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Address
to
Graduating Class
of
Miami Medical College.

Written Feb 1887
Delivered 9 March 1888.

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Address by Alexander McGuffey to Miami Medical
College (Elm & Plum
Streets), Cincinnati, O.
Written February 1887
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(199)

Before delivering
to you the parchment Evi-
dence that you have been
admitted to the honorable
and honored degree of Doc-
tor of Medicine, it may
not be amiss to ask your
attention for a few minutes,
to the consideration of some
of the principles which lie
at the foundation of true
success and honorable dis-
tinction in your profession.

And first, let me advise
you to form to yourselves
a proper conception of the
dignity of that profession:
— and in order to do so,
nothing can be more proper
than to glance at its scope
and its purposes.

But I can do no more than
sketch, and that very briefly;
or I should occupy far more
than the time which is set
apart for these Commence-
ment Exercises.

In the first place; no other
profession calls for higher pow-
ers, or greater cultivation of
mind; - none which de-
mands more vigor of thought,
- profounder research; -
acuter logic; or more
varied attainments.

Your profession embraces
not one science alone, but
many; - for the Educator
physician ~~also~~ must not
content himself with the
departments of science em-
braced in the Courses of the
medical schools; but should
also ^{also} be a diligent student of Com-
parative anatomy;
General physiology; - Chem-
istry (far beyond the nar-
row bounds of pharmacy)
- Botany - Mineralogy
- and the philosophy of the

human mind.

In the second place, -
 no other profession requires
 or cherishes finer sensibilities
 of heart. Its various
 duties and objects; its cares,
 anxieties and achievements,
 are all connected with
 human infirmity and the
 relief of human suffering. The
 physician is the only man
 in society whose whole
 mission in life is to do
 good - to ~~ward~~ ~~away~~
 to alleviate suffering; and
 avert danger or death;
 - who is never with drawn
 from scenes of ~~affliction~~ affliction
 and distress; and
 whose heart is never
 suffered to grow cold.

Again - there is no
 profession which opens
 to its votaries - wider
 or grander fields for
 scientific investigation or
 discovery; - or in which
 success either in the
 discovery of new facts

or principles; or in the wise
practical practical appli-
cation of facts and prin-
ciples already known,
lead to results so precious
to humanity, and dear to
the benevolent heart.

I could readily occu-
py all, and more than
all the time for which
I am permitted to claim
your attention, in expand-
ing these ideas, and in
pointing to other claims
which your noble profes-
sion has upon your ad-
miration; - but I must
pass on to "consideration"
of a more practical
character.

And now, gentlemen,
in entering upon this profes-
sion - so fraud in its
scope, and so God-like in
its purposes; - how are
you - each of you - to bear
his part?

The question is a solemn one which Each must answer for himself, but not to himself alone. Each of you must answer it, & Humanity, owe to God.

— If any ^{word} suggestion or admonition of mine can aid you, I shall be most happy; — and in the hope that I may so aid you, I will venture to offer you a few suggestions.

He who is master of the principles of any science can readily deduce from them its practical precepts.

A principle, is a just Conclusion ~~or~~ from all the facts which naturally relate to each other. It is, indeed, the assimilating power which groups them, and makes them, as it were, the parts of one machine. So numerous and varied are the phenomena of living bodies, both in health

and disease, that it must always be difficult to arrange them; and to draw from them the general conclusions, which we call principles. So far as this can be done, these principles are certain guides.

To promote the development of these general and guiding principles, should be the earnest and unceasing study of every practitioner of the healing art. But that his efforts may be successful, they must be well directed. His first duty is to collect facts; - the second, to arrange and compare them. The former requires acute observation; - the latter demands reflection and observation combined.

In the acquisition of every kind of knowledge, observation is the most essential of all faculties.

Considered, however, as a humbler exercise of the mind than reflection, it has been

often neglected; and to this may be ascribed much of the existing imperfection of medical Science. Physicians, instead of observing, and collecting new facts, have, too often, undertaken to generalize conclusions from insufficient data; and, possessing but part of the premises which the case required, have, of necessity, come to false conclusions.

Nothing, in my opinion, has subjected your profession to ~~such~~ ~~obloquy~~ so much obloquy, ~~as this~~ this practice. - Indeed, hasty generalizations, are the reproach of every department of Science. Principles (so called) which may be arrived at, in this manner, are - of necessity - imperfect; and the rules of practice, deduced from them, of course, inadmissible or pernicious. They will therefore be rejected, or retained but in part; - and in proportion to the ex-

tent to which you may act upon principles thus imperfectly established, will your profession wear the garb of Empiricism.

Permit me, then, gentlemen, to impress it upon you, that he who accurately observes and truly records a new fact in medicine, performs a greater service to mankind, than he who deduces from facts already known an imperfect principle.

The practice of observation, has never been properly appreciated. It is a great mistake that ~~it only requires acute~~ ~~or faint of sense.~~ for accurate observation, nothing is required but acute or faint of sense. An ignorant ~~man~~ or uncultivated man may observe a phenomenon in nature, with as intense a gaze, and as keen an eye as a philosopher; and yet his description of it may be, and probably

will be worthless. In the sick Chamber, the nurse may watch the symptoms of a fever, with as much vigilance as an enlightened physician; but I suppose no one would ~~compare~~ compare the value of the nurse's observation, with those of the man of science.

^{for} Learning is necessary to correct and useful observation. A physician should be acquainted with what is already known, that he may fix his attention upon facts that are new, or that he shall not swell the libraries of the profession with repetition of what is already known and admitted.

Industry is necessary to an observing physician, because the field of observation is bounded only by the limits of organized nature. Dunction is the result of ~~organized nature~~ organization.

and disease is the derangement of function. It is found, then, in ~~plants~~ the lower animals and in plants, as well as in man. To compare the organization, functions and disease of the lower animals and of plants, with those of man, is an operation well calculated to illustrate the latter. However the soul of man, formed in the image of his Creator, may be elevated above the mere possibilities of the lower world, his body is the ~~perfect~~ perfect work, of which theirs is but the sketch, or suggestion; and many of them approach him closely, both in structure and function. In studying the laws of organization and life, you should, therefore, not confine yourselves to the human body, which affords but one of their varieties. You should range through the whole; observing the phenomena of all; and never allow yourselves to adopt

a principle in physiology, until you have ascertained the application of it to every being which has the organs to which it relates. Unless you pursue this course, gentlemen, you cannot become thorough physiologists; and none but physiologists can become truly scientific physicians.

I do not assert, gentlemen, that it is necessary that you should become practical anatomists, physiologists and naturalists, in order to be physicians; but I do assert that you must know the basis on which the principles in physiology rest; — and if you do not observe for yourselves, you must, at least master the observations of others.

Last — an acute and discriminating mind, is necessary to successful observation. Appearances must be analysed; — the Essential must be distinguished from the unessential, —

The Extra ordinary from the ordinary. To accomplish this, the mind must not only be well stored with the principles of general science, but ~~and~~ also well disciplined in its habits.

These, gentlemen, are some of the qualities and accomplishments which are necessary for an observing physician. You will agree with me that he who possesses them is extraordinary man. An eminent talent for observation is, indeed, by no means common, among men of any calling; and hence the slow progress of improvement in all professions, notwithstanding the multitudes of men who swell their ranks; — and hence too, the black oblivion which has swallowed up the very names of millions who have devoted their whole lives to the care of disease.

About you, gentlemen, ~~is~~ avoid the approach of having con-

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to avoid for gentlemen, avoid the reproach of having Cou-

Tribute nothing to the advancement of your Profession, or would you record your name, — imperishable — in its annals, cultivate the faculty of observation, and extend the range of your enquiries, throughout the whole Kingdom of animated nature.

This recommendation, Gentlemen, involves, as you will perceive, an exhortation to industry and application.

Without application, no intellectual energy; no acuteness of observation, nor the best trained habits of investigation can avail you any thing. The vessel may be well built and perfectly equipped; but unless the breeze drive it, Sails, or the fire generate the propelling steam, it will never ~~leave~~ leave the dock, much less make a successful voyage.

A spirit of industry must animate and impel you forward, or the amplest preparation will be of no avail.

This spirit, gentlemen, does not resemble the fitful breeze that dies away ere the hopes of the becalmed mariner are more than fairly aroused. It is not like the occasional, and sudden gust that moves the ship hither and thither;—but resembles the steady and regular trade-wind, under which the mariner holds ~~on~~ ~~an~~ an uninterrupted way, to the end of a successful voyage.

Such, gentlemen, should be your professional career; and such it will, certainly, be, if you combine the habit of accurate and enlightened observation, and accurate discrimination, with a regular and persistent industry.

He who lacks industry finds it laborious to master the truths of a single branch of his profession. He will tell you that you should limit yourselves to a single department, if you would attain distinction; and will cite the

fact, that he whose business it is to ~~make~~ form the heads of pins, becomes more perfect in that operation than he could be if he undertook to manufacture the whole pin.

But the various branches of your profession, gentlemen, are without any distinctly defined limits. On every side, they are mutually interlaced, — supporting and being supported — aiding and illustrating each other.

While, therefore, you select, as the main object of study, a single branch, you are to consider it as but one of the wheels, or parts, of a complicated machine; and you must realize, that to understand all its properties and powers, you must study it in connection with the rest. While you choose a single star, as the principal object of your ^{own} contemplation, you are to view it as one of the members of a con-

or Planetary System;
 Stellations, and observe its re-
 sultions, & the other members
 of the group. You are to make
 the investigation of a partic-
 ular branch of Science the
 object of your life, and your
 study of others, as a means
 of knowing more thoroughly
 the one to which you have de-
 voted yourself.

Do not listen for a moment
 to the delusive suggestion that
 you will not have time for
 this extended study of your
 profession. It is, generally,
 many years (and so it
 should be) before young
 practitioners acquire a
 business that fully occupies
 their time. During this pe-
 riod, they may, and should
 acquire a knowledge of
 the leading facts and princi-
 ples of all the associated
 sciences which enter into
 the composition of your pro-
 fession. And even,
 when in the meridian
 of your career, if you

are impelled by the industry
for which I am the advocate,
you will find opportunities
Every hour, for improve-
ment, not merely in prac-
tical medicine, but in the
auxiliary Sciences which
I have already named.

In conclusion, gentle-
men, let me earnestly en-
treat you, that when you
establish yourselves as can-
didates for business, you
will make it your chief
ambition to deserve the
Confidence of Society; and
your greatest happiness to
Extend and strengthen that
Confidence, by the dili-
gence, ability and humanity
with which you will dis-
charge your professional
duties.

Make Science the ground-work
of your reputation, and acts of
intelligence, honor, and benevo-
lence, the materials of the
abiding superstructure.

Feb. 1877,