

AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

The Life of a Physician.

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The Life of a Physician.

There is something peculiarly striking in the life of a Physician that deserves notice. He cannot be considered in all of his moral and social relations as other men or as other professional men. There are many circumstances connected with his professional life that brings him directly before and connects him intimately with the people. There are three prominent traits that should characterize the life of a Physician, First he should be a scientific man, secondly he should be a moral man, and thirdly he should be a prudent man. Before entering separately in to the con-

2
sideration of these traits however, I wish to make a few preliminary remarks concerning the Physician and the profession.

I believe that there is no profession in the whole circle of science that is worthy of more respect and honor than the Medical profession. And I believe that there is no department of general science, that is intrinsically of more importance to the welfare of the human race than the science of Medicine. And I am fully satisfied that there is no profession that carries with it a greater weight of responsibility than this. And I know that there is no profession that suffers so much from imposition as the science of Medicine does. Look at the innumerable hosts of Em-

3
pices and Quacks that are arrogating
to themselves the name of Doctor, and are
forcing themselves in to the arms of the
profession, for the purpose if possible of
sharing or inheriting a portion of the hon-
or that the profession has acquired by
the unceasing labors and untiring en-
ergies of the fathers and supporters of
the profession.

Yes the Medical profession is a noble pro-
fession and it is a lamentable sight to
see the amount of degradation that is
heaped upon it by the mercenary as-
pirants and the vast crowd of nostrum-
and patent medicine dealers that are flood-
ing the country in every direction and
blindly misleading and defrauding
the unsuspecting public in a thousand ways.
And not withstanding the great respect

that the profession meritoriously demands
of the public. Yet there is no class of men
that suffers more from an ungenerous
and an unthankful world than Physicians.
And why it is I am not able to say,
unless it is from the influence of asso-
ciations, by which the truly profession-
al man is necessarily compelled to bear
a portion of the disrespect, and abuse
that those impostors so richly deserve.
These are facts that the professional por-
tion of the community - every where should
take in to consideration, and should
adopt some plan if possible to purify
and defend the profession from the contin-
ual and increasing innovations upon its
vested rights, and blot out - if possible
the almost indelible stain that these Par-
asitical doctors have cast upon the high

and honorable character of the Medical profession.

I will now confine my remarks to the consideration of what should be considered requisite qualifications - or rather traits of character of the practitioner. Every man that ^{is} pretending to practice medicine, should understand as far as possible, all the routine of diseases in ^{all} their stages. And acquire all the information that he possibly can: concerning the treatment and general management of all the Maledies that the human race is troubled with. And how is he to get this information, Will he trust to his own inflated and often erroneous opinions in regard to certain pretended specifics of his own production or will he attempt to inform.

himself by experimental practice, which indeed would be a very cruel and tedious way of acquiring that amount of medical knowledge, that would be necessary to enable him to practice with any degree of success or credit to himself, or to do justice to his patients. Then how is he to possess himself of this labyrinth of knowledge, which will elevate him to - and confer upon him, the honorable title of Doctor. There is but one way - and that is by a resort to the treasures of science. Science is a store-house of concentrated knowledge. There we may learn the results of nearly all of the important experiments that has ever been tried, and by that means possess ourselves of those important facts that we could not otherwise acquire

in the whole course of our lives. There we may meet and consult with the learned men of all ages, on the very interesting subject of the human structure. We see them there busily engaged in the dissecting room. It is there that we can consult with them on the subject of the nicely poised mechanism of the human skeleton, and the systematic arrangement and articulation of all the bones and the exactly proportioned fulcrums and levers, so as to keep up a proper equilibrium between the powers and actions of the muscular and osseous systems. It is there that we see them dilligently engaged in ferreting out and tracing from their rising to their insertion the various muscular fibres, and allotting to each muscle a certain action, and

pointing out with the greatest precision
the exact effect produced upon the human
system by the action of the several muscles.
All being properly attached to and connec-
ted with their tendons, and ligaments and
all nicely lubricated and padded with the
adipose and cellular matter, and very power-
fully protected and supported by fascia
and the skin, or external integuments,
that surrounds them. It is there that
we meet them, and see them pointing out
the great mechanism, and wise adaptation
of all of the internal organs, to the functions
that they have to perform. Commencing at
the heart and tracing the blood vessels
through the pulmonary and systemic cir-
culations. Tracing the arteries in their
various ramifications terminating in
the capillaries and finally losing their

identity as it were in the capillaries
of the venous system, from thence the
veins gradually unite and finally
meet again in the great central organ
the heart. We see them there pointing
out the singular order of the attachments
and suspension of the bowels and their
very peculiar-varioullar action in
the performance of their function. We
see them pointing out the great adap-
tation of the urinary-biliary and res-
piratory organs to their several functions.
And we see them examining the contents of
the head, and pondering over the intricate
structure of the great organ of sense
and tracing the nervous filaments to
every part of the body. and pointing out
a concentration of a portion of the filaments
to form as it were a great moral agency

in the animal government - the great sympathetic nerves.

Science introduces us to all the important Physiological experiments and enables us to consult with all of the learned men of ancient as well as modern times, on the interesting subject of the functions of the human system. It is there that we see the whole routine of organic life explained. It is there that we see the importance of the nervous system fully demonstrated, and of the unlimited influence that it exercises over the action of every part of the animal structure, and materially altering and controlling the organic functions of the system. And the allwise adaptation of our senses to the relationship that we bear to the objects which surround us. It is there that we see the fathers of

important functions of the respiratory organs and the very
the profession pointing out the highly
interesting and vitalizing change that the
blood undergoes while it is passing throu-
gh those organs. It is there that we are infi-
rmed of the great importance of the cir-
culation of the blood. We learn there
that there is a continual expensiture
of the vital powers of the system and
consequently a corresponding repaira-
tion is indispensibly necessary to be made
to keep up a normal condition of the system
We are taught there that the blood per-
forms this highly essential function, ac-
ting as the commercial medium of the anim-
al government. The heart and lungs an-
swering as a great central port or com-
mercial depot from whence the blood con-
veys to every part of the government, the ap-
propriate materials for which the various func-

tions call and the wasting vitality imperiously demands. We there learn that these vitalizing principles are derived from two common sources viz the alimentary canal, by the cooperation of the lacteals and thoracic duct, and secondly the lungs, acting as the great fireplace of the body, in which a constant exchange of gases is going on oxygen being incessantly taken in and carbonic acid gas at the same time given out. It is there that we are taught ^{the} importance of the function of digestion, and of the indispensable part that the biliary and urinary organs have to perform in regulating and sustaining a uniform action in the animal economy. It is there that we are made acquainted with and are privileged to enjoy the advantage of all

of the experiments and matured principles that have resulted from the indefatigable efforts and untiring energies of the learned and experienced of all ages in their labors in the wide and extended range of Therapeutics, and Materia Medica. They point out to us in a clear and succinct manner the undoubted truth that disease, in its ravage upon human life, has been checked, ~~and~~ ~~the~~ and the wild career of the fell monster, has been impeded, and the strength of his mighty arm weakened, and Man's sufferings materially relieved by the timely application or administration of appropriate medicines, all of which are the effects and conclusive proof of the advanced condition of the science of medicine. It is there that we see them busily engaged in investiga-

-ting and analyzing the various articles of the Materia Medica, and studying closely the nature of their constituent principles, and the chemical nature of their combinations, and they point out with great care and precision, their peculiar effects up^{on} the animal organization, and the great diversity of their effects, wisely arranged to meet a similar diversity in Pathology, thereby enabling the practitioner to meet with appropriate means the multiplicity of indications that the great routine of diseases will present.

Science opens out to us the wide field of the fixed principles of the practice of medicine. It leads us gently to the bedside of the sick. It there teaches us the general and diagnostic symptoms present in the various and multiform diseases that

the Physician has necessarily to meet with in the course of his professional services. They there explain to us the great necessity of nice discrimination in the treatment of diseases. They remind us of the great importance of being able ^{to} discriminate properly between diseases of debility and diseases of an inflammatory character. Showing the great amount of injury that may be produced by mal-treatment resulting from a wrong diagnosis. And in the treatment of anomalous and doubtful cases the great value of a tentative course.

We are there also taught the great necessity of a thorough knowledge of the principles of the practice of surgery. We learn here the facility and safety of amputating the limbs in dangerous cases of dislocations, fractures, mortification, &c. And it shows how

very much mans sufferings may be relieved by the skillful use of the knife, in the various deformities, and morbid, and abnormal growths to which the human race is subject. It is there that we learn the great use, of the application of false stays, or splints, and the adaptation of pads and bandages, to the support of limbs or other parts, when fractured, dislocated, bruised or otherwise injured or diseased. We have here pointed out to us the most approved plan, of reducing and properly adjusting dislocations, and the most expeditious and proper plan of dressing and treating all wounds generally and locally. And lastly we come to notice that branch of the science of medicine which is termed Medical Jurisprudence. In this department of the science, we are again introan-

eed to the learned and matured works of
the wise and experienced Medical Philosophers
of all ages. Here we are initiated in to
and made partakers of the beneficial infor-
mation resulting from the wise and sys-
tematically conducted experiments, and care-
ful investigations of a Teacchias, Fodere,
Orfila, Chaussier, Duputren, Christison,
Schlegel, Louis, Capuron, Esquivel, Per-
sival, Paris, Dunlop, and I might men-
tion many others whose labors have con-
tributed materially to the development of
legal medicine. but it is quite uncalled
for. It is clearly shown that this branch
or department of the science is not defic-
ient in men of talents, experience and
energy, who have labored in the inves-
tigation and systematic maturation of
that branch of science which we have

now under consideration. It is here that we see them examining ⁱⁿ cases that have feigned to be sick, diseased, or pregnant, in order that they may be released from public service or to escape punishment for crime or to inherit estate &c. We see them pointing out with ^{the} greatest precision the difference between feigned diseases, and real diseases. And marking out with care and ingenuity the modes of detection. We see them examining infants that are said to have been still born, and pointing out very clearly, the indications present in children born dead and the great changes that are produced by the act of respiration, in the condition of the Thoracic and Abdominal viscera. They produce sufficient evidence to prove whether an Infanticide has been committed or whether

the child was born dead. Again we see them examining cases of death supposed to have been suicidal, and marking out with considerable plausibility the rules by which a homicide may be distinguished from suicide. And pointing out the various indications present on the dead body of persons found dead, which may enable the examining witness to determine whether death has resulted from a natural or a violent cause. There too we see them pointing out the various indications present from the effects of poisoning and marking with great care and exactness the modes of making examinations and the rules for detecting the poison both before and after death, and even the character of the article of poison that has been used and the quantity that has been taken.

I might go farther and notice many other points of importance in legal medicine but it is quite unnecessary. I have said enough to show that forensic medicine has been reduced very clearly and beneficially to a science. And as to medicine generally, I might extend my remarks up on the various branches, but it would be a waste of time to do so. Who will or can deny that the practice of medicine in all of its branches is and has been reduced to science and that it is approximating fast to perfection.

There are two prominent reasons why every Physician should be acquainted thoroughly with the science of his profession. First as a public and professional man he is held responsible for the cor-

2

rectness of his practice, therefore his reputation both morally and professionally is always at stake when engaged in professional business. Science shields the practitioner from the liabilities in two ways. first it acquaints him with the various indications presented in diseases, wounds, &c &c and points out the remedies indicated, and lays down the proper course to be pursued in their management, no matter what is the cause or nature of the abnormal condition present. And thereby enabling him always to do justice to his patient and give satisfaction to the parties concerned. Secondly if he has been guided strictly by science in all of his practice the results of which notwithstanding may be unfavourable yet having

conformed to the rules of his profession, he will be liberated from the abuse and infamy that would have otherwise attended such practice. The Physicians duties are always of an important character, and frequently fraught with momentous and weighty responsibilities. He has ~~commit~~ the lives of his fellow beings committed to his care. Therefore every professional act should be strictly in accordance with science, or the rules established by experience. He is frequently called on to give testimony on subjects of vital importance. We see him examined frequently on medico-legal questions, and perhaps the fate of his brother man may rest upon the import of his evidence, and by ignorance of the established and decisive rules of science he may liberate a guilty

2.

person or condemn an innocent one.
Then how all important it is for the medical witness to be fully informed in regard to the most approved rules of judging such cases. For in such cases the unscientific man is at a great loss. And many important facts may be lost in consequence of his ignorance. He has no fixed rules to guide him in the examination of difficult cases, and consequently having no precedent to go by, he has to grope his way in darkness without even the light of experience to guide him in that wilderness of difficulties and obscurities. So cunningly devised by lawless villains to elude justice and increase crime, from which the uninformed can expect to deduce but few facts of importance, or derive but little

24
information or satisfaction. But the man of science is never at a loss he has the matured principles and experience of the intellectual and the energetic men of all ages condensed in the form of science to guide him, in the arduous duties of his professional life, which will under nearly all circumstances and in nearly all cases enable him to form correct opinions, and do justice to his fellow beings, and reflect honor upon his profession.

It is unnecessary to give more reasons why the practitioner should be a man of science. It is sufficiently evident that no man without a knowledge of the science of medicine is entitled to or worthy of the name of Doctor. Science to the practitioner is the great

20
beacon light without which he could not be able to steer his course safely through the breakers and almost insurmountable difficulties that interpose to check the professional man's career through life.

Then let every Physician consider fully the importance of the position that he occupies in life, and throw aside all Empirical and Quack doctrines and all nostrum and patent drugs, that are of an obscure composition and uncertain character. And put on the garb of science, and conform to its rules. And the benign and beneficial influence of their professional lives will not cease when their professional career is ended, But will live ever bright in the history of the progress of

20
the science of medicine to be handed down
through the long vista of time while
science exist to bless and alleviate hu-
man suffering.

And secondly every Physician should
be a moral man. The scope of action
or the conceded liberties that the pro-
fession grants to the Physician is very
latitudinarians. And without the power
of some restraining influence. Avarice, Envy,
Malice, jealousy, and many other pas-
sions, and causes may prompt the practi-
tioner to the commission of many secret
crimes, and the unprofessional world
would never detect or even
suspect that such crimes were ever com-
mitted. Morality exerts this controlling
or restraining influence over the conduct
of the Physician. If a man is so guarded

2

in his feelings as to attend to his professional business when there is a hope of remuneration only; he is an unfeeling and immoral man, and is not worthy of the name of Doctor. We are frequently called on to attend to cases where there is not the most distant hope of any compensation. And what are we to do in such cases? Shall we permit our fellow being to suffer and die, because he is not able to pay the Doctors bill? No: Then what induces us to attend to such cases. It is here that Morality puts in her claim for suffering humanity, and awakens that fraternal feeling or portion of our nature which prompts us to sympathize and bear with our fellow beings, and to alleviate their sufferings when practicable. Morality forces us to the performance of

those duties which constitute the essence of sociability. It is that that sweetens the social transactions of life, and reconciles man to the trials and difficulties that he has to encounter in his intercourse with the uncertain world. Morality and virtue are constant associates.

Then where there is no morality, virtue is a stranger. How often do we see innocence betrayed and virtue mocked at by the being who pretends to be a Doctor. He acting under the cloak of his profession has a two fold opportunity to commit his depredations upon the confiding people. Therefore Morality to the Physician is coequal at least with any other trait that can characterize the life of the practitioner. And no man should have the confidence of the people as a Physician

2

who does not possess those social elements of character. And who has not cultivated his moral nature. And formed regular moral habits as permanent traits of his general character.

And thirdly- Prudence next demands our attention. When we consider the many delicate points connected with the practice of medicine, We are at once awakened to the inestimable value of prudence in the character of the Physician. When we see the great variety of the functions of the human system and the many changes that may be produced upon them by the action of Medicines, and when we see the many temperaments and idiosyncrasies that the practitioner has to meet with, We can imagine very readily why a Physician should be a prudent ^{man}.

30
Again when we think of the great diversity and variety of medicinal agents, and the innumerable effects that they produce upon the animal economy, we are not surprised that so very much mischief is done by hasty and unguarded practitioners, and it is very plain that prudence is paramount at least to any other trait of character that the Physician could possess. The trust confided to him in the administration of medicine, makes him fearfully responsible for every professional act of his life. We can not place too ~~very~~ high an estimate upon prudence, when we consider the number and character of the Medicinal agents that he has to use in the accomplishment of the objects of his profession. *Materia Medica* opens out to him

its store house of materials. We see in it every variety of articles from those of the mildest character to those of the most deadly poison. The Physician alone has the control of these preparations, and he alone can estimate properly the effect of the different articles upon the system. All the organs of the system are more or less susceptible to the exciting influence of certain articles of medicine. These articles may be said to be specifics or that they exercise a specific effect upon these organs and more or less always change or modifies either directly or indirectly, their function. And all of these organs are subject to various diseases. And in such critical conditions a very slight mistake in the adminis-

tration of Medicine may produce seri-
 ous effects and perhaps fatal consequences
 seeing then that the Physician ^{has} the entire
 control of all of the Medicinal agents-
 some of which are of the most ^{active and} deadly char-
 acter. and seeing ^{that} humanity in its dis-
 eased and infirmed condition looks to
 him for relief. It is not difficult to
 see of what inestimable value pruden-
 ce is to the Medical practitioner.

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 3