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No. 13

# EULOGY

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE

HON. SAMUEL LATHAM MITCHILL, M. D.

DELIVERED AT THE REQUEST

OF THE

NEW-YORK CITY AND COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY,

IN THE

SUPERIOR COURT ROOM, CITY HALL,

OCTOBER 15th, 1831.

BY FELIX PASCALIS, M. D.

PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE NEW-YORK STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY; MEMBER OF THE NEW-YORK CITY AND COUNTY MED. SOC.; MEM. MED. SOC. OF CONNECTICUT, PHILADELPHIA, CHARLESTON, NEW-ORLEANS, MEXICO; OF PARIS, BOURDEAUX, MARSEILLES: OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENT OF MED. FAC. OF PARIS; MEM. LINN. SOC. PARIS; MEM. AGRICULTURAL SOC. NEW-YORK, CINCINNATI, HAVANA, &c. &c. &c. &c.

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ΟΥΤΟΣ ΕΚΕΙΝΟΣ!—*Luciani Sonnum.*

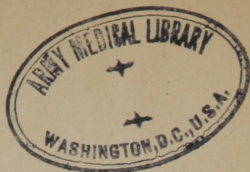
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NEW-YORK:

FROM THE  
AMERICAN ARGUS PRESS.

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*Extract from the Minutes of a Stated Meeting of the Medical Society,  
held September 12th, 1831.*

“RESOLVED, That *Dr. Felix Pascalis* be appointed to deliver a Historical Eulogium on the life and character of our late distinguished fellow-member, DR. SAMUEL LATHAM MITCHILL.”

FRANCIS W. WALSH, M. D. *Secretary.*

*Extract from the Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Medical Society,  
held October 22d, 1831.*

“RESOLVED, UNANIMOUSLY, That a Committee of three members be appointed to solicit from *Dr. Pascalis*, a copy of his Eulogium on the late DR. MITCHILL, for publication :”

Whereupon, the following gentlemen were appointed such Committee :—Philip E. Milledoler, M. D. Samuel Akerly, M. D. Stephen Avery, M. D.

FRANCIS W. WALSH, M. D. *Secretary.*





## EULOGY.

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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY :

CALLED, by the unanimous resolution of your Faculty, to render a tribute of respect to the memory of our departed fellow-member, the HON. SAMUEL LATHAM MITCHILL, as the homage of gratitude for his continued and valuable services in the cause of medical science and natural philosophy,—I ought, perhaps, Gentlemen, to have recoiled from the task, and pleaded my insufficiency, my inadequacy for the occasion. And I might have remonstrated with you on the inutility of any such encomiastic display ; for where, Mr. President, had not the name of our illustrious colleague already become familiar ? In what part of the learned world have not his scientific writings found readers, admirers, or disciples ? Or, if we look among ourselves, what bosom is there that has not been used to throb with delight, or sympathetic emulation, at his cordial, his indefatigable philanthropy ?

No : the orator of an assembly like this, convened in solemn recollection, can offer to such auditors nothing novel, nothing unanticipated ; it is a theme of praise, in which the feelings of the American and the stranger must be already alike enlisted. And you, my fellow-citizens, who, in the ordinary intercourse of society, have received true impressions, and formed a just estimate of the merits and usefulness exhibited by our deceased brother, so long as he was sustained by the vigor of his prime ; you might, whatever the fidelity of my statements, still secretly reproach me with falling far short of the original in my feeble outlines of his portraiture.

Such, indeed, is the acknowledged axiom, that encomium can but poorly satisfy the sense of our loss for the worthy and the ven-

erated ; and that when the sage and the genius are stricken from among us, the praise of the orator seems idle. It is their own acts, their own lives, stamped on the memory, that form the fitting eulogy.\* But, Mr. President, these considerations, maturely weighed, seem to be of no avail against my obedient acceptance of the honor of your appointment. I have some claims, also, to strew a few flowers on the grave of MITCHILL, to encircle the cypress of his sepulchre with a votive garland : or to add a few stones to the heap over his tumulus.

For thirty-four years had we been connected by literary and friendly intercourse ; I had been admitted to his confidence, and had enjoyed the honor of being chosen as his coadjutor ; and in the many branches of medical or natural philosophy to which we turned our attention together, he was always my companion or my preceptor. My name has been blended with his, for many years, on various occasions, and has been covered with the ægis of his fame and reputation.

Let us omit all speculation on the unquestionable splendor of these latter, while I place before you, as food for contemplation, the causes and means by which he attained his enviable station in the love, the esteem, and the admiration of his contemporaries.

1. Let us look at MITCHILL in the article of natural talent and progress of education, as a candidate for honors, uncommonly gifted by nature, and well prepared by study.

2. As conferring great lustre on his country by his scientific labors.

3. As exemplary in promoting the public good ; and as a model in his moral, social, and domestic relations.

For any professed judge, it must have been difficult to comprehend how DR. MITCHILL no matter how highly endued with intellectual powers, could have obtained his perfect classical tuition, and have mastered so thoroughly both ancient and modern languages. He was born in the year 1764, in Queens county, Long Island, not

\* Vid Bossuet, Proverbs xxxi. 31



far from New-York. His childhood was therefore contemporary with the horrors and distresses of the revolutionary war, which were seriously felt in the vicinity of the city, and must have been still more severe upon the family in which he was born and reared, the members of which were Quakers. His father was a respectable farmer, with six sons and two daughters. SAMUEL, the fourth child, was apparently intended by nature for a higher destination; but it would have been difficult or dangerous to have placed him at a distance for the sake of better schools and masters than those of his village. The problem of his early advantages begins to be solved only when we are informed that MITCHILL had been blessed with the observant eye and affectionate guidance of a maternal uncle, *Doctor Samuel Latham*, of Hempstead, who, capable of appreciating the latent powers of his nephew, determined to cherish and foster them, by regulating and directing his education. With this aim, having no family, he adopted him as a son, and appropriated a liberal legacy to the exclusive purpose of young MITCHILL'S education. In accordance with these plans, dictated by the purest and finest feelings, SAMUEL LATHAM MITCHILL was placed under the tuition of the Rev. Mr. Cutting, and others, from whom he could derive the best classical scholarship, to be found in the district undisturbed by the war.

Ye parents, here present, blessed with the means of advancing the education of your children; and you who are members of a rising and active generation, with the command of your time, and still able to correct the errors, if such there be, of the education you have received, permit me to warn you to beware of an opinion, now too common and gaining ground, against classical studies preparatory to employments in life that seem not to demand or require intimacy with the ancient languages. This error has found encouragement in a population, which, in its origin, was by the force of circumstances, necessarily devoted unsparingly to agricultural, commercial, and mechanical pursuits. But within half a century, that population has become a great nation, wanting and calling for

a high degree of public instruction, and requiring professional men, trained studiously and severely, for the researches of natural philosophy ; for diplomatic and legislative services ; for the pulpit and the bench ; for medicine and the bar. How then can classical tuition appear to you a matter of indifference ; or how, without it, shall you keep on a level with other nations ?

But, say you, the dead languages are no longer now, as they formerly were, of prime importance : all the extant records and books which they contained have been translated into the living tongues. In reply, I will admit the alleged inutility of the Greek and Latin idioms ; but be assured, that the study of either, or of both, is of positive and immense benefit, surpassing, in the mental discipline it gives, the study of treatises of logic. It imparts an acuteness and elasticity to the perceptions ; exercises the faculty of comparison, and increases the powers of the memory. Having this opinion of its efficacy, Dr. Latham, with a fatherly authority over his adopted child, placed the young MITCHILL under private classical tutors, until a regular seminary could be provided for him. The impatient mind of the scholar embraced these studies with instinctive taste and ardor ; and so intense was his eagerness for improvement, that during the long winter nights, when candle-light was not allowed him according to his wishes, it was his custom to make a preparation of brushwood and other light fuel, by the flame of which he continued his studies long into the night, to the great injury, however, of his eyes, which never entirely recovered their previous strength of vision.

After the return of peace and the victorious achievement of American independence, and before the completion of the 20th year of his age, MITCHILL was directed to repair to Europe, to attend at the courses of one of the most celebrated schools of medicine.

This second period in his education was destined to be as remarkable, as the first had been fortunate ; for in this he became the pupil of some of the greatest physicians and philosophers that the university of Edinburgh, in its palmy day, could boast of ; the



celebrated *John Brown*, of whom it was said in Parliament, that he deserved a statue of gold for the new and philosophical character he had given to the study of medicine ; the venerable *Cullen*, who is ranked among the first European masters of the healing art ; a *Home*, a *Monro*, a *Gregory*, a *Nesbitt*, and an *Alexander Hunter*, whose works constitute such important text-books, and the great *John Black*, one of the fathers of the science of chemistry. Young *MITCHILL* diligently attended to the lectures of these, and of several others, and the courses of natural history, for three years, not only as a matriculated student, but as a *mace-bearer* of the University. This appointment of *Macer* was no small honor, conferred on an American citizen, after the late struggle which had resulted in the separation of the two nations. *MR. MITCHILL* was received in this new circle with a consideration beyond even the claims of his personal recommendations and suavity of manners. A recent traveller in France, and a visitor of the capital, of which he had drawn a lively description, and where he had been gratified by his introduction to the great and to the learned—he was treated in Scotland as a distinguished stranger. Already, too, his talents were confessed ; and he completed his courses in Edinburgh with every credential and testimonial of his diligence, capacity, and devotion to the study of medical and natural sciences ; of the ancient and modern languages ; and even of the elegant arts. One of the extraordinary occurrences of his stay at Edinburgh, was his initiation into the unique and famous Latin Masonic Lodge of the Roman Eagle, of which *Johannes Bruno* was the Grand Master—*ut ferem*, said he himself, *magister edificatorius*. This singular fraternity, erected by *Doct. Brown*, to endear to each other his disciples in medicine, and the proceedings of which were held exclusively in Latin, would of course engage the faithful observance of a *Doctoris Medicinæ Universitatis Edinensis*, who was himself so fair a specimen of classical erudition.

Aware of his renown abroad, the venerable Seminary of his native state, Columbia College, prepared a gratifying reception for



him on his return, by investing him with the degree of *Master of Arts*. He shortly after, with the promptness which he always evinced in his devotion to the public good, and equally to the interests of his own State, undertook an analysis of the Saratoga Springs, amidst the primeval forests still standing around them, by which analysis he imparted the more general confidence in their efficacy, which first threw open a way for the influx of wealth annually poured into this State, by travellers to those sources. He was then, in succession, called to a seat in the Legislature of New-York in 1792, and appointed Professor of Chemistry, Natural History and Agriculture in Columbia College.

I pause here, Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the Medical Society, to forewarn you, that I may not and cannot enumerate, in full series, the deeds of the young patriot and sage. It would be an endless task to follow him closely through every path of learning and economics which he pursued, and to which he came prepared with a capacious and active memory, and an industry and punctuality by which each day was marked with a new acquisition. Besides, the works of MITCHILL now belong to the domain of history; and his biographer will doubtless do ample justice to the details of a life of public services; and to the pre-eminent mind which entitled its possessor to rank in the American constellation of worthies, with a Franklin, a Jefferson, a Ramsay, a Rittenhouse, a Muhlenberg and a Rush. For my own part I can only present you a few of his more striking claims to celebrity by his aids to the Sciences, and in the first place to Chemistry.

MITCHILL commenced his career precisely at the juncture when that science was undergoing a thorough change and reform, the successes of which he pioneered in this country, by promulgating, *ex-cathedra*, from the chair of Columbia College, the Lavoisierian nomenclature. This was the more meritorious, because having been the pupil of *Black* of Edinburgh, he might have consulted his prejudices, and have been pertinacious in maintaining the *phlogistic theory* of his master. And indeed he might well have

been deemed excusable. Had it not been for the impulse of advance, given by the experiments in pneumatics of *Black* and *Priestley*, the French school might have been long delayed and diverted from that decomposition of atmospheric air, of water, and of the oxydes of metals, which laid the foundations of their memorable discoveries.

It was somewhat remarkable that the Birmingham philosopher and MITCHILL should have met at this conjuncture in the new world. The venerable Wurmser of science, (as he styled himself in a published letter,) made strenuous efforts to re-inlist the revolted disciple, whom he found an obstinate and indomitable opponent, notwithstanding the eleven epistles, in defence of the old and crumbling doctrine of Phlogiston, which he addressed to him, and to all of which MITCHILL replied with address and perspicuity, and without the aid of any experimenter.\* The letters of Priestley brought other converts to his cause, which, however was destined soon to sink to insignificance. But the adherence of the American champion to the French school was based on those wide and far-seeing principles of philosophy which often exercise a prophetic grasp. Thus although remote from their laboratories, and without, at the time, connection or correspondence with the French Chemists, yet he, in America, foretold and pointed out one of their principal discoveries. I allude to that of the chlorine, of which, under the name of *Septon* † he gave, in the manner of Darwin, an animated and elegant description, in the year 1797.

“Gnomes ! ye beheld with pity and with pain,  
Organic relics strew the fertile plain ;  
Ye saw, with wondering eyes and rare-drawn breath,  
Infused the peccant principle of death,  
Grim *Septon* ! armed with power to intervene,  
And disconnect the animal machine,  
Within the great disorganizer lurks,  
And plans, unseen, his undermining works.” ‡

This *Septon* is the *Chlore* of *Scheele*, of *Hallé*, of *Vauquelin*, of

\* Vid. Medical Repository, passim.

Vide p. 34 Medic. Repos. O. S. Vol. I. p. 267. ibid. † Med. Repos. Vol. 4. p. 179



*Fourcroy* and of *Guyton de Morveau*; the element of the boasted *chlorides*, so abundantly spread throughout the earth, from bases of calcium, potassium, sodium, &c. "My native acid of *Septon*," said DR. MITCHILL "is a combination of this base with oxygen." (Med. Repos. Vol. 3. p. 16.) It is the same which is the base of the oxygenated muriatic acid, and which is proved by modern chemistry, to be an element of extraordinary nature, and most disorganizing properties.

*Merat* and *Delans*\* inform us that Chlorine abounds in nature, especially in unison with hydrogen and soda. From its strong affinities with many other elements, it is, in the language of MITCHILL, the universal decomposer. It is named from its yellowish-green hue; pure and concentrated, it is deleterious to every thing animated, but united with alkaline earths, it separates and neutralizes putrid compounds; and through the alcalescent medium, dissolves, modifies or consumes the unsound matters of contagion and pestilence, or the virus of diseases.

So too the *Septon* of MITCHILL was to be disarmed of its formidable virulence by the anti-septic virtues of lime, potash, soda, saltpetre and salt. He represented it as a fiend to animal and vegetable life, and such is the Chlorine, which has a suffocating odor, dissolves in water, combines by preference with hydrogen and soda, and deprives all substances of color. This latter property makes it an invaluable assistant in bleaching, for which Berthollet recommended it in combinations which he termed *oxygenated muriates* or *oxygenated muriatic acids*. And just so positively as MITCHILL insisted on lime, potash, soda and soap, in more than a hundred instances, as apt and all-sufficient sanitary applications to arrest and render harmless the destructive principle of *Septon*, so do we now hear applauded the various *chlorides* of lime, potash, soda and salt, to stay the ravages of the pest-house; to purify from filth, and to rank in the *Materia Medica* as anti-septics, relieving or curing maladies. The same salutary and beneficial precautions, now

\* *Merat* and *Delans* Univ. Dict. This work is very recent, 1830.



proclaimed in Europe, in their new and efficient arrangement, with so much pride, were understood and advised by MITCHILL, and adopted on his recommendation by his countrymen, more than thirty years ago.

The sole difference consists in the names of the elements ; and that of *Septon* is the more judicious, because indicative of the nature instead merely of the color of the article. With the same intuitive penetration, MITCHILL anticipated all those so famous results of the experiments made by Sir Humphrey Davy, with the galvanic battery, upon alkaline earths. Before the subject had engaged the attention of Davy, MITCHILL had already supported in a published essay, the supposition that metals might exist in three states,—viz : of *ductility*, when compounded with hydrogen ; *calciform*, of a base united with oxygen ; and the third an intermediate condition, deprived of both hydrogen and oxygen ; and that it was inferable that they might be found existing, without possessing any attribute usually considered as metallic. Next to Chemistry, the science of Mineralogy claimed his attention, receiving at his hands a lustre and improvement, which, for our Northern Continent equalled the accessions of Humboldt in the Southern Hemisphere. His memorable mineralogical report in the year 1796, to the Agricultural Society, and which may be found entire in the Medical Repository, was such a production as placed its author on a level with Werner, Bergman, Berzelius and Haüy. It comprised a statistical view of the boundaries, divisions, mountains, rivers, and levels, and the soils and minerals of his native state, which might be converted into imperishable sources of wealth and industry. It traces geologically the granitic, schistic, limestone and sandstone tracts of the mainland ; and in the islands and alluvions, the primitive and secondary formations, the marshes, beaches, overslaughes and lowlands. This Report is a brief in Mineralogy of universal knowledge ; all is explored and described from the highest mountain ridge, or the craters of extinct volcanoes, to the beds of rivers ; from homogeneous earths and soils, to precious metals, crystalliza-

tions, gems and every combination that has sprung from the operations of fire, water, and of specific gravity.

During his excursions and travels, and out of his intercourse with the learned of every nation, it could not but happen that an immense number of specimens in the mineral kingdom, on which he disserted so profoundly, accumulated under his hands. To this large and precious collection, other natural curiosities of a durable nature, and singular fabrications were added, until it formed a rich cabinet of organic remains, of fossil plants, of shells, of moluscas, madrepores and marine productions, of gems, jaspers, agates crystals, and all remarkable relics. The MITCHILLIAN CABINET, will no doubt contribute much to the instruction of future generations, and to the pleasures of the friends and lovers of Natural History.

Of Natural History, MITCHILL was the patriarch ; and every branch of it had captivated his taste and his genius. And it is singular to reflect how much this province of learning has been the theme of such votaries as have been an honor to their country and their era : without more than naming Pythagoras, Theophrastes, and Aristotle, among the Grecians, and Pliny among the Romans,—what industry and eloquence can vie with those of the indefatigable, the gifted Buffon ; what labors are more worthy of admiration than those of Linnæus ; what lights of reason and talent were Haller, Jussieu, Broussonet, Foster, Spearman, and Robert Smith ; how splendid in intellect were Barton, Muhlenberg, and MITCHILL !

To the delights and charms of botany, MITCHILL was peculiarly susceptible. He was a zealous and active furtherer of the horticultural art : and whenever, by example or endeavor, he could propagate the love of these pursuits, he omitted in the cause neither effort nor expense. Not only did he discourse on them learnedly from the three professorial chairs which he filled in this city, but he was ever ready, among his fellow-citizens, accurately to name or describe every plant referred to his notice ; or to disseminate rare



or useful seeds which he had imported from abroad, or to teach the art of gardening by his own example :—a great disciple, on whom had descended the mantle of Linnæus, yet making his wisdom amiable even to a child ; with a happiness of spirit, as if horticulture were the Eden of the earth. Although he was a general oracle in botany, yet the science was to him but a graceful exercise of memory and an elegant relaxation from severer studies. He has left, among other memorials of the enthusiastic zest and devotion with which he attended to the history of the vegetable kingdom, a discourse, delivered at the anniversary of the N. Y. Historical Society in 1813, which gives an account of every work and writer that has illustrated the botany of North and South America. This admirable explanatory list of records presses irresistibly a singular conclusion upon the mind ; which is, that the population planted in this country, including Canada, has not been, as is sometimes allowed, formed by the refuse and superfluous inhabitants of two great European powers. Not so : the ancestry of the American people can be more justly traced to the best, as well as most adventurous spirits of civilized Europe ; to the philosophic travellers, navigators, naturalists, astronomers, and eminent characters, who since the sixteenth century (1526) down to the middle of the eighteenth, have, during 250 years, crowded to these shores, exploring their territorial extent, the rivers, forests, mountains, and wonderful productions of the soil. The most learned of the Dutch, the English, the French, Danes, Swedes, Portuguese, Spaniards, Germans, and Italians, have made this land their bourne. Some of them and their companions have taken up their abode in it ; some have even ventured to sojourn among the Indian tribes ; or, from North to South, spent years of exploration, at the expense of their governments, carrying home a museum of specimens of the mineral, animal, or vegetable kind. Many such have sought it as an asylum, and their labours and observations have not been lost. The discourse of MITCHILL numbers no less than 150 such contributors on the subject of botany alone. How plausibly then may we not



trace to such a select origin the primitive derivation of the nation ?

We have mentioned, that in acknowledgment and reward of the attention he spent on this branch of natural history, MITCHILL had been appointed President of the N. Y. Agricultural Society in 1792, and Professor of Natural History in Columbia College the ensuing year. He also received the honors of membership and presidency of agricultural or botanic institutions in Virginia and Pennsylvania ; of the Royal Museum, the Linnæan Society, and the Royal Agricultural Societies, of Paris, Prussia, Vienna, and Switzerland ; and of the Agricultural Societies of Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Montreal ; and of the Horticultural Society of this city.

Passing by, wholly, the merits of MITCHILL as a zoologist, ichthyologist, and comparative anatomist, it is time, Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Medical Society, in the present solemnity, to take up that part of the task imposed upon me by your honorable faculty, which more particularly relates to the services rendered to medicine by our departed friend, who was an eminent physician ; a fellow-member of the State and County Medical Societies ; a distinguished Professor in our College and University ; for years a favorite instructor in *Materia Medica* and patron of tyros in the art ; the promoter of the legal privileges of our profession ; the indefatigable adviser, trustee, or attending physician, of our City Hospital, and of a large number of our charitable institutions ; in fine, a most voluminous writer in matters of medical science, and a critical compiler of its records ; accurate in observation, and nice in appreciating experimental and practical resources for allaying diseases ; and inspiring universally a generous and noble emulation, which has not been without its use in extending the benefits of the healing art and elevating the general character of the profession.

MITCHILL had long ago declared that all ancient, medical systems, which the course of centuries had given birth to, merited the reproach of collision and absurdity. That recent hypotheses had

been less preposterous ; yet all alike had only established more fully the fundamental truth, that conjecture may precede experiment, but facts are the only basis of theory. In short, that a long time must elapse, devoted to the collection of these medical facts and observations, before any sole, complete, and final system of medicine can be erected, in accordance with the laws of physics and physiology, still so mysterious and obscure in so many phenomena of organic or animated matter.\* MITCHILL, therefore, could neither be an exclusive supporter of *Cullen* or *Brown*, his former tutors. He could be neither *humorist* nor *solidist* ; he could not dogmatize as an *animist*, or explain the principles of life by the modes of *mechanics*.

Thus fenced with a wise reserve, and unincumbered by the shackles of hypotheses, or bewildered by the illusions of fancy, he entered into his professional career, well resolved to incur no responsibility, beyond what the close study and experience of nature in all her mysteries, had prepared him to meet. He was so fortunate as not to be obliged, by the pressure of exigencies, to rush from the seat of academic honors, at once into the field of practice, **where** it is happy for the young beginner if his talents, quick memory, and moral probity are sufficient to withstand the shock of the heavy responsibility which devolves upon him. He placed himself for a time under the friendly guidance of the celebrated Bard, until invited to the chair of chemistry in Columbia college, and to the clinical attendance of the Great Hospital. It was not until more than ten years after his return from Edinburgh, that he undertook such professional duty as fitted his great scope, and was best calculated to extend or confirm the beneficent influences of his knowledge of the art. This course in MITCHILL cannot be too highly applauded. He employed his time to profit and to good purpose ; and, by observation, recruited a vast amount of experience, before he ventured to sway with his single hand, the wand of Æsculapius : a course than which none more admirable

\* Vide Circular Med. Repos. Vol. I, p. vii.



could be adopted, for insuring the certainty of medicine and exalting the standard of the science.

In accordance with his strong sentiment of the necessity of garnering up facts, in place of cultivating nosologies, the *American Medical Repository*, a periodical repertory of essays, was established by him in 1797, assisted by our much honored friend, Edward Miller, and by Elihu Smith, a young worthy of great promise, too soon removed from the stage of life. MITCHILL was the presiding editor until the close of the 14th volume, when the second editor, in the strength of his age and mental vigor, fell the victim of an epidemic fever. The work was continued under the superintendence and name of the veteran and patronal colleague, until six volumes more were added to the collection ; which had thus become the registry of twenty years of a professional life, unexampled for the innumerable subjects of instruction it afforded, and the services it rendered.

By this work, much applicable knowledge of natural philosophy and medicine was extensively diffused over the country, and the talents drawn forth of unnumbered contributors, through wide regions still subject to the wants and difficulties of new settlements, especially to epidemic recurrences from half-cleared grounds, and to diseases from the variable seasons and the want of acclimating. But labors still more important were accomplished by the editors. Doctrines, which materially concerned the interests of commerce and the intercourse of nations, became a prominent topic in which they took the lead, in defence of induction from facts, observed apart from the prejudice of theories. Several foreign journals entered the arena with them, and not a few athletic combatants enlisted under the banner of MITCHILL ; such for instance as the celebrated *Maclean* and *Moseley* of England, and *Benjamin Rush* of Philadelphia. These were the words of MITCHILL in the year 1800 : “ We flatter ourselves that something substantial has been gained against unjust and odious restrictions, and that much more is likely to be hereafter gained.” (Vol. 10. pref.) The period during



which the Medical Repository existed was one remarkable for repeated prevalences of malignant, fatal epidemics, ravaging our sea-ports, and which severely visited this city. In the discovery of the causes and prevention of these, the editors took an animated part. How far in the present long continuance of the public health, and preservation from the grim invader, they merit the honor of having been judicious, as well as zealous, in their sanitary suggestions, it would not be proper for me, at least, to urge :

But with the stream of time attendant sail,  
Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale.

The Medical Repository, from the beginning, forms a body of information and disquisition on every important subject of medicine, and the materials or adjuncts of the science, embracing the welfare of the whole human race ; and its interest belongs to all countries, times, and conditions of society. It would be invidious to single out the more prominent essays emanating from MITCHILL or from his most valued friends or disciples. Suffice it to say, that the work, as it is, has obtained a distinguished rank, which it must continue to hold in public and private libraries, domestic and foreign, as an emblematical monument of the merits of its originator and patron, who had to boast also of the concurrence in his labours and design of so many of the philosophic and learned in both hemispheres. I do not apprehend that my feelings exaggerate, if I only look back at the honors which were showered at his threshold ; when the two despotic Emperors of Russia and Austria expressed their estimation of our fellow-townsmen by their presents ; the one by a splendid diamond ring, the other by a most choice collection of the minerals of his empire ; and when, among popular testimonials of his abilities, might be counted his investiture into the learned institutions of every capital of Europe and of this country. The seals of more than a hundred of such diplomas of adoption, at home and abroad, bore the name of MITCHILL ; letters-patent of

nobility, which surpass in indisputable value, either knighthood at the hands of kings or the parchments of the herald's office, or titles from hereditary lineage.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Medical Society, I had already remarked to you that there was no part of the world where the name of our great sage had not been heard of, and his writings admired; that my feeble efforts to celebrate his memory might be useless, and even fall far short of the impressions, which you and our fellow-citizens had received, of his merits and numerous services, during that intercourse which the grave has just divided. But even if it be thus—allow me, before we part, to complete his eulogy, by shewing you what a model and example he has been in the discharge of public and civil duties; of those of social urbanity, charity, and philanthropy; and of his moral habits and feelings in his walks with his fellow-men.

That the members of a republic have something to do for their compatriots and country, is a self-evident position; it is a pledge of the liberty enjoyed, and of the justice of the government. Hence the true patriot spontaneously steps forward, to seal with his blood the defence of his native soil; or, in the happier season of security, devotes a portion of his talents and abilities to the common weal. But this admirable spirit of the republican social system is very liable to suffer perversion from egotism or self-interest, eager for an undue share of importance or authority, honors or rewards. Hence republics, ancient and modern, have been so much exposed to factions and dissensions, and sometimes to a fatal change or destruction. The only safeguard that can be interposed, is the national character itself, when it is formed and trained to self-possession, to ready and universal philanthropy, and to an abhorrence of the conflicts of passion for usurping upon the rights or tranquility of others. And such is the fortunate and remarkable character of the North American nation, from habits of observation and speculative industry; even the strangers who daily join her social compact, arrive disgusted with evils at home, or driven



by adversity, or impelled by a projecting mind : and duly prepared for her institutions by the tedious privations and hazards of navigation, and by a suitable, solitary perusal of their past lives.

In a nation so much favored, and thus composed of choicer elements, under the blessings of a free government, a virtuous citizen like DR. MITCHILL might use to the best advantage the power conferred on him by his talents and patriotism. He was still but young, when, in 1790, he was sent by the citizens of his native county to the Legislative Assembly of the State of New-York, in which he re-appeared at a succeeding term, in 1797, by the suffrages of the city of New-York, where he had fixed his residence. His growing reputation and worth soon paved the way to greater honors and trusts ; and he took his seat in the 7th, 8th, and 9th Congresses ; thence he was sent to the National Senate ; he was re-elected to the Legislature, and in fine to the 11th Congress ; his civil services, therefore, included a period of 22 years ; beside his many distinguished employments on great occasions, in municipal offices, and in commercial or monied institutions, in which he acted as Commissioner, or Director, or Manager. But let us inquire whether, with the opportunity and enjoyment of so universal a confidence in his talents and capacity, he used his influence and usefulness for his personal interest, to the aggrandizement of his rank, the increase of his estates, or to public favors for himself or his numerous relatives, more than for any fellow-citizen with equal claims to patronage. Instead of such results, instead of his applying his elevated functions in the nation and state to his proper ease and emolument, he remained contented with the moderate, regular accumulation of his paternal property, assisted by his professional avails, and never betrayed a partizan spirit ; and he made himself the means, through eloquent and persevering exertions, of obtaining many sound laws, which go far to increase our present sum of security and happiness. He obtained in this State the statute for a College of Physicians and Surgeons ; and, in Congress or the Legislature, was foremost in promoting the steamboat navi-

gation of our rivers ; of surveying the canal facilities between the Hudson and the Lakes ; of shortening the term for the naturalization of aliens ; of furthering the acquisition of Louisiana ; of exploring the regions beyond the Rocky Mountains ; of correcting the formerly exposed situation of the port of New-York ; of protecting the destitute condition of the merchants and seamen during the last war ; of requiring by law the just proportion of hands to tonnage in small navigating craft, and the provision of medicine chests ; of disposing the general government to countenance the nascent nations of Spanish America ; of increasing the United States navy ; of endeavoring to guard the coast by floating batteries ; of correcting, by actual measurement, a mistake in the supposed altitude of Navesink Hills, near Sandy Hook, a mistake which was very dangerous to vessels approaching our port. These are a few, and but a few, of the prominent acts of the public life of MITCHILL. Let us also consider him in the less conspicuous department of social and domestic life, and in his own dwelling house, which, for thirty-six years, he changed but once ; and where dignity, hospitality, kindness, and comfort, were exemplary in the welcome extended to the stranger ; in the familiar intercourse of friend and neighbour, and in the relief that so freely, and without parade, was afforded to the afflicted and the distressed.

The affability of MITCHILL and his simplicity of manners, were proverbial ; there naturally were times, indeed, when after long application, he found it difficult abruptly to unbend from deep study, and to counterfeit or assume the easier tone of mind of the occasional visitor ; he then was apt to be slow of speech and absent in address. Yet it was admirable to see with what equanimity he bore the unreasonable demands upon his time, called on, as he was, as umpire of all merits, in inventions, discoveries, projects, arts, sciences, literary subjects and schemes, new books and publications, professional cases, acts of charity or public spirit ; to decide on most multifarious topics, to give advice, or bestow recommendation, as if his very versatile and applicable talents, alike in books or



the business of the world, possessed ubiquity of perception. Of this slavery he would sometimes petulantly complain to a friend ; but he was never disconcerted by intruders, however ignorant, or idle, or indiscreet,---and managed to send each away contented ; nor was he ever perplexed by the bright and burnished wit of men of parts, seeking his society to measure their faculties with his. No man was ever more universally accessible than he—holding so high a place in society, yet he condescended to the lowest without ostentation—descending even to the capacity of a child, to instruct, to encourage the love of study, or to amuse. And notwithstanding the solidity and magnitude of his acquirements, yet he was unequalled in the cheerful and light operations of the mind, which he used as his defence against antagonists, for enemies he had none. With moral dignity and true goodness of heart he forbore all haughtiness of demeanour, acrimony in censure, or heat in disputation ; but when pressed by attack, he was unsurpassed in fine raillery, neat satire and keen sarcasm ; and all the artillery of wit, and mirth, joke and epigram, were ever at his command in repartee. Chaste in mind and conversation, and trained in early habits of guarded speech, he neither permitted nor encouraged the smallest departure from decency and purity of language, nor could he be detected in the utterance of vulgarisms or profane swearing. The morality of his habits was depicted in his household ; in his affectionate regard for his excellent and respected consort, who claimed and received his sincere love, and considerate indulgence in her domestic arrangements ; in his family of young relatives, whom he cherished with the tenderness of a father ; in his servants and attendants, who after emancipation still stayed with their master, and whom we have seen under his roof to the third generation ; in the methodized distribution of the time, and tasks of each individual ; in the refinement and social entertainment that pervaded the quiet and amiable abode ; in the love of order and exercise shown in the precincts of his garden, cultivated and ornamented by his own hand ; and in the weekly rest on the Sabbath, and obser-

vant attendance on the worship adopted by his family, and which he sustained by his example of respect and punctuality.

Our Sage has been accused of infidelity and suspected of scepticism ; but let us be permitted to inquire with what degree of justice or reproach. We have seen him conversant with science in general, frequently invested with professional authority in universities, colleges and other public institutions, where he was responsible for the doctrines he espoused, and philosophical questions he decided ; and that in these positions he never descended to controversy on his opinions or lectures, beyond plain argument inducted from facts ; that when his opponent refused his conviction, he made no further effort, but would shake hands with him as a friend, leave the cause of truth to its own progress, and thenceforward only smile at the ridicule or the rancour with which his late adversary would convert principles into personalities. By many of our fellow-citizens, occasions of the kind are well recollected, and they justify the reserve, the moderation and the strict limitations, which MITHCILL knew how to trace around his expression of opinion in matters of ethics or religion.

—Sunt certi denique fines  
Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere nefas.—*Hor. Sat.*

He was perfectly acquainted with the history of every Christian denomination transplanted to America ; but, he held the liberty of conscience to be the noblest conquest which his country had won ; and he loved not to wound the weakness of self-love, by discussing the merits of one system or sect, over the excellence or the purity of another. He did not join the meeting of the Quakers, which was that of his parents, nor the worship of his adopted father and preceptors ; but he faithfully attended that of his consort, because with her he would be united in life and in death. Diversity of opinion between friends on religious tenets too often includes an unfavorable estimation of the mind or of the heart of each other ; hence disunion and diffidence and, perhaps, feelings more unworthy, take place even between brethren. The charge of

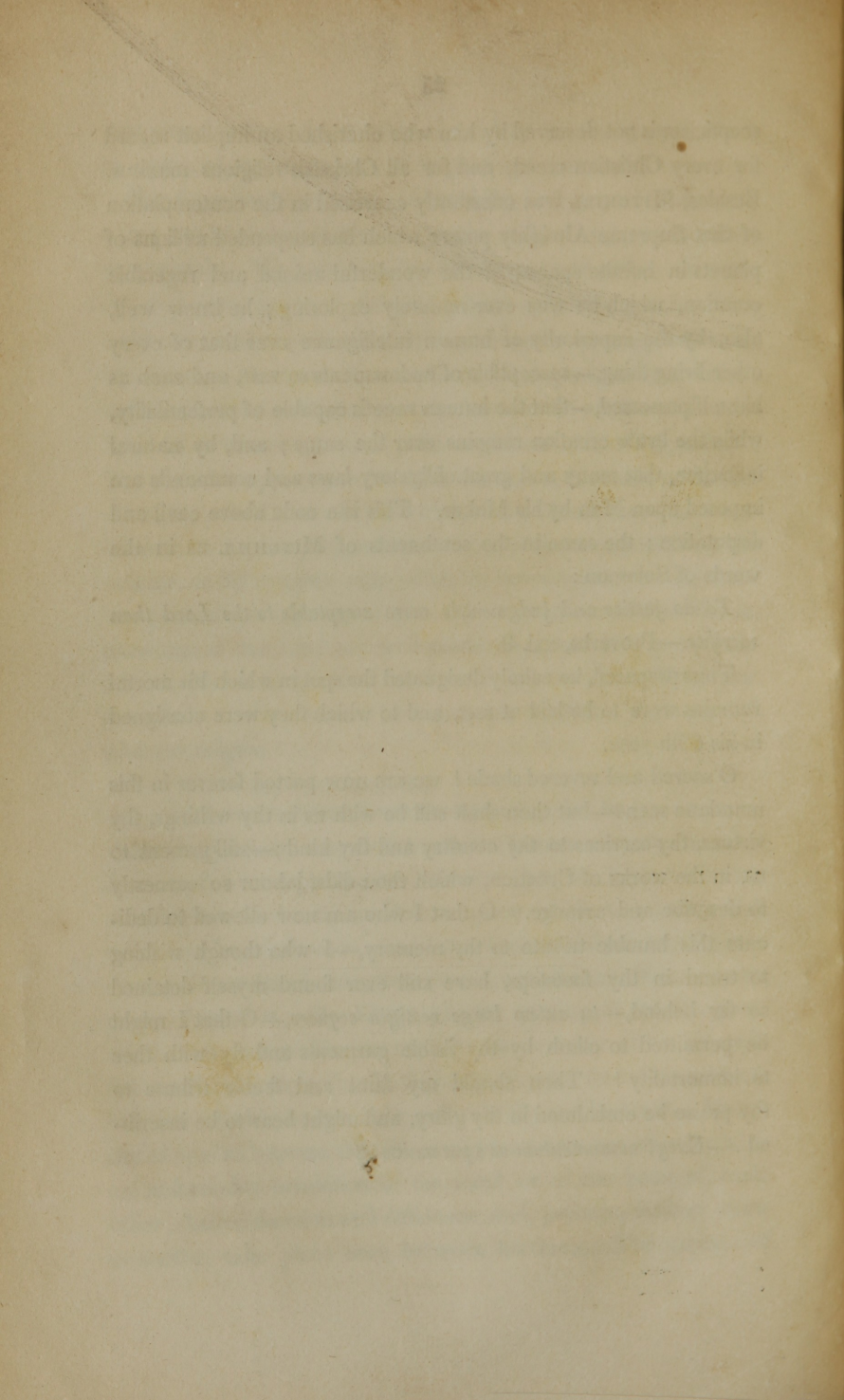


scepticism is not deserved by him who cherished an implicit regard for every Christian creed, and for all Christian religious maxims. Besides, MITCHILL was constantly exercised in the contemplation of that Supreme Almighty power which has suspended millions of planets in infinite space ; of the wonderful animal and vegetable creation, which he was ever minutely exploring ; he knew well, also, by the superiority of human intelligence over that of every other living thing,---susceptible of endowments so vast, and such as himself possessed,---that the human race is capable of perfectibility, while the brute creation remains ever the same ; and, by natural inference, that many and great obligatory laws and commands are imposed upon Man by his Maker. This is a code above cavil and disputation ; the same in the sentiments of MITCHILL as in the words of Solomon :

*To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.*—Proverbs, xxi. 3.

Thus prepared, he calmly designated the spot in which his mortal remains were to be laid at rest, and to which they were consigned in his 68th year.

O sacred and revered shade ! we are now parted forever in this mundane scene—but thou shalt still be with us in thy writings, thy virtues, thy services to thy country and thy kind ;—still present to us, in the works of Creation, which thou didst labour so earnestly to describe and arrange. O that I who am now allowed to dedicate this humble tribute to thy memory,—I who though wishing to tread in thy footsteps, have still ever found myself detained so far behind,—*tu autem longe vestigia sequere*,---O that I might be permitted to climb by thy visible garments and fly with thee to immortality ! Then should my faint and feeble tribute to thy praise be embalmed in thy glory, and might bear to be inscribed :---*Exegi monumentum ære perennius !* !













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