MEMOIR

OF

THOMAS C. JAMES, M.D.

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READ BEFORE

THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

OF PHILADELPHIA.

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MEMOIR.

*Gentlemen—Fellows of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia:**

Some years have now elapsed since we were deprived of one of the ornaments of our profession—the late venerable President of this College, Dr. Thomas Chalkley James. His death, though at last sudden, had been long expected by himself and friends from the evident decline of his health, and from the premature approach of those infirmities which too surely indicate the decline of life.

We all knew him. We all loved and respected him. It could not be otherwise. The senior members of this college viewed him as a friend and brother, who had always been their chosen companion and their fellow labourer in all the duties of this society, and of the profession to which they were alike devoted. The younger members looked on him with love and veneration, for he had been their medical teacher—their friend, their counsellor, and, as far as practicable, their benefactor. His example had always been presented, as most worthy of imitation. And, when he departed, they felt, and still feel, as if one important link in that golden chain which binds this generation to the past, was, unfortunately for them, severed.

The college lost one whose devotion to its interests had been sincere and long continued; and whose virtues, age, and experience had deservedly placed him in the most prominent station in its power to bestow.

To his immediate survivors, it would therefore be useless to depict the character of our lamented president; but for our successors, and for posterity, the record should be made, not only that justice should be shown

* Read before the College of Physicians, at the stated meeting in June 1841.

to him who always rendered ample justice to others, but that his example, virtues, and piety, should still benefit the profession which he adorned; and be presented to succeeding physicians as objects worthy of imitation.

The most striking trait in the character of Dr. James was unfeigned modesty and diffidence. His conversation, his intercourse with his friends, with professional brethren, and even with students of medicine, his whole deportment indicated, that he did not rest upon his own sentiments with that implicit confidence which would induce him to promulgate his opinions, or to insist on their correctness or importance. He paid great deference to the opinions of others, and would hence submit to the guidance of those of an opposite temperament, really believing they must be better informed than himself. This native modesty, pervading his whole intellectual and moral nature, had the most decided influence on his professional course, and on his present and future reputation.

Nevertheless, Dr. James, however reluctant he might be to promulgate his sentiments, or even to express an opinion, possessed a mind too powerful and too well furnished not to form positive opinions on almost every subject to which it was directed, whether in literature or science. Those only who enjoyed his confidence; who were admitted into the favoured precincts of his private friendship, could discover how positive and correct were his sentiments; how discriminating his opinions, respecting men and things; and yet, how anxious to avoid having his views known, whether for praise or criticism.

As a man Dr. James was also remarkable for great dignity, combined with mildness of disposition and gentleness of manners. He was entirely free from any thing approaching hauteur or stateliness; yet no one could look on him without feelings of respect, which were excited by his venerable appearance and by the native simplicity of his manners. He was affable and condescending to all, and never, in the latter years of his life, manifested undue excitement under the most trying circumstances. This gentleness of character was greatly the result of his own efforts; for gifted by nature with a warm heart and a sprightly imagination, he was prone in early life to be excited, when any dear friend or darling opinion was assailed. In subsequent years he had so fully obtained the government of his passions, that no one even suspected that he could ever have been under their

influence; a victory this, more difficult of achievement than those which have conferred celebrity on many of the heroes of the world.

This self-command was the result of high moral and christian principles. As a young man, when his feelings and passions were ardent, he is believed to have been uniformly correct in his conduct and moral principles. Subsequently there can be no doubt that he was governed by the high principles of Christianity. To this important subject he devoted much attention. He studied the Bible as the source of all correct knowledge on religious subjects, not only in his native language, but in the original Hebrew and Greek, and in the Latin, French, and German versions. He examined the various readings, the commentaries of different authors, and the creeds of different sects of Christians. He ventured even within the perplexed mazes of theology, and endeavoured to elicit information and sound doctrine from the obscurities of theological metaphysics. His mind, however, was too strong to become confused by sophisms, and his heart too sincere in the love and pursuit of truth, to be lost in this extensive investigation. He returned from these excursions ladened with good fruit; and, after much inquiry among the living and the dead, he rested with child-like confidence, his hopes of immortal happiness on the simple declarations of the Bible. Frequently in the confidence of friendship has he confessed to the writer his great and overwhelming sense of the depravity of human nature; that he had no confidence in his good intentions, feelings, or actions; and that all his hope of pardon and happiness rested on the merits and sacrifice of an Almighty Saviour. This solemn declaration was reiterated in the most impressive manner to his family and physicians, a short time previous to his dissolution, and was almost the last effort of that excellent man, whose life in the eyes of his fellow-men was irreproachable, but who regarded himself as vile in the sight of a Holy God.

His life was governed by these principles. In conjunction with the diffidence and modesty of his character, they gradually separated him from the general intercourse of society. Although naturally of warm feelings, of ardent attachments, devoted to his friends, disposed to be social, and happily gifted with convivial talents, abounding with anecdote and information, Dr. James, in the latter periods of his life, studiously avoided all social meetings. The collisions of sentiment, the scintillations of wit, as well as the ruder shocks which occasionally result from opposition of

opinion in mixed societies, were too powerful for his refined taste and sensibilities. He was fond of reading and study, of examining intricate subjects in the quietness of his study, surrounded by the recorded facts and opinions of the mighty living and dead, and of thus forming slowly, but carefully, his own opinions. He devoted every moment to the acquisition of knowledge, which could be spared from the arduous duties of his profession, and from that delightful intercourse with his family to which he looked for subtantial happiness.

His main objects of pursuit were of a practical character, especially those which related to the duties of his profession and the demands of religion, but he always, especially in his youth, manifested a love for literature. He was fond of the belles lettres. In the early periods of his professional career he indulged a strong native taste and a sprightly imagination, not only in rapidly ranging over the products of kindred minds, but in becoming himself a writer, even of poetry, and, in the opinion of partial friends, with no ordinary success, but never so much to his own satisfaction as to allow his name to be publicly connected with any of his productions. Several effusions emanating from a true poetic fancy, and suited to the circumstances of the day, became exceedingly popular, and gave him a publicity he studiously avoided. In the magazines of the day are to be found some sprightly and beautiful verses, entitled the "Glow Worm," "The Eagle of Freedom," "The Country Meeting." A friend and cotemporary states that he well remembers the last mentioned production—that it was very much admired, and passed through all the magazines that were published, for several succeeding years. On the same authority it may be mentioned that in 1794, Dr. James accompanied the Western expedition as Surgeon of the "M'Pherson Blues," and on his return presented his friend with a copy of a very animating song which he wrote on a drum-head, at a time when great gloom pervaded the corps. It had a fine effect on their spirits—was set to music, and was sung through the camp for a long period.

Under the signature of P. D., he published in the Port Folio for 1801, versified translations of the Idyls of Gessner, which were regarded by good judges to be entitled to "much and some to high praise for poetical merit," as well as exhibiting his accurate knowledge and fine perception of the German language and idiom.

The imagination of Dr. James was, however, restrained by strong good

sense, and by devoted attention to practical duties. Nevertheless literature was his delight and recreation. He kept pace with the publications of the day, and amidst the interruptions and toils of an arduous and self-denying profession, succeeded in gratifying his taste and refreshing his spirit by continual recurrence to these fountains of unalloyed pleasure. These intellectual gratifications were derived, not merely from publications in his native language, but from those in Latin, Greek, French, and German, with all which his knowledge was considered as so intimate that he could fully appreciate their merits and enjoy their most delicate allusions. Thus keeping up an active interest in the republic of letters, and a peculiar fitness for intelligent and cultivated society.

Intimately associated with these intellectual gratifications, was the interest he manifested in the history of his native state, in the character and conduct of the earlier settlers, in the product of the soil, and especially in the richness and variety of its mineral productions. He was among the first to perceive and rightly to estimate the great value of the coal formations—so numerous and varied in Pennsylvania—having commenced the use of anthracite coal in his own house as early as 1804, and having published* a memoir on its original discovery. He was among the founders of the society for commemorating the landing of William Penn, and also of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. To these he devoted much of his leisure, took a warm interest in their success, and rejoiced in every new development of the original character and policy of the early settlers, in every discovery relating to the physical and moral character of Pennsylvania.

It does not appear that Dr. James ever devoted much attention to the exact sciences. He was in the proper meaning of the term a Philosopher, —a lover and a supporter of science;—but, irrespective of those branches which are involved in his profession, he left to others minuteness of detail, and contented himself with mastering the general principles, and lending his influence for the support of scientific men and institutions. Being early made a member of the American Philosophical Society, he at one time attended its meetings, acted as its secretary, and was interested in their transactions; but afterwards he but seldom appeared, and, it is believed, never contributed any paper, except on medical subjects, to their publica-

* In vol. ii. p. 154, part I. of the Trans. of the Historical Society.

tions. He preferred the seclusion of his study to the bustle of the society, and the lighter walks of literature to the rougher paths of science.

It is as a medical practitioner, that Doctor James was best known to this community, and especially to the members of this college. In this character, who has not known and admired him? Who is not ready to present him, as regards his disposition, his virtues, his sentiments, his manners and deportment, as a model for the young physician? His whole conduct proved that he was governed by those high-elevated sentiments, which result from an enlightened and gifted mind,—sustained by all that virtue and religion impart, to purify and exalt the human character. As a physician, he was especially distinguished for the benevolence and kindness which characterized his intercourse with his patients. He was anxiously devoted to their welfare, sympathized with them in their sufferings, and laboriously exerted himself at all seasons to remove or meliorate their trials, not only by administering the usual professional remedies, but by inspiring confidence, elevating their hopes and expectations, changing the current of morbid thoughts and feelings by his cheerfulness, intelligence, extensive information; by the pleasant and elevated tone of his conversation, abounding in humour and anecdote, calculated to lead off the mind diseased from the contemplation of its sufferings, to more delightful, if not engrossing subjects; and to afford the stimulus of hope—so powerful in resuscitating the depressed energies of body as well as mind. The benevolence of his disposition was also manifested in his gratuitous and disinterested services to those unable to reward his attentions by any other recompense than the overflowings of a grateful heart: and, not unfrequently, by services to those who in the hour of health and of prosperity, remember, not even with gratitude, the devotion and anxieties of that man, who under Providence restored them from the brink of the grave, to life, health, and happiness. In all such cases, it was the uniform practice of Dr. James to submit to injustice, rather than have any unholy passions excited in his bosom by the wickedness of others.

In his attentions to patients he was unremitting and persevering, even when the infirmities of declining health might afford a suitable excuse. When the extent of varied character of his practice is considered, when it is known that much of his time was occupied with obstetrics, and, of course, that his hours of rest and sleep, as well as those allotted to recreation or business, were thus encroached upon, it will be found no mean

praise that none complained of his remissness or neglect. The wonder is, that business such as his, could have been, in any manner, suitably transacted.

Although Dr. James was remarkable for the kindness of his feelings, and the suavity of his manners towards his patients; although the benevolence of his character may have occasionally inclined him to be too lenient in enforcing his prescriptions; yet he never compromised the dignity of his profession. None of the modern forms of empiricism, however, supported by nominal physicians, received any countenance from him. His appearance, manners, conversation, sentiments,—all evinced the instructed and polished practitioner, who never condescended to the minor arts, by which lesser minds attempt to advance their temporary popularity, forgetful of their permanent interests and of the welfare of the profession. Dr. James at once cast his professional interests on his moral and intellectual character; he maintained, steadily, but quietly, and without offence, his personal and professional dignity, and with a result, every way encouraging to the young practitioner. He did not, it is true, at once command an extensive practice; but he gradually, but surely, fixed on himself the confidence of the community, in his integrity, virtue, benevolence, intelligence and professional attainments,—a confidence eventually manifested by an over abundant practice; a confidence which gained strength with his years, until the withering hand of time, rendered, in his case, more influential by watchings, anxieties and fatigue, advised him, as well as others, that his course was to close sooner than his friends anticipated.

As a practitioner, he was remarkable for his knowledge, and for his judgment in the selection and application of remedial measures, rather than for the novelty or boldness of his prescriptions. He was well read in his profession, learned in the opinions and practices of others, well imbued with all that collateral information, so important for all professional men, especially for the physician; and interested in every thing suited to advance the interests of the profession, to enlarge the boundaries, or to increase the efficiency of medical science. He was a scientific physician; not governed simply by authority, or by the experience of himself or others, but regulated by principles derived from anatomy, physiology, and pathology. He was however, a practical physician; that is, he was never led astray, or unduly influenced by novelties, by specious theories, by the crude notions of men of talent or genius, but always adhered to those principles and re-

medies, which, while they were sustained by scientific rules, had received the testimony of experience in their efficiency. Hence he was not one of the pioneers of the profession—not one who was remarkable for the novelty of his views, the importance of his discoveries, or the boldness of his practice,—but he was numbered among that most respectable and useful class, who, by the exercise of a discreet judgment, under the guidance of science and experience, profited by the discoveries of others, perhaps of more genius, and of more energy and enthusiasm; and at the same time avoided the errors into which such geniuses often fall, and the mischief they not unfrequently produce.

As an obstetrician, he was chiefly known to the inhabitants of this city and of our country; and great are the obligations under which society is placed to him and a few of his cotemporaries who, by their talents, education, learning, manners and accomplishments elevated and adorned a department of the profession which had been unaccountably neglected, and was, in this country especially, in a degraded condition.

As a practitioner of obstetrics, Dr. James manifested the same kindness and benevolence of disposition, the same prudence, discretion and judgment for which he was distinguished as a physician, and which gave him an eminent station as an accoucheur. As an operator, he was also skilful and prudent: occasionally also bold and decisive when the circumstances of the case demanded his assistance. His natural diffidence of himself, his fear of responsibility, his deference to the opinions of others, prevented however his obtaining that self-command and that composure essential for greatest eminence in the operative department of obstetrics. Nevertheless a large proportion of our physicians resorted to him for assistance in cases of difficulty and danger with the happiest results.

As a teacher of obstetric science, his success was also great. Commencing a system of instruction when no medical school patronized this department of the profession, when the prejudices of the community were greatly in opposition, and when even practitioners of medicine thought any peculiar tuition on this subject unnecessary, Dr. James succeeded in securing the attention of a very respectable portion of the pupils who then resorted to Philadelphia for medical instruction, and soon obtained an influence in favour of tokology, by which the practice was rendered more efficient and extensive, and the importance of the science suitably acknowledged by the establishment of an independent professorship. Occupying

the situation of professor, he was well and advantageously known to the full classes which annually resorted to the University of Pennsylvania. In him, they beheld the accomplished obstetrician, one whose mild, sociable yet dignified deportment, not only gained their respect but their affection, who not only secured for himself attention and confidence but for his science, the devotion and interest which it so richly deserved.

As a lecturer, it is not pretended that Dr. James was perfect; the critic might say that from the native peculiarities of his character, especially from that modesty and self-diffidence, that respect to the opinions of others, even of mere tyros in their profession, he wanted that boldness and decision, that spirit and enthusiasm, that air of originality and self-confidence so interesting and impressive in a teacher, so calculated to fix attention and impart instruction. Nevertheless he was an excellent teacher. His lectures were handsomely and classically written; they were copious, abounding in matter, rich in illustrations, and indicating a mind of a superior cast, well cultivated and enriched with literary, as well as scientific attractions. If he wanted originality, he was well versed in the opinions and discoveries of others; if he was deficient in spirit and boldness, his compositions evinced great taste, much reading and laborious attention to his subject, so that every lecture was a full and satisfactory essay on the subject, treated with suitable references to acknowledged authorities. His delivery, it may be inferred, was not very impassioned; he wanted more energy, and more vigour in his voice and composition, yet he was always interesting from the mild dignity of his appearance and manners, and from the good sense and superior mental and moral character which marked the man and his productions.

Hence he was a successful teacher. This is not the proper occasion to analyze the doctrines which he taught, or to examine the medical and chirurgical treatment which he recommended in the practice of obstetrics. Suffice it to say, that receiving his early impressions from distinguished English teachers, his views were founded mainly on British obstetrics. He examined, however, the productions of the French and other continental schools, followed their writers into that scientific detail, and those minute instructions regarding the mechanism of labour and the treatment of parturition therewith necessarily connected, which has distinguished the French obstetrician, and so elevated the science of tokology. Profiting by all this accurate information, Dr. James still in his teaching

and his practice, yielded to the influence of the English rather than of the French authorities, either from the influence of early impressions, or from a decided conviction of the superiority of the former.

Unfortunately for the medical profession, as well as for the greater perpetuity of Dr James's reputation, he has not appeared before the public as a medical writer. The results of his accurate observation and extended experience, have, with some minor exceptions, perished with him. Dr. James has published few opinions on professional subjects. This is to be regretted, for it seems hardly possible, that the experience of a long life, devoted to the observation of disease, to the details of a profession so varied, yet so imperfect, as that of medicine, should not have furnished abundant material for the improvement of his science as well as for the amelioration of human suffering, especially when elaborated by a mind so well constituted and liberally furnished. Our regrets are unavailing, but this negative example should induce all of us who are actively engaged in professional duties to make that record of our experience and observations, which when age or ill health prevent active exertion, may be promulgated as our mite to the cause of science and the interests of humanity.

The excellence of Dr. James's feelings, the exercise of his benevolence, and his christian charity were not limited however by the duties of his profession. He was a promoter as well as a patron of many benevolent institutions. He was, as early as 1801, made physician to the Welsh Society; was for some twenty-five years on duty as a physician to the Pennsylvania Hospital, and was among the founders of the Union Benevolent Society, which has been productive of so much moral as well as physical good to the poor of our city, whose means and influence are still increasing. Over this society Dr. James acted as president until the period of his death, giving impetus to its first and feeble efforts by his liberal contributions, and by the weight of his personal and professional character. He was also a warm friend of the negro. Actuated by a sound judgment and christian feelings, he ardently desired his emancipation from moral as well as physical slavery: of course not that sudden emancipation which would send him forth upon the world as an infant or a child, incapable of providing for present or future wants; or as a savage, hungry, and revengeful; with his hand against every man, and every man against him. No: but for that gradual emancipation, which would first diminish the

intellectual and moral darkness in which his brother was enshrouded, and then would knock off fetter after fetter, from the enslaved limb of the African, until he could, with confidence and exultation bid him walk forth a freeman; free from physical restraints to his body; free above all things from the slavery of ignorance and vice. Such were the views of Dr. James; hence he early lent his influence to the society (formed chiefly among Friends, and having for a long time the late excellent Wm. Rawle as its president,) for the abolition of slavery in Pennsylvania. In perfect consistency with these views he was among the first members, and for a considerable time the president of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, believing that the true interests of the black would by this institution be most efficiently promoted. Perhaps it is known generally, that at that period, more than at present, these were not the general impressions respecting the Colonization Society, especially among the society of Friends, who regarded the system of colonization with a jealous eye, as calculated to strengthen, not to weaken slavery in these United States. Dr. James was, therefore, unpleasantly situated with his most intimate friends and his religious society. He acted on this occasion in obedience to those feelings and principles which always governed him. He resigned "to please friends," anxious to avoid any thing which would gender strife or bad feelings, to avoid "even the appearance of evil;" although his own sentiments, as declared to the writer, remained unaltered. Another example in which the amiability, timidity, and modesty of his character, prevented him from taking that bold stand in which his influence would have been great, and, in the opinion of many, for nothing but good.

Dr. James lent also the great weight of his character to the active measures adopted for the suppression of lotteries, but his modesty was again shocked in being made president of the society for their suppression. He did not live long enough to see the triumph of these benevolent principles by which he and his colleagues were actuated, in the abolition of this nefarious business by the constituted authorities of the state.

Such was the character of our late president, modest, retiring, distrustful of his own abilities; willing at all times to avoid responsibility, seldom acting therefore boldly and decidedly; but, nevertheless, a man of superior talents, well cultivated with ardent feelings and social propensities, in love with literature and science, eminently prepared for the social circle, for literary and scientific society, and for the active, laborious, and exhausting

duties of the medical profession. As a physician, especially as an obstetrician, a noble example of the profession, venerable, not only for his appearance, but for his real excellencies. He was beloved and respected by all. His manners were courteous, affable, to the high and the low, to the learned and the unlearned, to the experienced practitioner in medicine, who came to solicit his advice, and to the student who was anxious to imbibe his sentiments on all subjects. Every word and look intimated the delicacy and purity of the inner man, whose mind was stored with knowledge, and whose heart was overflowing with kind feelings. "His character," says an intimate friend, Mr. Anthony Morris, "belongs to that distinguished class in which the virtues appear more from a habit of doing every thing in the spirit of Christianity, than any thing in the spirit of the world. There was no display, but a consistency and conformity in every thing to the mind, and manners, and habits of the christian gentleman."

It would be interesting, if practicable, to trace the gradual development of such a character from infancy to old age, to discover, if possible, the circumstances which favoured its growth, and to draw philosophical deductions for the improvement of the present or succeeding generations. Such hopes are vain, or nearly so; man is born with his peculiarities, with specific and yet complex sensibilities, and however similar the circumstances of life and education of two or more individuals, entirely different characters result. This is experience, ancient and modern, in opposition to the theories of philosophers. Still, our interest for the early history of the great ones of this world is not diminished, and when little can be learnt, as in the present instance, the disappointment is felt.

The ancestors of Dr. James were originally from England, and on both sides were connected with the society of Friends. His maternal grandfather was Thomas Chalkley, (for whom the Doctor was named,) who for many years exerted by his talents, eloquence, excellencies and untiring industry, a most extensive influence among Friends in Europe and America. His life and correspondence have been published, and indicate the superiority and excellence of his character.

His father, Mr. Abel James, was for many years one of the leading merchants in Philadelphia, and very successful. From a character published in the Columbia Magazine, for 1790, we learn that he was of an active, enterprising spirit, well prepared to devise plans for mercantile advancement, but disposed to leave to others the practical details and the

efficient execution. Eventually however, he failed, and soon after, in the year 1790, Oct. 27th, died apoplectic, leaving his affairs in a state of derangement. His widow, with a spirit worthy not only of her pious ancestor, Thomas Chalkley, but of that christian religion which she professed, gave up all her own private property, inherited from her parents, and never involved in the business of her husband, for the satisfaction of his creditors. Part of her property was eventually restored, there being more than sufficient for the liquidation of the debts.

Of such parentage was our friend and president: not usually termed noble, but far superior to that ancestry too often termed noble, which has no recommendation but external honours and decorations. Dr. James wa born in Philadelphia, Aug. 31st, 1766, and was the youngest son. He was well educated after the manner of Friends, especially at their school, under the superintendence of Robert Proud, the historian of Pennsylvania. No doubt can exist, that his love of literature and of books in general, must have been at this period manifested, as his proficiency was early evinced, and a superiority over his cotemporaries in this respect existed, which could not otherwise be explained. He commenced and prosecuted the study of medicine under the direction of that eminent practitioner, Dr. Adam Kuhn, a disciple of Linnæus, whose opinion always carried weight among his medical brethren, and who had the honour of educating some of the first physicians of our country. In 1787, at the age of twenty-one, he received the certificate of bachelor in medicine, from the University of Pennsylvania, of which his preceptor Dr. Kuhn, was a distinguished professor. It was about this period that his father's affairs became deranged, and the desire of the son to have a complete medical education, then not to be procured in America, seemed to be thwarted. He did not despair, but through the influence of friends, procured in the fall of 1788, the situation of a surgeon in the Sampson, a mercantile vessel, to the Cape of Good Hope and Canton, and by the results of this tedious voyage, was enabled to carry his anxious wishes into complete execution. His voyage was productive of no remarkable incidents, but gave opportunity for reading and reflection, which was fully embraced, as well as for the exercise of his passive virtues. He returned home early in the summer of 1790, and soon afterwards completed his long contemplated preparations for finishing his medical education in Europe. After receiving advice and instructions from his experienced friends and preceptors, Dr. Adam Kuhn and Dr. Wistar,

he sailed for London in the fall of the year. A short time before the death of his beloved and respected father, the intelligence of this melancholy event reaching him not very long after his arrival.

In London he found his countryman and fellow student, Dr. P. S. Physick, a pupil and an assistant of the celebrated Mr. John Hunter, pursuing his studies in St. George's Hospital. By Physick's advice, Dr. James entered (May 30, 1791,) as a house pupil of the Story-street Lying-in Hospital, under the care of Drs. Osborne and John Clarke, the two leading obstetric practitioners and teachers in London. In this institution he had soon the pleasure of receiving as a companion, his friend Dr. J. Cathrall, who was also with him at Canton. The winter of 1791–2, was spent in London chiefly in attending lectures, and also as an attendant at St. George's Hospital. When relieved from professional studies for a short period, he availed himself of his letters of introduction, especially to the connections of his mother's family, and partook of the hospitality which was freely and cheerfully extended to him. He speaks in his letters with gratitude, of the attentions he received from friends, and also from that ornament of our profession, Dr. Lettsom, who treated him very kindly, and proffered him letters of introduction to Paris.

After much deliberation respecting the relative advantages of spending a winter in Edinburgh or Paris, and after consulting by letter his friends on this side of the Atlantic, he finally followed the example of Dr. Physick and Cathrall, and went to Edinburgh in the spring of 1792. Here he remained and attended the lectures during the succeeding winter, in company with Dr. Hosack of New York, and Dr. Ruan, one of our fellow members, whose acquaintance with Dr. James commenced at Edinburgh.

It does not appear that Dr. James graduated at Edinburgh, in imitation of his friends, Dr. Wistar and Physick, being content with the honours of his own University in Philadelphia, then in its infancy. In the month of June, 1793, Dr. James, accompanied by Dr. Ruan, arrived at Wiscasset, in the then district of Maine. They reached Philadelphia a short time only before the terrible and then unknown epidemic, the yellow fever, visited this city. Dr. James had hardly time to receive the congratulations of his anxious friends, when the fatal scourge appeared, bringing dismay and terror, even to the boldest spirits. Before time was afforded him for exerting his talents and acquired knowledge for the benefit of others, he himself became a sufferer and for some time was disabled. He probably

had but a slight attack, for in a letter dated Philadelphia, Sept. 20th, 1793, to his mother, he makes no mention of his own health, while he alludes to the dismal scenes which his family and professional duties had made too familiar. In the violent disputes which unfortunately existed among the leading physicians of the day, respecting the source and nature of the epidemic, Dr. James, as might be supposed from his character, took little part. He however decidedly avowed himself as agreeing with Kuhn and Wistar, to whom his predilections and attachments had formerly been fully accorded. Still so slightly was he tinctured with prejudice, that when Kuhn and Wistar were absent from the city, he solicited the assistance of Dr. Rush for a sick relative, as we learn from the above-mentioned letter to his mother.

The winter dissipated the epidemic, and of course the fears, although not the sorrows of the inhabitants of Philadelphia. Dr. James undertook the more regular business of his profession, but did not yet feel himself settled; for the ensuing year we find him acting surgeon to the "M'Pherson Blues, on the Western Expedition," as already mentioned.

On his return from this military expedition, he opened his office and became a candidate for professional business and reputation in this city, under the most favourable prospects of success. The yellow fever had greatly thinned the ranks of the profession. Dr. Way and Dr. Carson had lately died. Dr. Dunlap, who was extensively and almost exclusively devoted to obstetrics, was advancing in years, and depended much, says Dr. Ruan, on Dr. James, whilst his competitors, although numerous, were about his own age, and perhaps none of them possessed the advantages which Dr. James enjoyed. With the talents, attainments, extensive and complete medical education at home and abroad, now extending to at least eight years of preparation, was conjoined great personal attractions. His figure, I am informed by one who, although his junior, became acquainted with him about this time, was nearly perfect; his features handsome, his expression open, candid, cheerful; his manners pleasant, and his conversation, when he felt unrestrained, was of the most elevated character, abounding, as a friend and relative informs me, with information, cheerful, occasionally eloquent, and always replete with anecdotes well selected, and garnished by the corruscations of a poetic imagination. His family connections were of the most influential character; while his medical friends, Kuhn and Wistar, were the ornaments of the profession, and exerted an influence not

second to those of any of their cotemporaries. Thus favoured by natural endowments, mental and corporeal, supported by family and professional influence, and blessed by providential arrangements, great expectations were entertained of Dr. James; his society was sought for; a connection with him was by all esteemed desirable, and his success in his profession was regarded as certain and rapid. These favourable presages were however not realized. His morbid sensitiveness, and his dread of responsibility, prevented his taking the lead in the professional race for reputation and practice. He drew back under a mistaken notion of inferiority and unsuitableness. His friends however, acted judiciously and decidedly. They made him assume his proper station, and gradually bring his strength into competition with that of his cotemporaries. This alone was necessary; he gained confidence, so that in the course of a few years he ventured to teach, as well as to practice his profession, and, having about this period married Miss Hannah Morris, (a lady connected with one of the first families in Pennsylvania, eminently adapted by her mild, but decided character, her judicious, yet cheerful disposition to meet the peculiarities of Dr. James's character,) his success became certain, business rapidly increased, and his time became fully occupied with patients and pupils, all of whom admired and loved him.

In 1802, Nov. 17th, Dr. James, in conjunction with the late Dr. Church, commenced his first regular course of lectures on obstetrics. It was altogether a private course, entirely unconnected with the University or any corporate institution, resting for success on the merits of the lecturers alone. It was quite successful, commencing with twenty pupils, who had the good sense to devote time to this neglected department of medical science. This was not the first effort to teach obstetrics in our country; for some lectures were delivered by Prof. Shippen in the University of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Dewees lectured prior to this period in 1797; but it seems to have been the first regular and sustained effort; the commencement of that chain of circumstances which has elevated the science of Obstetrics to a co-ordinate rank with the other medical sciences, in the opinion and confidence of the community through the whole extent of our country. To render his teaching useful, Dr. James, assisted by Dr. Church, not only employed the usual modes of illustration, but zealously endeavoured to instruct practically, as well as theoretically. For this purpose his influence and exertions prevailed in having a "lying-in ward" (the first

in this city) established at the Almshouse, over which he presided as attending accoucheur. To each case of labour was admitted not only the resident pupils of the house, but three of those attending the lectures, so that in succession all were furnished with cases, the peculiarities of which were duly explained.

The first course of lectures terminated on the 2d March, 1803, the second commenced May 10th, of the same year. So that two courses were delivered every year for three years. On the death of Dr. Church, which occurred about this period, Dr. James associated Dr. Chapman with himself, lecturing with him during the winter of 1807–8, and subsequently as a private and public teacher.

The influence of the eminent men who practiced and taught obstetrics in our city, now began to be felt. This science was emerging from obscurity; the clouds which enshrouded it were dispersing; public attention was roused, and public sentiment demanded that more importance should be attached to this branch of medicine in the schools of our country.

In 1808 Dr. Shippen died, and Dr. Wistar was appointed his successor, as Professor of Anatomy and of Midwifery. Dr. Wistar immediately perceived that these two departments of medical science ought to constitute two distinct professorships. On the 3d of January, 1809, he communicated these sentiments to the Board of Trustees, but it was not until the 11th of April, 1810, that the Board took action on this important proposal of Dr. Wistar, and declared by resolution that there should be a separate Professorship of Midwifery in the University of Pennsylvania; but singular as it now seems, they did not render it obligatory on the student to attend the lectures, nor did they place the Professor on an equality with his colleagues.

For this new and important station—important, not only for the expected incumbent, but for the interests of science and the cause of humanity, several candidates were immediately presented, and supported warmly by their respective friends and admirers. Dr. James had for his opponents Dr. Wm. P. Dewees, who had been practising midwifery since the year 1793 in Philadelphia with great success, and whose reputation as a practitioner was then at its height. Also, Dr. N. Chapman, much younger than his rivals, but whose talents and attainments, whose vivacity, humour, and other social qualities, united with an excellent education in this country, polished by a visit to Europe, and with the influence of many and

devoted friends, had attracted in a few years the admiration of our community. Of course, the canvassing among the friends of the candidates, when such men were concerned, was spirited; each party felt confident of success, for each had a superior man to support, although the natural modesty and diffidence of Dr. James not a little interfered in the advancement of his claims. The election by the Trustees was made June 29th, 1810, and terminated in the elevation of Dr. T. C. James as Professor of Midwifery in the University of Pennsylvania, with the understanding that he should be assisted by Dr. Chapman. This was a most important epoch, not only in the life of Dr. James, but in the history of Medical Science, particularly of obstetrics in the United States.

The first course of lectures in the University was commenced by the new Professor in November, 1810, and although supported, not by any positive regulations on the part of the trustees, but merely by the indirect influence of the school, and by the personal character of the teachers, was attended by a large proportion of the medical students then assembled in Philadelphia. Succeeding years witnessed increased attention to obstetrics; the importance of the science and its great practical utility were more obvious, and its complete triumph over ignorance and prejudice was at hand.

In May, 1813, the medical profession lost one of its brightest ornaments, Dr. Benjamin Rush, the Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine, whose life and opinions have become identified with the history of medicine in our country. He was succeeded by Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton in the practical chair, on the 14th July, 1813; while the chair of Therapeutics and Materia Medica, vacated by the resignation of Dr. Barton, was assigned to Dr. Chapman, on the 13th Aug., 1813, and Dr. James was left the Professor of Obstetrics without an assistant. On this interesting event, the following resolution was unanimously passed by the Board of Trustees in Oct., 1813:—"Resolved, that hereafter the Professor of Midwifery shall be a member of the Medical Faculty, and shall have all the power, authority, and privileges, belonging to a professorship in the said Faculty, and that no person shall be admitted hereafter as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Medicine in this University, unless he shall have regularly attended the lectures of the said Professor for two years, provided, &c."

This triumph of truth and humanity over ignorance and prejudice may

be considered as complete. Obstetrics was confessedly equal to the other practical branches of medical science; and its practitioners and teachers were authoritatively pronounced on a par with those of Surgery and the Practice of Medicine. The battle had been fairly fought and won, and Dr. James who, we have seen, contributed so much to this happy issue, received now the reward so eminently due to modest worth, superior talents and attainments, united with persevering industry.

Large classes annually resorted to Philadelphia, and profited by the lectures and demonstrations of the various professors, which were continually rendered more pointed and instructive, by the reiterated experience in the difficult art of teaching, and by the adoption of all the real improvements promulgated here or elsewhere.

At this interesting period of the history of medicine in our country, it was the lot of many members of this society, and of the writer of this memoir, to form a professional, and afterwards a friendly acquaintance with the professor of midwifery. Some fifty years had passed over his head. Age had made an undue impression, owing perhaps partly to original temperament, but more to mental and corporeal exertion, to anxiety, to loss of sleep and necessary exposure. He was partially bald, his hair whitened, and his form originally so perfect, was now somewhat bent, but his ruddy and healthy aspect, his fine countenance, his diffident yet refined manners, his affability, his condescension to medical students, his great intellectual and moral worth, excited feelings of affection and veneration in the minds and hearts of all.

Dr. James continued to lecture without assistance, to the increasing classes of the University until 1821, when, with the desire of relieving himself of a portion of his duties, but especially with the wish of rendering the course more valuable, he requested the assistance of the then adjunct professor of anatomy, Dr. Horner, in demonstrating the anatomical portions of the lectures, and in exemplifying to the sub-classes, the mode of performing obstetric operations. Soon, however, the lamentable fact began to be apparent to Dr. James, as well as to the pupils, that his physical powers were failing. A nervous tremour was occasionally observed in the fingers of the right hand; gradually but very slowly, it extended to the muscles of the right arm; and in a few years involved all his nervous and muscular system, exciting the symptoms of a premature old age, and indirectly becoming the cause of his death. Soon after, his voice began to fail, so

that great attention was requisite to hear him during the lecture. He applied to the trustees for an assistant to his chair. In consequence of this suggestion, the following resolution was passed on the 18th of October, 1825.

"That an Adjunct Professor of Midwifery be appointed, who shall hold his appointment so long as Dr. James continues to be Professor of Midwifery: Provided that the expenses of the student shall be in no manner increased by such appointment, and that such an Adjunct Professor shall have no vote in the Faculty of Medicine, except in the absence of the Professor of Midwifery to whom he is adjunct."

On the 15th of November, 1825, Dr. William P. Dewees was unanimously elected adjunct professor under the foregoing resolution, and immediately entered on the duties of his new situation. Dr. Horner soon after retired from the performance of his duties as an assistant to the professors of midwifery.

With this valued reinforcement, Dr. James continued for some years longer to exercise his duties at the University and in private practice, but the annual increase of his nervous tremours seemed continually to diminish the strength of his voice and the activity of his body. Eventually, most of the lectures having been in the year 1833–34 delivered by Dewees, Dr. James in justice alike to his own character, to Dr. Dewees, and the University, resigned in the month of June, 1834, his professorship, of which he in a great measure, may be considered the founder, and the reputation of which he sustained for the long period of twenty-four years.

We have already intimated the manner in which those duties were discharged, with how much affability and dignity combined, with what purity of diction his instructive lectures were delivered, and how the love and veneration of the students were extended to one to whom the profession and the public were so much indebted.

During his professional career, he became engaged also with many private and public institutions as physician in ordinary, or as consulting physician; among others, with the Welsh Society, St. George's Society; also with the Philadelphia Dispensary, where for many years he was consulted by the attending physicians, many of whom, with much gratitude, bear testimony to the value of his assistance, and to the readiness and cheerfulness with which it was at all times rendered. As formerly remarked, he might be regarded as the founder of the "Lying-in department" of the Philadelphia Almshouse Infirmary, over which he presided until about the

year 1807, endeavouring to render it practically important for students of medicine. In 1807, (Jan. 26,) he was appointed Physician to the Pennsylvania Hospital, as successor of Dr. J. Redman Coxe, and on the 25th of June, 1810, was translated at his own request to the station of obstetric physician. The duties of this appointment he continued to discharge with scrupulous attention and punctuality, until the 26th of November, 1832. He watched over not only the interests of his immediate department, but the other portions of the establishment, and paid great attention to the medical library of the hospital, the improvement and increase of which, he facilitated very much by his advice and recommendations. At his resignation, the board of managers made the following minute on their records: "A letter from Dr. Thomas C. James was received, resigning the station of obstetric physician after twenty-five years service most acceptably in this institution. The managers, on parting officially from the Doctor, tender him their acknowledgments for his long, faithful, and useful labours, and assure him of their cordial regard, and best wishes for whatever may contribute to his future happiness. The secretary is requested to furnish Dr. James with a copy of this minute."

In the Philadelphia Medical Society, Dr. James was an honorary member, but the exciting character of its debates never seemed to suit the quiet tenor of his feelings, and he rarely, at least of late years, attended its meetings. To the College of Physicians he was much attached. Its quiet and dignified course well suited the peculiarities of his character. Within its precincts, he was sure to meet with his cotemporaries and personal friends, or with those who were gratified in numbering themselves among his pupils and admirers; and he there never anticipated that rude collision of sentiment, which, although it may occasionally elicit the spark of genius, too frequently generates the fires of envy and passion. He was elected Fellow of the College on the 6th of October, 1795, and in July, 1796, he succeeded Dr. Samuel P. Griffitts as secretary. The duties of that office he discharged for six years. In 1809 he was made treasurer, and continued as such for seventeen years; at the expiration of this period in 1826, he became vice-president, and finally in March, 1835, he was unanimously elected president as the successor of Dr. Parke. We all remember the interest which he took in the affairs of the college, the pleasure with which he attended its meetings, and the suavity and dignity with which he presided over its deliberations. Great however, as was his confidence in

his associates, and anxious as he was for the improvement of medical science, he was unwilling to present his sentiments in written communications to the society. With perhaps one exception, the papers he read were rather the history of facts than the detail of opinions. On the 9th of April, 1804, he presented the history of a case of hydatids. On the 4th of September, 1810, he gave the details of a case of premature labour, artificially induced by himself, in the case of a contracted pelvis, after the expiration of the seventh month, with the gratifying result of safety to mother and child. This is the first record, we believe in this country, of the scientific performance of this operation, for which much credit is due to Dr. James, especially as in America and Europe generally, it is still viewed with suspicious eyes, although in Britain, it is regarded as an established operation in certain defined cases.

On the 7th of August, 1827, he read a paper on extra-uterine pregnancy, in which he seemed anxious to establish the opinion from the historical detail of cases, that ventral or abdominal pregnancy never originally occurred; that tubal or uterine pregnancy had previously existed in cases where the child was found in the cavity of the abdomen; the tube or uterus having been ruptured or ulcerated, so as to allow the escape of the fœtus from its original location into the peritoneal cavity. His reasoning from the anatomy and functions of the parts concerned, from the mode in which the fœtus is sustained, and especially from the facts on record was ingenious and powerful; but facts subsequently detailed seem to confirm the opposite opinion, however improbable, that the ovum may be deposited in the peritoneal surface and there be developed with its contents, in some instances, even to the usual period of utero-gestation.

Connected with his efforts to favour the beneficial influence of the college, and the progress of medical science in our country, was the establishment and support of a most valuable periodical work, termed as evincive of its character the Eclectic Repertory, commenced in the year 1811, and carried on for eleven years with great advantage to students and practitioners of medicine. Although chiefly eclectic from foreign books and journals, many valued domestic and original monographs and cases were admitted, which enhanced the interest and importance of the publication. The names of the editors whose disinterested labours and judicious efforts were for a long time lent to this undertaking have not been published, but were known to most of the members of the college. They were Drs.

Hewson, Parrish, Otto, James. The latter is well known to have spent much time in selecting and preparing suitable materials, although he did not frequently contribute original matter to its pages.

Such are the most important and interesting facts which we have been able to procure, respecting the public and professional duties of our late President. There is another series of facts which might be brought into view as exceedingly interesting, but which have only an indirect bearing on his character before the world. We allude to his private, his domestic history; but this is and ought to be a sacred subject, to be touched by no foreign hand. Suffice it to observe, that what Dr. James was abroad, he was at home, excepting that when in company with friends and relations, reserve would be banished and his warm, full heart, would overflow in confidential and familiar intercourse with his family and friends.

Thus blessed in his domestic relations, in his social circle, and in the confidence of the public as a practitioner and teacher of medicine, the moderate expectations of Dr. James were abundantly gratified; he had all that this world could bestow to render life happy and useful. He, however, felt and acknowledged that more was requisite to satisfy the wants of man, and he early found that religion alone can give zest to temporal enjoyments, and dissipate the dread of a future state of existence so natural to the human soul. In this state of mind, looking forward to an eternity of increasing knowledge, holiness, and happiness, he died July 5th, 1835; leaving us, his surviving friends, and the medical profession, a bright example of the accomplished physician and the Christian gentleman, who always preferred the useful to the brilliant, and who, however others may have surpassed him in originality of thought and boldness of execution, was inferior to none in that pure morality, that unsophisticated integrity, that sound discriminating judgment, so essential for the practitioner of medicine; which exalt and dignify the professor, and render him a blessing to the community.