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AN
ORATION,
PRONOUNCED ON THE ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
K A SOCIETY OF HIPPOCRATES,
IN
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY.

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AN ORATION.

Gentlemen of the K Λ Society of Hippocrates,

The remark is as trite as it is melancholy and true, that there is no sublunary good, without the admixture of some alloy. An impartial survey of nature, throughout all her works, will convince us that such is the fact both in her moral and physical constitution. We are afforded a striking and impressive confirmation of this, when we contemplate the march of civilization and refinement from the dull vacuity and insipidity of barbarity and savagism.

In a state of nature man's sphere of intellectual operations is extremely limited; apathy usurps the place of the passions, and all the finer and more noble feelings of the soul, which brighten and render attractive the journey of life, have comparatively no existence. Association with his fellow man levels the rough protuberances of his nature, and eminently exalts him in the scale of intellectual and moral perfection; but this advancement, however desirable, tends powerfully to augment the number and malignity of human maladies.

All the causes of disease, whether predisposing or exciting, produce their deleterious effects primarily either on the body or mind. To say nothing of the destructive influence, the artificial habits of civic life exert on the former, the mind of civilized man is

the prolific source and inroad of innumerable affections to which the natural man is a stranger. In the words of the poet,

“Anxious study, discontent and care,
Love without hope, and hate without revenge,
And fear, and jealousy, fatigue the soul,
Engross the subtle ministers of life,
And spoil the lab’ring functions of their share.”

The sweets and advantages of civilization, then, are acquired by the sacrifice of health, one of the choicest and most invaluable of heaven’s gifts; so that it may well be questioned whether civilization has conduced more to the happiness or misery of mankind. Gentlemen, it is the province and glorious prerogative of medicine to dispel this doubt; and the humane and scientific physician, by watching, with a guardian eye, over the health and lives of the community, and attacking and successfully combating disease, will justly be ranked among the greatest worthies and benefactors of the world. This benevolent design has already enlisted under its banners the talents and the souls of an Hippocrates, a Sydenham, a Fothergill, a Cullen, a Mead, a Haller, a Boerhaave, a Tissot, a Howard, and a Rush.

If the station to which you aspire be thus exalted and responsible, if it has been occupied by the first men the world has ever produced, you cannot be indifferent to an institution, which has for its object the promotion of medicine, by concentrating the exertions of her worthy and respectable votaries.

To the successful cultivation of every science, but particularly that of medicine, societies or associations are highly tributary, if they are not essentially ne-

cessary. In our profession a single individual, however deserving, exemplary and intelligent, like the original or *primitive* particles of earth, is subject to the rude and capricious blast of every storm, which, together with the unjust aspersions and calumnies of of his interested competitors, puts to hazard his reputation, his fortune and even his bread.

The tender and delicate tendrils of the vine, as if sensible of their imbecility, cling with amorous fondness to the lordly oak, the giant of the forest—thunders, hurricanes and tempests now roll innocuous round its head. So with individuals, weak and impotent in themselves, by uniting by *elective attraction* with similar individuals a *crystallized* fabric is reared, so compact in its structure as to bid defiance to the united agency of malevolence, ignorance and superstition.

In order that the particles of any body may regularly arrange themselves, according to their affinities, the concurrence of several circumstances is requisite; one and not the least important of which is the pressure of the circumambient atmosphere. In like manner the pressure of *science, friendship, virtue* and *honour* is absolutely necessary to the sustentation of our Institution. As these are the pedestals on which our whole superstructure is erected, it may not be improper or irrelevant to submit a few remarks on each in the order in which they have been enumerated.

First of Science. Science is the deduction of principles from legitimate facts, accurate experiments and correct observation. Without some such process, in medicine, all would be anarchy and confu-

sion: facts the most important and interesting, when entrusted to the mind, without order or system, if they make any impression, it is so confused and indistinct, as to be better calculated to mislead than assist us in the discharge of the multifarious and distracting duties of our profession. But when science is introduced, illuminated by her torch, symmetry, beauty, order and harmony are established on the ruins of chaos and darkness. Science is equally opposed to empiricism and dogmatism; let us then take equal pleasure in the renunciation of false principles, as in the establishment of correct ones, ever remembering that we are "*Non doctior sed meliori imbutus doctrina.*"

Of Friendship. This sentiment of the soul exists in its greatest perfection only in minds of the most refined and noble texture, and can be reciprocal only between congenial natures. The cultivation of friendship and brotherly love between those embarked in the same great undertaking, is essentially necessary to the successful prosecution and happy termination of the enterprise. Next to christianity, friendship is the most effectual antidote to the turmoils and anxieties of human life. Who that has had his heart stung with anguish, pain and grief, has not felt its agitated pulsations subside into a pleasing calm, when soothed by the sweetly plaintive and symphathetic voice of Friendship. Let us not, then, persuade ourselves that

—— "Friendship is but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep,
A shade that follows wealth or fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep."

Of Virtue. This is a generic term, comprehending a great many qualities equally necessary to our present and future happiness. It is diametrically opposed to, and holds no communion with vice.

Although some have acquired an ephemeral consequence in medicine, who not only contemned virtue, but assiduously *studied* vice and profanity, yet the physician should know that this is one of his most essential qualifications, and the only passport to posthumous reputation. However safely he may wade through vice, falsehood and immorality, to temporary distinction, yet posterity will analyse his character impartially, and if these predominate, he will certainly be weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Lucrative considerations will have minor importance with the humane and virtuous physician.

The whole world, the noble and the ignoble, the rich and the poor, have equal claims on his kindness and attention. Virtue is an angel of such exquisite loveliness, and vice a monster of so horrid a mien, that we can have no hesitation in making our selection.

Of Honour. Scrupulous integrity is a jewel of no less value to the physician than any of the requisites above considered. It is as much opposed to officious interference and illiberal insinuations, as Science is to ostentation and gasconade. We may well exclaim, then,

“A wit’s a feather, and a chief a rod,
An honest man’s the noblest work of God.”

With regard to the manner in which you are to demean yourselves in practice towards one another

and towards your patients, I cannot do better than recommend to your careful and attentive perusal Doctor Percival's excellent "Code of Institutes and Precepts," judiciously adopted and republished by this society for its government: But I cannot refrain from adverting to, and dilating on one of the primary objects of this institution; I allude to the collection and dissemination of accurate and authentic medical information.

Our constitution entitles every worthy and honourable member of this society to a charter, authorising him to establish a similar society at his place of residence. He can by this means associate with him medical men of *primitive* excellence and talents, and possess himself of their experience and observation, and thus he will be prepared to encounter those peculiarities which climate, modes of living, &c. impress on the face of disease. But the beneficial consequences flowing from this institution do not terminate here. Each subordinate society is obligated to draw up and forward on an annual report to the mother society, detailing the observations of its members, relative to the prevailing diseases of their districts, together with their causes and most successful method of treatment, and announcing important discoveries in medicine, or any of its collateral branches, of Anatomy, Geology, Botany, Chemistry, Mineralogy, or Zoology.

By this regulation a sufficiency of matter will be collected for the publication of an annual volume, which will be the more valuable as we can rest with implicit confidence on the accuracy and fidelity of the observations it may contain, inasmuch as

every individual is obligated by the honour of a **K A** for the veracity of his reports.

Gentlemen, what a wide and unbounded field is here presented to you! While the most insignificant streams and mountains in other countries have been made the habitations of as many Naiads and Gnomes, and every forest marked by the footsteps of the naturalist, the hidden treasures of the wilds of America are comparatively unexplored! Medicinal plants are every where wasting their healing virtues on the desert air—unknown because unsought by the patriotic and scientific physician! Medicated mineral waters rise up in every part of our continent, run their course unheeded, and are absorbed by their parent earth, without having as yet been made significantly tributary to the health and happiness of our citizens!

Perhaps in these there is a charm which can give renovated vigour to the palsied nerve, and arrest the ravages of that fell scourge of our countrymen, Consumption! As the mineral kingdom has already furnished us with some of our most active medicinal substances, perhaps from this source we may extract a cordial prophylactic and restorative which will curtail, if not entirely expunge, the catalogue of incurable diseases! when the only outlet of human life will be the gradual and progressive decay of age!

Gentlemen, with such an attractive prospect before you, such encouraging incentives to emulous exertion, you cannot remain supine and inactive! You cannot refuse the inviting solicitations of nature to enter her grand medical Laboratory, and receive the

meed she never fails to award to her sincere and faithful disciples, the prayers and blessings of unborn millions, who are indebted to you for their health, their happiness and their lives! Philanthropy, humanity, charity, and even interest, invite you from the shades of inutility and oblivion! If *you* remain deaf to their entreaties, others more wise will joyfully obey the mandate and receive the triumphant laurel. Will you, can you, content yourselves with humble mediocrity, while others are basking in the meridian sunshine of glory and renown? Just ascending the eminence of youth, with hearts beating high with the love of distinction, will you hasten down the rapid declivity of old age, and be swallowed up in the devouring river of Death, and make no one manly effort to reach the glory-gilded Temple of Fame, which decorates the hill of manhood: Are you desirous to leave no one evidence of your having performed the journey of life? Yes, I know you are; already, in imagination, I see you joining hand in hand and marching, with majestic strides to usefulness, to glory and to Fame.

The profession of medicine in this country has been degraded to a mere money-making machine, whose wheels have been so clogged with empirics, ignorant pretenders and self-dubbed doctors, that the intelligent and deserving members of the faculty have been prevented from cohering into a perfect and extensive *crystallization*, which would reflect the beams of the science of medicine over benighted and suffering humanity.

The establishment of a medical school in Transylvania University has contributed much towards the

attainment of this object in the Western Country, and may we not hope that this society will perfect the grand design? As a fountain, which issues from the mountain's side, glitters in the sun for a moment, and then conceals itself amidst the rocks and umbrageous forests, which overhang and shadow its hidden passage to the plains which it is destined to fertilize and to adorn; so the principles of this society, which originated in the little island of Cos, conducted by *Science, Friendship, Virtue, and Honour*, have arrived in *crystalline* purity, on the happy shores of the Ohio, and may we not hope that the remotest regions of the medical world will ere long feel and acknowledge its beneficial influence?

The philanthropist, in anticipating so pleasing a spectacle, is naturally lead to inquire into the author of an institution so disinterested and benevolent in its principles and so pregnant with blessings in its application: and if his interrogatory meet with a definite and satisfactory reply, he will be instinctively disposed to revere his sacred memory.

Reverting back through the dark vista of two thousand two hundred years, we behold this wonderful personage, Hippocrates, the admiration of his contemporaries, the pride of Greece, and the veneration of posterity!

With regard to the genealogy and early education of the illustrious physician of Cos, our information is not so extensive and authentic, as we could wish.

But we are informed that Hippocrates was born in the island of Cos, in the first year of the eightieth Olympiad. His attention was, at an early age, particularly directed, by his father, Heraclides, to the

elementary sciences; and he prosecuted the study of physics with more than usual ardour, from a conviction that, in order to arrive at the knowledge of the essence of any particular body, it was necessary to commence with an analytical investigation of the constituent principles of the universe itself. Having his mind fraught and expanded with these essential preliminary studies, Hippocrates ascended the extensive theatre of his medical operations, and, as might have been expected, from the acuteness of his apprehension, the precision of his judgment, and the native energy of his mind, the veil, which before obscured the arcana of animated nature dissolved into thin vapour at his approach.

The improvement of medicine at that time depended on the philosophers and the Asclepiadæ, to which family Hippocrates belonged: "the philosophers reasoned, the Asclepiadæ acted." But it was reserved for Hippocrates to effect an entire revolution in medicine, by enlightening experience by reason, and rectifying theory by practice; in this way avoiding on one hand the fascinations of hypothesis, and on the other the dangers of empiricism!—Thus we see he was the first that exalted physic to the dignity of a science, and is, therefore, justly honoured with the appellation of the father of medicine.

Laborious in his researches, and cautious in his inductions, he consulted the great book of nature, and waited patiently her responses. From this inexhaustible fountain, he extracted a rich and luxuriant harvest of facts, relative to the causes, diagnosis, and especially the prognosis of disease, which has enlightened and astonished all succeeding ages! In

the language of Dr Rush, "monuments and statues erected to perpetuate the memories of heroes and conquerors, have perished with the names inscribed upon them, while the name of Hippocrates, with no other passport to posterity than his writings, still lives in the admiration and esteem of millions in every part of the world."

Gentlemen, I know of no character, ancient or modern, whom I would so earnestly recommend to your imitation, as that of Hippocrates, whether we contemplate him in the light of a physician, or a man. As a physician, he was acute, discriminating and judicious: as a man, pious, charitable, ingenuous, benevolent and patriotic. Such indeed was the moral perfection of this venerable man, that of him it was emphatically said, that "in his soul there was but one sentiment—the love of doing good; and in the course of his long life but one single act—the relieving of the sick." The cultivation of moral principles should at last constitute the great object of our lives, for science is fluctuating and perishable, but virtue extends beyond the grave, through the boundless realms of eternity.

"True dignity is his, whose tranquil mind
Virtue has rais'd above the things below;
Who, every hope and fear to heaven resign'd,
Shrinks not, though Fortune aim her deadliest blow."

Book taken apart. Leaves washed & deacidified with magnesium bicarbonate. Leaves mended. Resewed. New all-rag end paper signatures. Unbleached linen hinges. Hand sewed headbands. Rebound in quarter Russell's oasis morocco with hand marbled paper sides and vellum corners. Leather treated with potassium lactate and neat's foot oil and lanolin. December 1979.

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