

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



FOUNDED 1836

WASHINGTON, D.C.

1872

AN EULOGIUM,

Ec. Ec.



*At a special meeting of the "PHILADELPHIA
MEDICAL SOCIETY," held on the 24th of
February, 1802.*

*"RESOLVED, That the thanks of the
Society be presented to DR. CALDWELL, for
his eloquent, ingenious, and just eulogium,
delivered this day, on the Character of MR.
GEORGE LEE, and that a Copy of it be request-
ed for immediate publication."*

Extract from the Minutes,

WILLIAM HORSEY, Secretary.

AN EULOGIUM

TO THE MEMORY

OF

MR. GEORGE LEE,

DELIVERED BY APPOINTMENT,

TO THE

PHILADELPHIA MEDICAL SOCIETY,

ON THE 24th DAY OF FEB. 1802.

BY CHARLES CALDWELL, M. D.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY THOMAS AND WILLIAM BRADFORD, BOOK-
SELLERS AND STATIONERS, NO. 8, SOUTH
FRONT STREET.

.....
1802.

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AN EULOGIUM,

Ec. Ec.

Gentlemen of the Medical Society,

HOW striking is the difference—how impressive the contrast, between the present and the last occasion of our assembling in this hall! What can exhibit, in bolder characters, the lamentable mutability of sublunary concerns! It was then our lot to meet on purposes of mutual congratulation; we are now convened on an object of sorrow. We were then summoned to join in celebrating the anniversary of our institution; we are now called together to mingle our griefs around the grave of one of its members. It was then our business to indulge in excursions of intellect through the

everblooming fields of nature ; we must now direct our footsteps to the waste and dreary mansions of the dead. We were then delightfully exercised in endeavouring to gain admission into some of the secret retreats of science ; we are now assembled to deplore the loss, commemorate the talents, and do homage to the virtues of one of her distinguished sons.

LEE, the pride and hope of his relatives, the favourite of his associates, the ornament of our society!—Lee has prematurely gone down to the tomb! For this the badges of mourning have appeared in our seats of learning, and sadness has become familiar with the votaries of science: for this have our public prints been made the vehicles of lamentation: and for this are we now assembled to convert for a while into a tabernacle of sorrow this mansion sacred only to the purposes of instruction.

On such an occasion, were my powers of utterance equal to the touching pathos of my subject, the tears of this auditory should flow in libation to the memory of our departed brother, and these walls should re-echo to the accents of woe. But,

“ I, indeed, have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
“ Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,”
To wake the slumbering tumults of the soul :

I, indeed, can “ only speak right on,” can only paint, in feeble colours, the *character* and *fate* of our deceased fellow-member, and bid them call forth, from those who hear me, feelings corresponding to the melancholy event. But if I interpret the human countenance aright, my theme will have no need of the lightning of eloquence, to cleave its way to the hearts of this assembly. To the story of sorrow, though simple and artless, the ingenuous bosom is for ever open.

MR. LEE was a native of the city of Philadelphia. He was born on the twenty-first day of September, one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight. During the first years of his life nothing is remembered respecting him worthy of calling our attention to that period of his history. He was early placed at a grammar school, in Woodbury, in the State of New-Jersey, where he acquired the rudiments of scholastic learning. He afterwards passed some time under the private tuition of the Rev. Dr. John Smith, late of this city, a profound scholar and a pious divine. From the family of this gentleman he was removed, while in his fifteenth year, to prosecute and finish his classical studies in the University of Pennsylvania. During his pupillage in this institution, his character was in no way conspicuous over that of his associates. He was regarded only

as an orderly student, a respectable scholar, and a youth of amiable and prepossessing manners. As yet he had given neither earnest nor promise of future eminence. As yet his talents were either but partially unfolded, or had not been directed to their favourite pursuits. Possessed of a native and specific affinity for physical science, his mind does not appear to have been formed for a ready union with the objects of mere scholastic literature. Weary of confinement and indignant of restraint within college-walls and academic groves, it panted for freedom of action in the walks of nature. Impatient of the slow lapse of a burdensome literary minority, it looked with joyous anticipation to the time, when it might turn from the study of sounds and forms, to enquiries into the nature of substances and things.

These are circumstances by no means uncommon in the history of great and illustrious characters. The most apt and distinguished school-boy is not always best calculated to become an ornament to science; nor does mediocrity, nor even dulness at school, necessarily preclude from future eminence. True genius is for the most part as stubborn as it is impetuous. If it be not suffered to move in its favourite direction, it becomes intractable, and will not be compelled to move at all. Thus it is, that mere cyphers in the cabinet are not unfrequently heroes in the field; and that some of our greatest statesmen, poets, and philosophers, have been incapable of becoming tolerable counsellors at law, or even of superintending the business of a farm.

Having passed with reputation through his collegial studies, and made himself master of

the several preparatory branches of knowledge, young LEE was admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts, on the 20th day of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-five, being then in the seventeenth year of his age. We here behold him arrived at the most critical and interesting æra which marks the progress of a literary character. He was now to make choice of a profession for life—a profession which might both serve as a source of future subsistence and emolument, and prove a basis of utility and fame. An injudicious step in a matter so momentous, was pregnant with evil if not with ruin. For what can be a greater barrier to the acquisition of fortune and eminence, than to be permanently embarked in a pursuit, without qualifications to ensure success? But subsequent events have sufficiently manifested, with what wisdom our deceased friend

deliberated, and with what judgment he decided on this important occasion. You are all apprised that the profession of medicine became the object of his election.

On this new course of study, for which nature had so peculiarly fitted him, and in which he was destined to make such brilliant acquisitions, he entered under the direction of a respectable physician of this city, sometime in the autumn of the same year, in which he had been invested with the junior honours of the University. He continued to read with this gentleman, and to attend to his practice for the space of about two years. During that period, though he both merited and received the approbation and friendship of his patron, he made, comparatively speaking, but a very faint display of that activity and energy of intellect which he certainly possessed. He had

not yet been subjected to the influence of that peculiar combination of circumstances, calculated to call forth his latent powers. For the human mind is sometimes endowed with specific susceptibilities, in consequence of which it is capable of being effectually acted on only by impressions of a definite nature. Exclude such a mind from these impressions, and its energies and resources, however great, are lost to society, like the diamond embedded in the bosom of the rock. Had it not been for the impulse of the American revolution, the immortal WASHINGTON would have lived and died the farmer of Mount Vernon: and, but for the revolutionary struggles of France, the name of BUONAPARTE, which was lately the terror and will long continue the boast of Europe, would have been scarcely commensurate with the limits of Corsica. So true is it, that the

part which we act, and the sphere which we fill in life, are the mere creatures of contingent events.

In the autumn of the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety seven, a vacancy occurred in the medical department of the Pennsylvania Hospital. MR. LEE, availing himself of a circumstance so fortunate, entered immediately as a house-pupil of that institution. This step may be considered as the key which completely unlocked his mind, and disclosed the extent and power of its faculties. From this period we may date the commencement of his career in science :—a career, which, had not an untimely fate interposed, would have contributed to enhance the reputation of his country.

We now behold our young philosopher (for such we may safely presume to call him)

placed in the very focus of circumstances peculiarly calculated both to kindle and gratify his ambition. The place where he resided may be considered as the medical sensorium of our country. All improvements and discoveries, whether in the theory or practice of medicine, and in whatever part of the United States they are made, flow to it as naturally as sensation makes its way to the throne of perception, or as our rivers descend with their tributary waters to the ocean. His situation, therefore, not only presented him with many important subjects for observation and enquiry, but furnished him at the same time with the most effectual aids to direct and facilitate the course of his researches.

The walls which enclosed and the roof which covered him were sacred to the purposes of science and humanity. Within them

was contained an epitomized collection of every form of disease, which climate, season, accident, passion, dissipation, and vice, are capable of inflicting on the human race. An extensive and well selected library occupied one apartment of the building. In others were to be found a diversity of excellent preparations, figures, and drawings, calculated to develop the structure, and shed light on the economy of the human system. The house was regularly attended by the first physicians of our city, and daily visited by strangers of literature and distinction from different parts of the world. To a mind enthusiastic in the pursuit of knowledge these were invaluable sources of instruction and pleasure. Nor did our deceased friend suffer one of them to escape, without eagerly embracing the advantages it held forth. He read, conversed, observed;

and experimented, on an extensive scale. When in pursuit of truth, whether on general or particular subjects, he possessed the happy art of rendering every avenue of information subservient to his purposes. On these occasions he turned his attention with rapidity and ease from books to things, and from the contemplation of nature to observations on the works and processes of art. With such intelligence and address did he interrogate every thing around him, that each object became an instructive companion. It is needless to remark, that a mind supplied with knowledge through such a multiplicity of channels could not be otherwise than abundantly stored.

MR. LEE had been but a short time in his new situation, when this change in his character became conspicuous and striking. The sudden and, I may add, unlooked-for

expansion of his intellect, with his diversified acquirements which were hourly accumulating, were noticed and spoken of by all his acquaintance. Nor were intelligent strangers, who visited the hospital, less pleased with his enlightened conversation, and gentlemanly deportment, in conducting them through the apartments of the building.

It will be recollected by some of you, that it was about this period he was admitted and enrolled a member of our society. It would be superfluous to dwell on his numerous and important services among us in this new relation. The humble though sincere tribute we are at this moment endeavouring to render acceptable to his memory, is the best evidence of your sentiments and feelings on this subject. Had you not been conscious of his distinguished merit, you would not have voted him a distinguished honour.

Though extensively informed in medicine and all its collateral branches of science, MR. LEE was more particularly devoted to the study of chemistry. In this his acquirements were ample and accurate. Not content with merely admiring, he was emulous of, the discoveries and fame of the celebrated chemists of Europe and America. Not satisfied with a bare knowledge of the experiments they had performed, he was in the habit, not only of imprinting them on his mind, but of testing their truth, by repeating them himself. By these steps he rendered them effectually his own.

In the chemical society of this city, of which he was a member, his labours and services were peculiarly important. Skilful in experimenting, perspicuous in illustrating, and able in his manner of conducting a debate, he seldom engaged in investigating a subject, without contributing materially to its elucidation.

His geological essays, which he read to the society in the summer of the year 1800, and which afterwards made their appearance in our public prints, were respectable specimens both of the extent of his researches, and of his abilities in composition. But, these are not the only pieces with which he enriched the periodical publications of the day. The Medical Repository of New-York, is indebted to him for several valuable contributions, and the Gazettes of this city have been repeatedly the vehicle of ingenious and interesting productions from his pen. In two or three scientific and literary controversies, in which it was his lot to be engaged through this medium, he acquitted himself with distinguished ability and honour. Though some of his opponents far surpassed him in experience, and all of them out-numbered him in years, yet on each occasion he carried with him the decided

opinions of those most competent to judge of the points at issue. It must be mentioned to his praise, that in these instances, he never descended to anonymous publications. Aloof in his sentiments from every thing that bore the resemblance of unmanly concealment, he contended that a controversial writer should be always prepared to answer in person for his manner of treating the arguments and character of his antagonist. His ingenuous nature taught him to feel, that a masked attack, especially when in any degree personal, betrays either a malignant and cowardly disposition, a self-acknowledged inferiority of talents, or a secret consciousness of a bad cause. Conformably to these sentiments, he always sanctioned his pieces with his proper signature.

In the summer of the year 1799, Mr. LEE engaged in a series of chemical experiments on the teeth of man and other animals.

His ultimate object in this new and interesting pursuit was, to ascertain the cause of the premature decay of the human teeth in the United States. Unfortunately for science and humanity, the attack of disease, which finally terminated his existence, arrested his progress and frustrated his hopes in this enquiry. The loss sustained by the public, in this instance, can be appreciated only from the importance of the investigation, and the qualifications which our deceased friend possessed for conducting it to a satisfactory issue. There are but few physical questions which involve more interesting and weighty considerations than that which relates to the premature decay of the teeth in America. Beauty, health, comfort, and longevity, would seem to be alike concerned in the proper solution of it. The American who shall first develop the cause of this evil, and at the same time direct to an

adequate remedy, will be rewarded by the gratitude and applause of his country. Had not fate dropt the curtain between him and his prospects, there is reason to believe that the youth, whose character we commemorate, would have been the successful candidate for this distinguished meed.

Though MR. LEE was not himself a graduate in medicine, yet, for three years previously to his death, he had been regularly called on to assist young gentlemen of his acquaintance, during the time of their preparation for that honour. Nor did the benevolence of his disposition ever suffer his aid to be solicited in vain. Such were the frankness and liberality of his nature, that his own personal concerns were always made secondary to those of his friends. It is due to his memory to mention, that some of the most valuable Theses, which have appeared in

the University of Pennsylvania since the year 1798, have been deeply indebted to him for their merit. A more honourable testimony cannot be produced of the opinion which his fellow-students entertained both of the powers of his mind and the qualities of his heart.

But his industry and attainments in science are not the only circumstances calculated to add lustre to the character of our friend. Equally conspicuous, but more endearing, were his animated exertions in the cause of humanity. His sensibility and unbounded benevolence fitted him no less to sympathize with the sick and infirm, than his knowledge did to relieve their distresses. The managers and physicians of the Pennsylvania Hospital have repeatedly acknowledged, in terms of the highest approbation, the extent of his services ; and long will the unfortunate objects of that institution cherish a grateful remembrance of

his tenderness and attention. During my attendance on him, in his last illness, one of the most affecting circumstances I was called on to encounter was, the grief and dejection pictured in the countenances of some of these afflicted people, when I, at times, replied to their enquiries, that I was doubtful of his recovery. Even the maniacs themselves were far from being indifferent to his merit and fate. In passing through the wards of the building, oftentimes has my attention been arrested by some of those unhappy mortals, in whom, though reason was dethroned, there still remained a sufficiency of memory and gratitude, to induce them to enquire with concern after the health of their favourite. It belongs to this place to remark, that, previously to his last illness, the constitution of our friend was materially impaired by the labours he under-

went in the discharge of the duties attached to his situation. This obliged him several times to relax for a while from the severity of his studies and pursuits, and make excursions into the country for the recovery of his health.

The respectable friendships which he contracted, and the correspondencies which he formed and supported by letter, during his residence in the Pennsylvania Hospital, are no less honourable to his memory, than they were subservient to his happiness and improvement while living. Nothing but acknowledged excellence, both moral and physical, can gain and secure a true and lasting intimacy with the enlightened and the virtuous.

Were I to attempt a summary of the general outlines of MR. LEE'S character, I would say, that to talents of a superior order he joined that degree of cultivation necessarily resulting from extensive opportunities and

consummate application. He was not remarkable for that extreme brilliancy of mind, that rapid loom of theory and hypothesis, where, with more than lightning's speed, vision succeeds to vision, and the imagination, grasping at prerogative, encroaches on the provinces of the other faculties. If there was a want of equilibrium between the powers of his mind, the balance was turned in favour of his understanding. His opinions and theories, therefore, were never the unsubstantial creatures of conjecture: they were either originally derived from experiment and observation, or, previously to their being made known, forced to do homage to these tests of truth. Though he discovered a taste for poetry and other branches of polite literature, his reading was confined principally to works which enrich, rather than to those which only embellish the mind. For he justly esteemed ornamenta

accomplishments as nothing more than secondary objects.

Considered in a moral point of view, his character and conduct would have shielded him from reproach under the censorship of a Cato. As they knew no blemish, they would have shrunk from no ordeal of justice however rigid. But, the possession of negative worth constituted but a subordinate part of his excellence. His heart was a hotbed of those moral qualities, which are the brightest ornaments of human nature. To such an extent was this true, that his friends were at a loss to determine which of the two was predominant, his love of science, or his love of virtue.

As a friend, MR. LEE was steady in his attachments, sincere in his professions, and candid in his opinions, remonstrances, and advice. He had too much of the unbending Roman in his nature, either to flatter or in

any way attempt to please at the expence of his veracity. Yet, in society he was oftentimes gay and facetious, and always affable, courteous, and gentlemanly. As he never forfeited his own esteem by a fashionable compromise with what he knew to be wrong; he was equally careful neither to appear singular, nor give offence to others, by a censorious disposition or an unaccommodating manner. If his sentiments forbad him to conform to the opinions or join in the practices of his company, he was sufficiently independent and well-bred to retire with ease, and search for more suitable companions among his patients, his books, or his own reflections.

His filial and fraternal character we must revere in silence. However amiable his deportment in these relations, a regard (I hope a delicate and proper one) for the feelings of some of those who honor me with their pre-

sence, forbid me to touch on a subject so affecting. It would be rudeness bordering on impiety, thus publicly to intrude on the sanctuary of recent sorrow. The feeling bosom can well appreciate the truth, that there is a degree of woe, which must be suffered to *retire* and weep. It is only the *silence* and *secrecy* of sorrow that are truly divine. What consolation could we offer to the immediate relatives of our departed friend, when we have not yet attained consolation for ourselves! Their only resource lies in the mellowing influence of time, and in a calm resignation to the pleasure of that Being, who gave and who recalled their beloved kinsman.

But, were I to end here, my enumeration of the excellencies of our late fellow-member would be defective to a fault. His extreme modesty is entitled to a distinguished place in our remembrance and esteem. This amiable

quality, though it always shunned the public eye, and blushinglly sought the back-ground in the picture, involuntarily blended itself in his intercourse with the world, and threw an engaging lustre over all his actions. It is thus, that the orb of day continues to dispense a friendly light to the benighted Zemblian, even when he is himself invisible beneath the horizon.

The attack of illness, to which MR. LEE fell a victim, was lingering, insidious, and distressing, beyond description. Those alone who are familiar with disease could justly appreciate its pains and its horrors. It commenced about the beginning of June 1801, and did not terminate in death till the sixth day of February 1802. During this slow rolling period of eight months, the patience, fortitude, and resignation of our afflicted brother were equalled only by the extent of his sufferings. He not only forebore to distress his attendants

by complaints and groans, but even preserved his usual temper and tranquility of mind. Till the close of his life he remained a stranger to that peevishness which so frequently results from long confinement.

Nor was ever his love of knowledge more conspicuously manifested, than during the course of this agonizing conflict. Though it must be confessed that the powers of his mind were somewhat debilitated, his spirit of enquiry remained unshaken amidst the reiterated shocks of his disease. Every lucid interval which he enjoyed was faithfully devoted to the perusal of late publications. This step resulted from a wish, which never forsook him, that his acquisitions might keep pace with the improvements and discoveries in science. With the pride and gallantry of a true soldier, he held it dishonourable, though mortally wounded, to be left in the rear of his literary

associates. His last moments were rendered not only tolerable but even delightful to him, by the pleasure he derived from an examination of a late distinguished work of genius by a young American*. When the fatal period at length arrived, death might be almost said to have extinguished his life and his midnight taper with the same blast.

Such was the character and such the fate of the youth, whose excellencies we have endeavoured to commemorate. Cut off in the blossom of his years, the promise of his fortune, and the flood-tide of his advancement to distinction and fame, his death was melancholy as his life had been honourable. Seldom, very seldom are the public invited to bedew with their tears so much merit consigned to such an untimely grave. When, therefore, the mournful occasion comes, it is manly, it is

*Woodward "On the Substance of the Sun."

virtuous to do homage to the summons. Such an act, is not only a tribute of justice to the dead; it awakens emulation in the living, and is balm to the sorrows of surviving relatives.

Shade of our brother ascend to thy destiny! and may mortal inquietudes never intrude on the sanctuary of thy peace! Escaped from the scene of sublunary visions, enjoy the realities of superior natures! But snatch not from among us the whole of thy attributes! With the legacy of thy example, condescend to let fall on us thy mantle of inspiration!

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