to observe at the outset, that the hand of partiality might not color his excellencies with too much warmth. What failings he had may be forgiven for the sake of his virtues. “His defects were spots on the sun.” I present as an example worthy of your imitation his

love for the profession; his keen relish for its studies, and high estimate of its character; his habits of industry; his steadfastness of purpose; his kind affections, and the goodness of his heart. I know not that I could have placed before you a more encouraging example of what devotion to scientific pursuits, under the most adverse circumstances, is capable of accomplishing. Do you sit down in despair and tell me "that you are less gifted, and it is useless for you to exert yourselves in competition with such a man?" Had *John Hunter*, when a cabinet-maker; had *Charles Bell*, when a watchmaker; had *Dupuytren*, when an apothecary's assistant in the army; had *Velpeau*, when a working blacksmith; had our late lamented *Francis*, when a printer's boy, thus thought, think you they would have so distinguished themselves, not only in our own science, but in almost every department of literature and art? *Labor omnia vincit*. Science will claim from you more than a mere enjoyment of the treasures which belong to her temple; she will demand that you also shall bring gifts to her altars. Go forth, then, aiming at knowledge deep and varied; cherish sentiments of the largest and loftiest liberality, for the character of the age demands it. Take with you the blessings of those whose delightful duty it has been to instruct you. May your return to your homes—to those who are anxiously waiting to clasp you to their bosoms—be safe and joyous. May no domestic affliction intervene to mar the felicity of that reunion; and may your many privileges fill you with gratitude to your God, and stimulate your devotion to the thrice sacred cause of science.

FAREWELL!



