AN ADDRESS

TO THE

CLASS OF MEDICAL GRADUATES

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

DELIVERED AT

THE PUBLIC COMMENCEMENT, APRIL 2d, 1841.

BY

GEORGE B. WOOD, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF MATERIA MEDICA AND PHARMACY IN THE UNIVERSITY.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY L. R. BAILEY, 26 NORTH FIFTH STREET.

1841.

Wood (Geo. B.) Dr. Franklin Bache
With the best respects of
the Author.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

Philadelphia, April 3d, 1841.

Dear Sir.—In behalf of the Graduating Class—and as their committee—we beg leave to tender you our most grateful acknowledgments for the excellent and appropriate Address delivered before them on the 2d instant; and to assure you of the heartfelt gratification experienced by them on that occasion. Furthermore, we beg, that you will increase our sense of obligation, by complying with the united wishes of the Class for a copy of the same for publication.

With sentiments of the highest esteem,

We remain your's, &c.,

John H. Parrish,
Daniel B. Anderson,
Moses F. T. Evans,
Robert P. Hall,
J. F. Hammond,
John N. Smith,
James C. Walker.

Professor George B. Wood.

Philadelphia, April 3d, 1841.

Gentlemen.—I feel much gratified by the opinion you have been so good as to express, on the part of the Class of Graduates, in relation to my Address; as it evinces at least their kind feelings towards the author. As the Address was prepared for the benefit of the Class, so is it entirely at their disposal. I could only wish it were more worthy of the honour proposed for it. Accept for yourselves and for those whom you represent, the assurance of my affectionate regard.

Your friend,
George B. Wood.

Drs. John H. Parrish, Daniel B. Anderson, Moses F. T. Evans, Robert P. Hall, J. F. Hammond, John N. Smith, James C. Walker.

ADDRESS.

Gentlemen,

In compliance with custom, and with the dictates of their own feelings, your teachers propose to address to you a few words of congratulation, of counsel, and of good wishes, before they and you part, never to meet again in the same relation. We have endeavoured, to the best of our ability, to aid you in preparing for the duties upon which you are about to enter; we have carefully and solicitously examined your qualifications for these duties; and we have had pride in presenting you to the authorities of this school as meriting its formal testimonial in your favour. That testimonial you have received in the degree of Doctor of Medicine which has just been conferred upon you. We congratulate you upon your honourable entrance into the ranks of our profession, and gladly offer you the hand of fellowship. But we shall not have fully discharged our obligation, without adding to the lessons you have already received some hints, out of the stores of our experience, which may be found useful in the long and arduous course of life you this day commence.

You have gained one great requisite to success—a good starting-point from which to throw yourselves forward into the future. With the aid of your teachers, you have risen above the obstructions which impede every attempted flight from the surface, and have reached a spot in the ascent of knowledge, whence enterprize may boldly spread her wings in the air, and be assured of support. But it would be a great mistake to content yourselves with this advantage. No error is more fatal to the young physician, than the notion that the period of study is

passed, and that hereafter he has only to act. To sustain a vigorous advance, it is necessary that, to the store of intellectual strength which he has accumulated in youth, he should make incessant additions at every stage of his progress. His ascent, unlike that of the projectile whose velocity diminishes constantly as the original impulse upon which it depends is exhausted, should rather resemble the flight of the eagle, who draws in new strength with every inspiration, and mounts steadily towards his goal. The knowledge which you have acquired should be considered only as a key to the vast storehouse whose riches are now open to you. If you aspire after excellence in your profession, merited success in life, and an honourable distinction—and there is probably not one among you who does not cherish such aspirations—you will look upon the present merely as a period of holyday relaxation, to be followed by renewed labour in the attainment of medical knowledge.

It is not probable that your time will for some years be quite absorbed in practical duties. The course of things, in this world, is much better ordered than if left to our own wishes, which, in the eagerness of pursuit, would leap over all obstacles, and if possible annihilate time and space. Existence, under our own guidance, would be nothing more than a rapid succession of wish and fruition—a thunderstorm in the night, with its flashes and its peals, and darkness between. We should lose the gentle excitement of alternate hope and fear, the pleasingly changeful sunshine and shadow of the landscape of life. We should lose the sweet reward of mental and bodily toil; the sense of enjoyment, namely, which Providence kindly mingled with the cup of labour which he gave to all men to drink. We should lose, moreover, those luxurious intervals of repose, when, seated beneath our own arbour, at our own household door, with all that is most dear about us, we look out upon the green, the blossoms, and the fruits, and feel that they are all ours, and that we have earned them. Be assured, gentlemen, that rapid and unearned success in life is not desirable. It is well, therefore, in reference merely to your own good, not to speak of the good

of others, that you should have further time for preparation; that the practical business of your profession should come gradually, so that while your circle of duties is widening, you may have the opportunity of extending equally that of your qualifications.

You may ask for instruction as to the course of study best calculated to advance you in the knowledge of your profession. In the first place, it is highly important that you should proceed with system. Desultory medical reading may furnish you with a mass of rich materials; but they will be irregularly heaped together in your memory, and mingled, moreover, with much that is merely rubbish; so that, in answering the demands of practical emergencies, you may ransack your store in vain for the desired object, and, in your haste and confusion, will even be liable to draw forth for use something wholly inapplicable to the end proposed. There is, moreover, in this sort of reading a dissipation which, as in every other pursuit, whether mental or physical, enervates the faculties which are called into play, and, if long indulged, unfits for any steady and laborious effort. In your medical studies, therefore, we would advise you to fix upon some systematic course, beginning with those elementary subjects which lie at the basis of the science, and, in your progress upwards, endeavouring always to master first those points in the ascent, the possession of which will facilitate your attainment of something higher.

But our science includes several distinct practical departments, in all of which it is scarcely possible for any one individual to attain great proficiency. We may err almost as much by perseveringly endeavouring to carry more than our arms will hold, as by being content with less. The greedy little child, who, unwilling to relinquish any portion of the desirable things within his reach, finds one thing after another falling from his arms as fast as he fills them, and at last, after repeated efforts, lets them all drop and begins to cry, is but the miniature of the ambitious student who wishes to learn everything, and, failing in the attempt, gives up in despair and abandons

study altogether. The best course is that each one should consult his peculiar turn of mind, and, as far as possible, his capacity, and give a corresponding direction to his studies. In medicine, a certain degree of acquaintance with all the branches is desirable, and to one whose sphere of action may lie in the country, is indispensable; but especial skill is attainable only by a concentration of effort; and he who wishes to excel should push his investigations preferably along some one route, though he may profitably cast his eye over the neighbouring tracts as he proceeds, and may occasionally diverge so as to get a general view of the whole region.

The steady pursuance, however, of a certain course of study should not prevent you from paying a particular attention to those forms of disease which may happen to come under your notice. We always read more intelligently, and better remember what we read, when the object of study is before us. Whenever, therefore, a case may occur to you upon which you may be conscious of insufficient information, suspend for a time your regular plan, until you have investigated, in relation to the complaint, all the authorities within your reach. Such interruptions, though they may break the continuity of the stratum of your studies, will, like cross-veins of some precious metal, greatly enhance their value. In exploring your memory for resources in any case of difficulty, you will find these deposits at once most obvious to your researches, and most productive of the aid you seek for.

I cannot leave this subject, without again endeavouring to impress upon you the importance of devoting the early years of your practical life to the continued prosecution of your medical studies. The physician who considers his degree as a dispensation from future intellectual labour, and henceforward looks only to the fruits of his profession, will be apt to reap but a scanty harvest; or, even should fortune cast his lot on some rich prarie-soil which yields abundantly to a very careless culture, will find himself unprepared to gather in the abundant crop, which may thus perish upon his hands. It will be in vain, when he begins to experience the want of more

ample professional resources; when he finds the magic stream which he has set in motion by an accidentally discovered word, flowing in upon him, and threatening to overwhelm him, because unprovided with that other word which would enable him to control its movements; it will be in vain, at this late period, that he may strive to repair the consequences of early neglect, and seek safety for his reputation, and peace for his conscience, by a late pilgrimage to the shrine of science. Knowledge, like the fabled Roman sibyl, makes the offer of her treasures once, twice, thrice, on each successive occasion diminishing the amount offered, and at last threatening to withhold all if her last offer is rejected. As we advance in life, we find it impossible to break through the crust which early neglect may have allowed to gather around our faculties, and which has become hardened by habit. It is only by a constant expansion that, like the young growing shell-fish, the intellect can prevent that concretion which is ever disposed to form about it, from becoming so firm as to restrain all future increase. A neglect of your early opportunities will prove in great measure irreparable, when time and experience shall bring with them a due sense of their importance. On the contrary, by cultivating assiduously those opportunities, you will find your knowledge growing with the growing demands upon it; you will experience a happy harmony between your avocations and your capacity; and, when in the full career of business, with the life and temporal happiness of great numbers in your keeping, though you may feel sensibly the deficiencies even of the highest knowledge, you will at least escape the ever present and ever gnawing consciousness, that your capabilities are not only beneath the level of your times, but also far beneath what nature and opportunity had enabled them to become.

The point, perhaps, next in importance to the acquisition of a due store of medical knowledge and skill, is the cultivation of a proper professional spirit. This is to the physician the very soul of his occupation, which, without it, would be a mere lifeless instrument for the supply of his necessities, a dead

compost to quicken and nourish the crop of his sordid enjoyments. He who considers his profession as an avenue to nothing higher than pecuniary gains, and limits his efforts accordingly, will find his capacity, and, unless under strong religious influences, his conscience also dwindling to the measure of his views. Next to an ever present feeling of responsibility to a higher power, there is no principle so influential in promoting every liberal and useful effort, in restraining every irregular or sordid act, in giving a high tone at once to sentiment and conduct, as a true professional spirit, which looks beyond personal profit to the respectability, honour, dignity, and general usefulness of a calling.

But this principle should not be confounded with the *esprit de corps*, which is nothing more than a sort of cohesive affinity between the constituent particles of an aggregate body, a selfish principle which yields for the sake of receiving support, which has no reference to the aims of the mass which it actuates, and is quite as efficient for evil as for good. The true professional spirit forgets the individual in the great objects of the profession; the *esprit de corps* thinks of the calling only from its connexion with the individual. The former can exist only where there is something great or noble or useful to support it, and breathes most freely in a pure atmosphere; the latter lives as well on garbage as on luxuries, and finds a congenial air wherever there is a crowd. The *esprit de corps* requires no cultivation. It springs up spontaneously in the soil of association, and flourishes vigorously upon the passions, the interests, and the selfish calculations which are everywhere abundant. The true professional spirit, on the contrary, is a delicate plant, which is developed only under the warmth of generous feeling, requires the careful nurture of good principles and dispositions, and is in constant danger of being choked by the sordid growth around it. But then it is exceedingly sweet and beautiful; and its fruit is honour to the profession and benefit to mankind.

This feeling naturally arises, in a well-constituted mind, upon the perception of an elevated character, and of noble and beneficent objects in the profession to which it is attached.

Let us examine how far the profession of medicine offers such claims to the devotion of those who have enlisted themselves under its banner. You will surrender yourselves with a more complete and more hearty self-abandonment to the service of your new mistress, should she be found worthy at once of your highest esteem and your warmest affection.

In estimating the character of a profession, we should consider the nature of the qualifications required for its due exercise, the end towards which it is directed, and the influence it is calculated to exert upon its votaries. Deficiency in any one of these respects would be a serious drawback to its merits; while excellence in all would give it a claim to the very highest consideration. A few words on each point will serve to indicate the proper position of our profession.

I know of no calling which requires a wider extent of knowledge for its due exercise. The study of medicine considers man both physically and morally, both in a healthy and diseased state, and in all those relations which have any bearing upon the soundness of his body or mind. It goes out into exterior nature, and investigates intimately every agent which has the power to produce, to prevent, to cure, or to alleviate disease. It inquires into the mutual action and reaction of bodies, and into the changes in nature, form, or position resulting therefrom, so far at least as these circumstances are connected with the functions of the human system, the operation of exterior agencies upon that system, or the modification of such agencies by natural or artificial causes. Anatomy, physiology, pathology, psychology, botany, mineralogy, zoology, chemistry, and natural philosophy, are but a portion of the sciences which contribute to the constitution, or themselves form a part of the complex science of medicine. The accomplished physician is also expected to have some acquaintance with the languages of Greece and Rome; and, if he wish to avail himself of all the resources within his reach, must cultivate also those modern languages, such as the French and German, which are the most frequent vehicles of new medical thoughts, facts, and disquisitions. As a gentleman, moreover,

associating intimately with the best instructed and most polished members of the community, he should be more or less conversant with polite learning, and familiar with the various topics of the day, whether literary, scientific, or political.

But knowledge is not his only essential qualification. He should possess, in addition, a practical skill derived from a close personal observation of disease, and of the application and effects of remedies. He should have the graces of a gentlemanly deportment, and familiarity with the conventional forms of good breeding; so that he may avoid wounding the often morbid delicacy of his patients, and adding the irritations of an offended taste or ruffled temper to the evils of the disease. He should be endowed, in an eminent degree, with the qualities of a good heart, rectitude of principle, and firmness of purpose; for in no profession are the temptations to a relaxation in the performance of duty stronger; and in none are the consequences of such relaxation so fatal to comfort and happiness in this world. I need scarcely say, in fine, that a good, native intellectual basis, is essentially requisite for the erection of that superstructure of knowledge which is expected of every physician; and that the faculties of a quick perception, good judgment, and accurate reason, are indispensable to a just solution of the intricate problems which disease frequently presents both in its nature and mode of cure. It is a great mistake to select medicine as a sort of hiding-place for deficient intellect; for, though a solemn exterior may for a time impose upon the public, it cannot long conceal the vacancy within from penetrating eyes; and the mischief which may have accrued, in the meantime, is incalculable and irremediable.

Such, then, are the qualifications in knowledge and character which the accomplished physician brings into the practice of his profession. Let us inquire whether the objects for which he employs them are of equivalent importance. These objects are the preservation of life, and the restoration and maintenance of health. None, certainly, can be of higher value in reference to this world alone. But the mere mention of them produces no impression. When life first opened upon us, there

seemed about it a holiness, like that of the ark, which it was sacrilege to touch. We shrank with a shuddering fearfulness from the thought of its extinction; and the word which spoke of our mortality, thrilled through us like a summons to judgment. Language was then a true picture of reality. But we have subsequently heard so much of life, death, and futurity, that our sensibility to the awful import of these sounds has become exhausted. Like the oft-repeated tolling of the church bell in our vicinity, they fall upon our ears, but we do not hear them. We are told of the value of life, and readily admit the fact; but it makes no impression, and we turn away to some indifferent object. We acknowledge the great importance of the profession whose business it is to save life; but we do not feel it. To realize its importance we must be, or imagine ourselves, in a situation to require its aid. Let this touchstone be applied to the profession of medicine.

Suppose yourselves upon a sick bed, in the crisis of a very dangerous disease, with the full consciousness of your condition. You look through the portals of eternity, and view an awful obscurity before you. The past, with its joys and troubles which now seem joys, its hopes and fears, its host of things done and undone, its certain faults and doubtful virtues, whirls through your recollection like a long dream of enchantment, from which you are about to awake into some dread reality. The sweet affections of this world entwine about your retreating form and strive to hold you. Connubial and kindred love cling with fond arms around you, and with tears entreat you not to desert them. But an irresistible force seems to impel you onward. You are on the brink of the abyss; a dizzy mist comes over your senses; you are on the point of falling. But the eye of professional skill is watching over you, and, at the moment of despair, an arm is extended to save you. With its support and guidance you return to life and health; and, oh! what joys attend your path. How beautiful is every object; how balmy the air; how delicious the fragrance; how sweet the music around you! Nature springs with radiant smiles and extended arms to meet you. Every sense appears to have been

baptized into a new and exquisite susceptibility of enjoyment. Life and its affairs have acquired new interest to your regenerated feelings. Your bosom swells with kindly emotion towards every animated thing; and your thoughts ascend, from the midst of the temple of your enjoyment, with deep humility and ardent thankfulness to the Author of all. This is no fictitious picture. Thousands and tens of thousands are realizing it every day.

But it is not our own lives only, with all their renewed enjoyments, that we sometimes owe, under Providence, to the skill of the physician. We are often in want of the same aid for those most dear to us. There are many present, I have no doubt, who have sat by the bedside of some near relative in alarming illness, watching with anxious eye each movement of the patient, fearful that every breath might be the last, and longing, with a scarcely repressible impatience, for the approach of him upon whom every earthly hope depended. And when at last the physician came, with what trembling eagerness was he greeted. How intensely did the strained eye scan his features, to gather from their expression the message of hope or despair. What relief, what joy, when the inquiring gaze was answered by a smile of encouragement and confidence! How did the heart overflow with gratitude for that kind watchfulness, that unwearied attention, that skill, which had brought the tempest-tossed bark, laden with so many hopes, once more to a safe haven. It is in such moments as these that we feel the full value of medical services.

Even when the efforts of the physician are unsuccessful, there is a priceless consolation to the survivors in the reflection that nothing has been left undone which skill could accomplish. The practitioner, indeed, often finds with some surprise that his warmest and firmest friends are those who have lost some dear relative under his care. His kind attentions are indissolubly associated with the memory of the dead; and no petty feeling of self-love, which too often endeavours to lighten a burdensome sense of obligation by undervaluing the favours received, can, in this instance, mar the first impression of affectionate gratitude.

Were our profession unable to prolong life, were its only service to shorten and alleviate disease, and render life more comfortable, it would still be the instrument of great benefit to mankind. How often do we see pains almost beyond human endurance, which extort groans and even cries from the strong man, retiring at the command of the physician, and leaving the patient, to use a frequent expression of his own, in a heaven of relief! How often are the discomfort and unfitness for any useful exertion, which have been running through months of some chronic malady, cut short in a few days, or in a few weeks, by medical interference! Not to speak of the immense mass which is thus, in the aggregate, taken off from the load of human wretchedness, the contribution which is made to the productiveness of human industry, in all its forms, by augmenting the time and capacity for labour, is altogether incalculable. Not only, therefore, does our profession accomplish its own immediate ends of preserving life and health, with all their abundant blessings, but it indirectly also promotes the ends of every other profession, by augmenting the agency through which these ends are attained.

It yet remains to inquire what are the influences of our profession upon its own members. At the very threshold of this inquiry we are met by two notions, to a certain degree prevalent, that the study of medicine disposes to infidelity, and its practice to disputation and strife. That there have been many unbelievers among physicians, and that public attention has been occasionally called to our disputes, is not denied. But of what profession or pursuit in life cannot the same be said? The chief cause of our peculiar reputation in these respects, is probably the circumstance that we are distinguished by a peculiar designation, which reflects more or less upon the whole class the credit or discredit of each individual. If a lawyer, a soldier, a merchant, or a gentleman without profession, should happen to be an unbeliever, or should be so unfortunate as to quarrel with his neighbour, the imputation rests with himself, and no one thinks of inquiring to which of these several classes of men he belongs, much less of fixing his fault

or his misfortune upon his calling. But if a physician fall into the same predicament, his title of doctor directs the public attention at once to the great body of doctors, and we are compelled to pay for the very doubtful honour of our distinctive designation, the very extravagant price of public odium. Nay, the faults and follies of those who bear the same title as ourselves without belonging to us, go to swell the charges against our profession; and I doubt not that, by many, the crimes of the late notorious Dr. Francia himself are laid at our door. The truth is that, among physicians as among other men, there are believers and unbelievers; and that, as other men, we occasionally differ among ourselves, and are so unwise as to bring our differences before the public; but that there is any peculiar tendency in the profession to either of these results, is altogether a mistake. On the contrary, the natural tendency of medical studies, by bringing before the mind innumerable instances of the wisest and most benevolent design, is to impress strongly upon the conviction the existence and attributes of Deity; and, at least within the circle of my own observation, a remarkable harmony prevails in the profession, even in instances where there is an apparent opposition of interests.

It scarcely consists with the occasion to enter into a philosophical disquisition upon the influences of profession in the formation of character; otherwise it would not be difficult to prove, that each practical pursuit has a tendency to stamp its own peculiarities, in a greater or less degree, upon the individual; so that, if the course of study be comprehensive and liberal, and the course of action nobly directed, the intellectual and moral character will be in a corresponding degree expanded and elevated. Now it has been shown that the study of medicine covers a vast tract of human knowledge; and it may be said to join, by an indefinite boundary, many of those departments which do not absolutely fall within its limits. It has been shown, also, that its practice is directed to the noblest results of human pursuit, short only of those which are to be found in a future existence. If, then, there be truth in human reason, the general character of the profession, wherever cir-

cumstances admit of its legitimate and full development, should be at once liberal and exalted, embracing a wide expanse of diversified interest, and elevated above mean and sordid views and calculations. And are not the deductions of reason justified by observation? In those countries where medicine has been duly cultivated, do we not find physicians prominent among the competitors for honour in almost every branch of literature and science? Are not their names enrolled, in large proportion, in the catalogue of every learned society? Is there a feasible project of public usefulness which does not receive their support? Is there a charity to which they do not contribute largely out of their comparatively slender means, and still more largely by their services, professionally and otherwise? Most assuredly there is no profession which gives up more of its time, and labours more assiduously, without reference to pecuniary compensation, than the medical. Endowed by its very constitution with peculiar faculties for the relief of human misery, it is impelled to the exercise of these faculties whenever occasion offers, and is thrown, almost by the necessity of the case, into a course of benevolent action. I presume that I am rather falling short of the truth than exceeding it, when I state my impression, that at least one-half of the time and service devoted by physicians to practical professional pursuits, at all events in large cities, is entirely gratuitous. It is indeed a question, whether this disregard of their pecuniary interests is not carried by physicians to the very verge of injustice; whether they have not so long accustomed the public to expect gratuitous service, that it has at length come to be considered as a right; whether, in fine, the readiness, I had almost said eagerness, with which they seize upon every opportunity for the charitable exercise of their skill, has not produced a general impression that, on all such occasions, they, and not the public, are the favoured party.

Nor is it only in the prompt surrender of their time and efforts at each call of duty, irrespective of all direct emolument, that physicians illustrate the generous and liberal spirit of their profession. In the ordinary avocations of life, a useful invention

or discovery is considered as a just title to peculiar emolument; and no one hesitates to avail himself of the law which secures to him, for a limited period, the exclusive control of the new source of profit which he has created. But it is not so with physicians. The results of their labour and genius, whether new views of disease, new remedies, or new processes of cure, though years, nay a lifetime of labour and research may have been devoted to their discovery and elaboration, are unhesitatingly thrown into the lap of the profession, and made the common property of all. It is considered altogether unprofessional to keep secret, with a view to pecuniary advantage, any valuable remedy; and few regular physicians or surgeons have deigned to resort to the protection of the patent law. The only legitimate advantages to the individual, according to the strictest professional code, are the credit of the discovery, the consequent probable increase of profitable occupation, and the heartfelt satisfaction attendant upon the consciousness of having contributed to the honour of the profession, and to the general good.

Such, gentlemen, in its character and tendencies is the profession to which you now belong. It is a profession of which you may well be proud, affording scope for the exercise of your best faculties and affections, tending by its noble purposes to elevate you above all that is low and sordid; and making you the honoured instruments of the greatest earthly good to your fellow men. Open your hearts, gentlemen, to the spirit which it would breathe into you, and cherish this spirit, like a sacred fire, by the vestal ministration of your highest and purest feelings. Commingled with your moral sense, it will shed a bright light about your steps, which in the darkest period of temptation will enable you to keep in the true path of honour and usefulness. Before this light, the phosphorescent splendour which often beautifies corruption itself will fade away, and you will see the rottenness as it really is. The glittering exterior of dishonourable success, which so often reflects the images of proud triumph to the eyes of the multitude, will be found a mere tinsel cover to self-reproach and conscious

degradation. What if, under a system of false pretension, of unworthy contrivance, of tortuous policy winding itself into every opening however foul and crooked, a physician should attain a certain amount of temporary success; what if, in opposition to better knowledge, he should trim his sail to some popular breeze, and raising the flag of homœopathy, Thomsonism, or some other folly of the day, should glide out of the obscurity in which he may hitherto have been concealed into a short-lived notoriety; what if, abandoning all regard to decent appearance, he should hang out the meretricious allurements of the vender of secret nostrums, and gather wealth and splendour by the wages of his professional prostitution; is all the success, or ten times the success which he may meet with in the world, the slightest remuneration for that self-loathing with which he must look into his own corrupt interior, for that pity or scorn with which he is conscious that he is regarded by his former professional brethren, and by the most enlightened individuals of the community which he disgraces? But I wish not to be misunderstood. It is only those who sin against better knowledge that are here referred to. Conscientious convictions should be respected, even though based upon ignorance and delusion; and, so prone is the human intellect to every kind of aberration, that we may readily admit the possibility of an honest conversion from orthodoxy in medicine to the wildest creed that ever sprang from a deluded imagination. We can even suppose that an educated physician may become a convert to some Mormonism in medicine, and, under the scourge of public contempt, feel all the consolations of a martyr. For such delusions there should be no other feeling than compassion, as there is no other cure than time. That the public should suffer is a misfortune; but this is equally the result of ignorance and delusion on their part, and is probably one of the means, in the wise course of Providence, for the eradication of error, and the ultimate diffusion of light and truth.

Imbued with the true spirit of the profession, you will be elevated above all these sources of error in conduct and judgment. In shaping your own course, you will always have

reference to the honour of your calling, which, as it is based upon truth, and aims only at the good of mankind, will in your relations with one another, with your patients, and with the world, have a tendency to keep you within those great ethical rules which have the same origin and object. Under this influence, you will, in every doubtful case, ask yourselves the question, whether the proposed course will conduce to peace and harmony among physicians, to the welfare of those entrusted to your charge, to the general good of society, and to the due estimation and consequent influence of your profession among men; and, according as this question is answered affirmatively or negatively, will unhesitatingly advance or recede, even though your apparent immediate interests may suggest a different conduct. Nor in the end will you ever have occasion to repent the seeming sacrifice. The instances are few, indeed, in which perseverance in a strictly honourable professional course, with a due degree of enterprise and industry, has not led to ultimate success; while, in our voyage through life, we are constantly passing the wrecks of hopes once as fair as our own, stranded upon the shoals of temporary interest and disreputable expedient.

We have thus, gentlemen, in taking our last farewell of you as a body, endeavoured to leave with you, as a parting gift, some thoughts for your professional guidance, which I have no doubt will be received in the same kindly spirit in which they are offered. It gives us great pleasure to present you, in addition, with the acknowledgment of our entire satisfaction, our more than satisfaction, with your deportment and exertions during the past winter, and with the general success which has crowned your efforts. From the peculiar relations of our school towards the country, and towards the sister schools which have sprung up everywhere in such rapid succession, it has happened that a progressive improvement has been observable in the classes of graduates who have annually left our walls; and I am authorized by my colleagues to say, as their united sentiment, that the present class constitutes no exception to the general rule. We have, indeed, been exceedingly gratified by

the result of the recent examinations, which, though assuredly not less rigorous than those of preceding years, have evinced a degree of preparedness on the part of the candidates, which has been equalled on no former occasion within our recollection. We send you forth, therefore, with entire confidence that your future course will be creditable to yourselves and to the institution whose honours you bear. It is scarcely necessary to say that, wherever you go, you will carry with you our warmest sympathies. We have indeed a personal interest in your conduct and success. Scattered over every part of the country, you will be the standard by which men will judge of the merits of the school in which you were instructed:—and we are willing to abide the test. Whether your present grade of character and professional attainment, or the position you are hereafter to occupy, be regarded as the criterion, we are willing to rest our claims to public approval upon the result of an impartial judgment. Perhaps, the very consideration that the reputation of your alma mater is in some measure in your hands, may add a generous and effective impulse to the other motives which urge you onward in the course of honourable exertion. There is no purer source of satisfaction, in this world, than so to stand in the eyes of men as to reflect back honour upon those to whom we have been in any degree indebted for early culture.

But, gentlemen, we must bid you farewell. Crowds of thoughts and emotions press upon us at this moment of separation, which time is wanting to express. We must content ourselves with referring to your own good sense for all of counsel, and to your own hearts for all of feeling that we are compelled to leave untold. May the divine blessing attend you throughout this life, and follow you into the life to come.

May 16. 1841.