GALENISM:

AN ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

GRADUATING CLASS OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF INDIANA.

By THEOPHILUS PARVIN, M. D., LL. D.

Prof. of Obstetrics and the Diseases of Women and Children.

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Gentlemen of the Graduating Class: It is at once my duty and privilege to congratulate you upon your recent honors. The first-born of this medical school, you are the heralds of those who in successive years shall stand where you now stand, and depart as you will soon depart to exercise the noblest of secular avocations. You are to be the first living epistles, known and read of all men, asserting the fidelity of your instructors and the fitness of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Indiana to take high rank among the medical institutions of the country. Socrates taught his disciples that they should not so much desire to be known for being philosophers as to honor philosophy by living virtuous lives; and let your chief honor be not that you are physicians, but that your professional lives shall bring new glory unto medicine.

And now in this final hour, amid all the glad emotions of success, of hope, of ambition incident to the occasion, before these witnesses attesting their deep concern in your entrance upon professional life, in this temple of the living God, what farewell words shall be uttered, what final counsels are most suitable, and how can I contribute in some slight degree to your future usefulness, happiness, and honor? The usual topics for such occasions—the trials, responsibilities, rewards, and general conduct of professional life; its temptations, its progress, its philanthropic character, its true glory, etc.—are indeed very old and familiar; they have been presented again and again with all the graces of rhetoric and all the powers of eloquence. Old and familiar though they are, they can never be trite and forever cast aside. In this regard history repeats itself; they recur as the seasons recur; they come as like

periods of life in individuals of successive generations. The tale of love is an old one—old as Eden—but immortal as the race. It was uttered before the Red Sea swallowed up the Egyptian host; uttered before the Roman eagles swept over Judea; uttered beside the plashing of Galilean wave, or amid the dark recesses and beneath the rustling leaves of olive-groves. This mighty passion burned in Leander's bosom unquenched by the Hellespont; it glowed in Petrarch's verse, and until the end of time some beauteous Genevieve will be learning

> 'All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
> All are but ministers of love,
> And feed his sacred flame.'

The love of parent for child is the same now as when the old patriarch wept over the bloody coat of his beloved son, or when Israel's monarch bewailed the dead Absalom, or when the widow of Nain followed the corpse of her only child to the burial-place, or when another mother climbed the Alpine cliff, so steep that hardy mountaineers dared not, to rescue her babe from the eagle's nest. Valor and patriotism, these are old, these are new; Leonidas and his companions at Thermopylæ; Horatius

> ——'facing fearful odds
> For the ashes of his fathers
> And for the temples of his gods;'

Arnold Winkelried gathering into his bosom a sheaf of Austrian spears, and thus making way for liberty—are historic figures representing sentiments that never die. The sweet lullaby that hushed many an infant to its rest to-night was sung, and the simple prayer that in many a Christian nursery floated from child-lips heavenward was uttered long years before the land was girdled with railroads, or ocean surface plowed with steam and its depths made the whispering-galleries of the nations. Spring is coming—is coming with the breath of the warm south wind, with verdant fields, bursting bud, unfolding leaf, with blooming flowers and the

sweet carolings of birds—but she has no treasure differing from those she brought in the years gone by, or will bring in the years to come. And if to-night I utter a tale much more than thrice told—repeat that which was said long before we were born, and will be said long after we are buried—it is because like occasion invites like thought, and the work of the physician is the same from age to age.

The late Sir James Simpson, in an address at the University of Edinburgh many years ago, stated that it was the custom in some ancient continental universities to present the graduate on the day he received his doctorship with a ring, a barette, an open and a sealed book. The study of these symbols will give us an ideal of the medical character, a picture of the medical life.

The ring represented the marriage of the physician to medicine. Here is thy bride to have and to hold, for richer for poorer, for better for worse, to love and to cherish until death do you part; a bride whose beauty and grace will more and more unfold with each passing year, and hold a loyal heart in willing bonds. Coleridge once playfully remarked of Southey, whose devotion to books was constant, that his library was his wife. Now it is not suggested that celibacy is the normal condition of a doctor, and that he should have no other wife than his profession. That would be an exceedingly ungracious utterance to those of you who are already in the paradise of matrimony, as well as to the rest, who doubtless intend entering therein at the earliest opportunity; ungracious too in the presence of so many of the gentler sex, among whom there may be some fancy-free maiden who has wisely decided that a medical gentleman would be the most desirable of life-partners. So far from holding to such heretical creed, I believe the doctor, like the bishop, should be the husband of one wife. Indeed I know of many instances where his professional happiness and usefulness were largely the results of a wife's intelligent and loving help. A most interesting volume might be written upon doctors' wives, showing how they had contributed not only to these

ends, but also materially assisted their husbands in professional and scientific investigation. A few years since a talented physician and medical teacher of Columbus, Ohio, published a book of original study. This book was enriched by skillful engravings that were the admiration of scientific men at home and abroad. Now these engravings were his wife's work. Her artist-eye and cunning hand, stimulated by wifely love, accomplished that which professional engravers shrunk from attempting.

However, married or single, the physician must constantly remember that medicine is his great work in life. No other occupation can be permitted to come in conflict with it; and that if, Atalanta-like, he turn aside to pick up a golden apple, he may miss the goal. To work, to work with all our might, is one of the great laws of our existence; and it is a sad thing if a man does not love his chosen or allotted labor with his whole soul. Now medicine is worthy the purest love and noblest consecration. More than four centuries before the Christian era—about the time indeed that the divine old man of Cos was laying the foundation of medical science—one of the greatest of Greek poets makes the baffling of disease an evidence of man's extraordinary power. In the Antigone of Sophocles the following passage occurs: 'Many are the mighty things, and naught is more mighty than man. He even sails beyond the seas when whitened into foam with the wintry south wind's blast, passing amid the billows that roar around; and the supreme of divinities immortal, undecaying earth, he furrows, his plows circling from year to year, turning up her soil with the offspring of the steed. Ensnaring the swift-winged birds, he bears them away as his prey; and the tribes of the monsters of the wild, and the marine race of the deep in the inwoven meshes of his nets, he, all-inventive man; and he masters by devices the tenant of the fields, the forest beast, and he will bring under the dominion of the neck-encircling yoke the shaggy-maned horse and the untamable mountain bull. And he hath taught himself language and lofty wisdom, and the customs of civic law, and to avoid the cold and

stormy arrows of uncomfortable frosts. . . . Only this he can not do, find escape from the grave; but he has devised remedies to baffle disease.' Another heathen writer spoke of the physician as 'the hand of God;' and when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among men one of the frequent manifestations of infinite love and power was in healing the sick. Surely we may claim for medicine a celestial origin, a divine lineage, and she is worthy any man's espousal. Take this divinity as yours, accept this bride; for in her right hand she offers virtue and truth, and in her left hand philanthropy and gratitude, while to some few—very few indeed—she grants honor and riches.

It is hardly necessary to insist on these latter points, nor shall I do it other than to introduce as to one of them a noble passage from Sydenham, who seems to stand out among British physicians, as we look back upon him through two centuries, very much as Edmund Spenser among early British poets, each surrounded with deathless glory. It will show that Sydenham had little honor in his life-time, and that he did not regard it as of much value. The great physician has been thanking a professional brother who has written him in approbation of his works, and states that he has seldom received any thing of this nature, and then adds in golden words: 'Yet, notwithstanding I endeavor all I can, and will do so, to learn and promote the curing of disease, and to instruct those that are less conversant in practice than myself, if any such there are, let other people think of me as they please. For, having nicely weighed whether it is better to be beneficial to men or to be praised by them, I find the first preponderates and much conduces to the tranquillity of the mind; but as for fame and popular applause, they are lighter than a feather or a bubble, and more vain than the shadow of a dream.'

A barette was also given the graduate, signifying that he was now a priest, and called to the exercise of priestly functions. You need not be reminded that in former times—among the Jews, the pagans, and the Christians—the sacerdotal and medical offices were

frequently united, the priest being the physician; and while in all civilized countries this union has terminated, yet there are striking analogies between medical and priestly functions, and intimate relations between medicine and religion. The priest was the interpreter of the law, the minister of comfort to the sorrowing, and made sacrifice for the sinning. The physician too is the interpreter of law, law as divinely instituted as any written upon tables of stone or uttered by prophet-lips when touched with hallowed fire; and he too ministers to those who suffer, bringing pardon or at least mitigation of punishment.

Medicine in its scientific aspect studies laws; indeed the simplest definition of science is the knowledge of law; and probably there never was a time in the history of human thought and scientific study when the prevalence of law was more generally and earnestly insisted upon. Yet we can turn from Huxley and Herbert Spencer to one of the great lights of the English Church, more than two centuries ago, and find declarations as positive and comprehensive as any that meet the ear in modern times. Take this passage from Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, a passage which for vigor of thought and splendid rhetoric has rarely been equaled, and tell me if its inclusion is not large enough for all subjects of human study in science, our own among the number: 'Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, and her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and on earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care and the very greatest as acknowledging her power; both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.' There can be no antagonism; nay, there is harmony between medicine and theology thus presented. So too the following passage from one of the most brilliant of modern writers (Ruskin) would receive the complete assent of most physicians: 'As you know more and more of the created world you will find that the true will of its Maker is

that its creatures should be happy; that he has made every thing beautiful in its time and in its place, and that it is chiefly by the fault of men, when they are allowed the liberty of thwarting his laws, that creation groans or travails in pain.'

However, disobedience to law is frequent, and the peace and joy are disturbed, and creation does groan and travail in pain. Not only do the violators themselves suffer, but they often involve others in a common calamity, like the blind Samson. And when the innocent—innocent so far as directly transgressing—suffer, are we, the priesthood of medicine, to read off God's decrees, and pronounce the suffering punishment for some moral cause? Not thus did a famous physician years ago, as the following incident testifies. Passing along with some of his pupils, a case of blindness in an adult, most probably congenital cataract, was presented him, and those pupils were anxious to know the cause of this affliction. It could not be a punishment for his own sin, for he was born blind; but had not his parents done something very bad? The answer came promptly from his lips, silencing those unjustly-judging pupils: 'Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but tha the glory of God might be manifested,' and he immediately gave him his sight. The glory of God manifested in giving vision to the blind man; and is it too much to say that the physician, in his daily work of healing the sick, is also manifesting that glory? And then is it too much to claim for medicine that she especially meets the two great ends which Lord Bacon declared the true objects of human learning, 'the glory of God and the benefit of man's estate.'

So far as personal religion on the part of the medical practitioner is concerned, let me say it can hardly be thought, even by the most skeptical, that a true religious faith and practice militate in the least against the performance of professional duties, or detract in the slightest from the excellence of medical character; nay, rather that they assist the one and enhance the other. No one will judge Boerhaave a weaker man because he spent the first

hour in each day reading the Bible and in prayer. No one will think that one of the most extraordinary men of the century, the late Sir James Simpson, should have any less honor because he took an active part in religious meetings; nor will the reader abate a tithe of his admiration for Thomas Sydenham when he finds in his tract on dysentery that the gifted author pauses in considering the disease to utter the words, 'And truly I can not here forbear mentioning with gratitude that Omnipotent God, the giver of all good things, has not provided any other remedy for the relief of wretched man, which is so able either to quell more diseases or more effectually to extirpate them, than opiate medicines taken from some species of poppies.'

The other presents received by the graduate were an open and a closed book; the one signifying the knowledge already obtained and the other that which he should diligently seek.

No matter how faithfully a student may have worked during his medical pupilage, he has only entered the vestibule of a vast temple, only touched upon the shore of an immense continent. It is to be feared that many relinquish study, or at best become only case-readers. The reasons for such neglect of systematic study are in part the natural indolence of the human mind, the diversions of social life, the temptations of business speculations or of political management, and above all a want of true love for medical knowledge and of just appreciation of its value.

Disguise it or explain it as we may, there sometimes is a downright antagonism between Young Physic and Old Physic; the former being disposed to exaggerate the value of knowledge derived from books and teachers, while the latter, who has seen the rise and fall of so many theories, and has seen too material changes in therapeutics, trusts chiefly to that knowledge derived from his own personal observation and the

> 'Old experience that doth attain
> To something like prophetic strain.'

Young Physic commences his professional career brimming with good resolutions; his brain is full of theories, pictures, and

definitions; he is cognizant of all bones, muscles, nerves, blood-vessels; knows all the fanciful names with which the old anatomists were so generous, from trees of life, forks, bridges, triangles, etc., to Turkish saddles. He is familiar with all the wonderful instruments of modern medical research, and has invested some of his last dollars in supplying himself with a goodly share of them. He can enumerate and describe diseases, and is omniscient of *râles* and *rhonchi;* and not to multify his qualifications, as the crown and conclusion of his scholastic attainments, can repeat the barbarous terminology of recent chemistry without fracturing his tongue. His diploma he possibly regards as a certain passport to public favor, an open *sesame* to the homes of the sick.

But Old Physic, who perchance never attended more than one course of lectures, and that thirty or forty years ago; whose library of venerable volumes might be carried in a market-basket, and who is careless of medical journals, but who has the unpurchasable knowledge drawn from intelligent experience, keeps most of the practice, and his ambitious young rival becomes digusted at the want of public appreciation, murmurs against it very much in the spirit, though of course not in the manner, of the complaints by Tennyson's 'Northern Farmer' when he has to die, suggesting that God Almighty does not know what he means in taking him:

> 'A mowt 'a taaken Joanes, as 'ant 'aapoth o' sense,
> Or a mowt 'a taakin Robins—a niver mended a fence,'

and in his disgust declares there is no use in studying. Where such conditions exist there is a mistake on the part of each. Each has knowledge that would be beneficial to the other; and if there were always, as there oftentimes is, a mutual recognition of this fact, they can be wonderfully helpful to each other.

But this error is not the only one Young Physic commits in relinquishing his studies. No matter how slow the public may be to recognize his qualifications, no matter even how greedily they may run after all manner of quackeries and medical abominations, let him patiently bide his time, strengthening himself for those respon-

sibilities which are sure to come to every faithful worker in medicine, responsibilities that are sometimes of almost crushing weight. Immediate entrance into a large practice, whether obtained by accident or by cunning and dishonesty, is generally an unmitigated curse to the young physician. Neither will natural indolence nor disappointment at delayed success, either leading to neglect of study, be excused by the remark sometimes made, 'I am not going to practice in a city, nor even in a town, only in a village, and I know enough for a country doctor.'

Here again two or three grievous errors. Human life is just as sacred, disease just as difficult of comprehension in the country as in the city; and there are country doctors that are the peers in medical knowledge, in culture and professional skill, of any of their city brethren. Country doctor indeed, and consultant many miles and hours away, with some one of those terrible emergencies pressing upon you, a human life trembling in the balance, emergency taxing the wisdom and skill of the highest, how can any mediocre attainments satisfy either your intellect or your conscience!

Country doctor indeed, and therefore no grand achievement for you, no great discovery to be made!

Within the first decade of the present century a country doctor in Kentucky made the greatest surgical triumph of the century, opened the way by which hundreds of human lives have been saved, and he became the teacher of the professional world. Some time in the sixth century one of the most horrible and fatal diseases was first observed. It raged unchecked among the civilized and savage, devouring human beings as Saturn his offspring, until millions and millions were its victims, France alone contributing thirty thousand every year. It raged unchecked for twelve centuries; but in the year 1776—immortal in the history of this republic, immortal in the history of medicine—there was the dawn of the grandest discovery ever made—a discovery which was to rob death and the grave of these untimely victims, saving more lives than all the wars since then have destroyed—and he who made it and successfully

worked it out to its great conclusion was only a country doctor! Ah! the names of Ephraim McDowell and Edward Jenner can no more be blotted out from the annals of medicine than the stars from the firmament.

Now surely with such illustrious examples no one will wrap the garment of sloth around him and lie down to pleasant dreams. The Master one day will demand his own with usury. Dream with the sublime possibilities which stand in the foreground and beckon you on to triumph, or at least heroic endeavor. Dream, with so many treading the *via dolorosa* and sinking into premature graves. Dream, with *Misereres* rising from every land and floating on every breeze. Dream, with that closed book vastly larger than the one you have opened and studied; that closed book whose pages no mortal, even unto the latest times, shall ever fully master, but which in their richness of knowledge and affluence of blessing are a true El Dorado. No, other things are believed of you. Hopes bright as day mantle your future. See to it that the world is better for your living in it, that medicine is exalted in your hands, and the people will rise up and call you blessed.

Did time permit, many other topics involving your future conduct might be presented. For example, your relations with members of the regular profession; and I would urge you to beware of even forming, still more of expressing, hasty opinions, either favorable or adverse, for few persons move in active life without veils; and also to beware of hasty friendships and confidences. So far as so-called irregular practitioners are concerned, personally let them be treated with such courtesy as their social character may entitle them to, having no concern or criticism for their medical beliefs. While you contemn dishonorable conduct in high or low, never meet violations of professional honor by corresponding acts on your part, and thus getting even, as it is said; rather make the golden rule your guide, as you would they should do unto you. You will be astonished and pained sometimes to find that men in their greed for gain, or from some natural moral obliquity, men

from whom you would expect better things, will be guilty of conduct in reference to getting or keeping patients, the counterpart of which in high-toned commercial circles would be regarded as dishonorable and dishonest, and that the Code of Ethics generally adopted by medical organizations, even if it were ten times more stringent, can never right all these wrongs or prevent these evils; but the derelictions of others should only induce greater circumspection on your part, so that you shall acquit yourselves in all emergencies not only as skillful physicians, but as high-toned gentlemen.

I should like to urge upon you the importance of keeping a daily record of your practice; of being not only readers of some of the best medical journals, but also of being contributors thereto as occasion may offer; of connecting yourselves with local, state, and national medical organizations; of not only diligently pursuing your professional studies, but also of cultivating some science or art allied to medicine in part as recreation and discipline, and in part for the positive help it may be. Some acquaintance too with general literature ought also to be the possession of every member of a liberal profession.

What is to be your treatment of female practitioners? No matter what you may believe on the abstract question of women studying medicine, these are to receive all the professional courtesies you would give to those of your own sex having similar qualifications.

A word as to suits of malpractice which just now are threatening to become in this state epidemic, or rather *epimedic*, if such a barbarism can be tolerated. Never advise, never countenance one of these, no matter what the provocation or who the prosecuted. Better that nine guilty men should escape than one innocent man should suffer is, I believe, one of the humane maxims of the law; and if this be true, no suit for malpractice has ground to stand upon a single minute.

The pathway upon which you have entered has its thorns, its glooms, and its perils. You can not always command success,

and you will sometimes meet with unjust censure. The defection of fickle friends, the misrepresentations of envious rivals, your mistakes—for doctors are not infallible, and mistakes you will sometimes make—and the imperfection of our art will try you as the furnace tries the gold, as the storm tries the mountain-rooted oak. Only see to it that you are purer for the fire and stronger for the storm. But the pathway has its fragrant flowers, its golden sunshine, and the good is vastly more than the evil.

Summon up all your energies for the conflict; gird yourself for the race; accept humbly but bravely your God-given labor, and you can not fail. The commander in a great battle is doing a sublime work. Those thousands and ten thousands of soldiers are mere automata, moving obedient to his will. Now, with all the horrible enginery of war, he holds them in his hand like thunderbolts, and now he launches them forth on their swift mission of death, and writes in the wreathing cannon-smoke and in the writhing bodies of postrate foes that one word supreme in his mind—victory. So too the leader of a great orchestra, an orchestra of many voices and instruments: at a look, at a gesture from him, silence is no more, the great deeps of sound are broken up, and the flood pours forth, wave upon wave spreading wider, swelling higher, billow surmounting billow, as if to rock the deep foundations of the earth and assault the very heavens with tumultuous raving; but the magic wand of the leader guides all these separate forces, compels and combines all these mighty utterances into one common harmony, into one sublime melody. But grander, sublimer than aught ever accomplished on battle-field or orchestral stage is the bringing a human soul in harmony with divine law, concentrating and combining all its high powers upon a single noble purpose in life, subduing all evil passions, and kindling upon its altar a flame of celestial light and love. This is a victory bringing an immortal crown. This is a music whose sweet melodies shall float beyond the stars, and may endure when the stars shall perish. Unto this eternal harmony and unto this sublime victory, my brothers, are you called to-night.