

MARSH

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Discourse ... 1882

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DISCOURSE

BY

LUTHER R. MARSH, ESQ.,

BEFORE THE

COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS,

OF NEW YORK,

TO ITS

GRADUATING CLASS OF STUDENTS,

Pronounced at Steinway Hall

MAY 16, 1882.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS;
AND YOUNG MEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASS :

There are topics on which I should feel at home. There are audiences which I could address without a tremor. But to gather up such stray and desultory thoughts as have occurred to me, relating to a profession not my own—some of them perchance erroneous—and deliver them to such an audience of culture, embracing so many men of distinction in their callings, is an attempt which may well make me pause. I rely on your magnanimity to pardon my temerity, and forgive my mistakes. And yet it is not so wholly incongruous, as it may at first seem, that a law-

yer should be invited to speak to the Medical and Surgical professions; for, to a certain extent, they are related pursuits. We need not trace back their philosophies far, without finding a relationship and unity, suggesting that they may have sprung from a common ancestry. Though seeming so different, they are yet closely allied. They find their point of contact—linked by a hyphen—in Medical-Jurisprudence. Nor can we easily tell which side of the hyphen is the more important. Yet it, must be admitted that, to your side of it, united science is indebted for its best development. No lawyer's library, nor any doctor's library, is complete, which does not contain that work, which, beginning so small, has come to be so large—the admirable treatise of Doctor T. Romeyn Beck, the father of the science in America. Nor should his indebtedness to Doctor John B. Beck, of New York, his faithful brother, be forgotten.

That medical-jurisprudence should be placed on the best basis, has been made painfully conspicuous in a late case of national importance. Indeed, it is a question worthy of solemn consideration, whether it would not be better to bring the experience and practical knowledge of a board of medico-legal constitution to pass upon all cases of alleged insanity. A large and prosperous association in our city attests the interest felt in this joint study, where members of the three professions mingle in a common cause, and

whose growing library already surprises us by its variety and extent. Certainly, your side of the hyphen is the most interesting in study. As the grandson of one doctor, and the nephew of another, I used, in youth, to range at large through their well-filled shelves, far more fascinated by them than by the abstruse studies of the law—preferring, greatly, the *Zoonomia* of Erasmus Darwin to the abstractions of Blackstone, and the *Physiology* of Richerand to the subtleties of Coke. But there is one difference in our practice which may be noted; for, it is said that the lawyers take their unsuccessful cases *up*, and the doctors take theirs—*down*.

True happiness is only to be found in health,—health of mind, health of soul, health of body. With that clearness of mind which sees the just relative proportion and importance of things; with that soundness of soul which keeps a “conscience void of offense;” and that physical condition which makes the pulse carry, in its swift arterial rounds, an actual and pleasant exhilaration—a man is in his true estate—the fullest, the strongest, the happiest, the best,—and can then realize the benevolence of his creation.

We are shut up in a material enclosure; encased in “vestments of decay.” Our outlooks are through material organs. The mind, in this world, can see only through the eyes, can hear only with the ear, feel through the nerves, think with the brain. The soul is caged, and must

peer through its bars. Our duty is to keep the cage sound, pure, sweet, well-conditioned, in good repair; else our sight is blurred, our outlook clouded, our imprisonment joyless. This is religion; for a worrying, impure and unhappy soul cannot be expected to inhabit such a home. Our thoughts go forth to roam the universe, but they must come back to their prison. Even the imagination itself, though it wing its way among the stars, needs to start from a healthful home, if its flight is to be pleasant and well-sustained.

How it will be with us when this mortal shall have put on immortality, its *impedimenta* dropped, its limitations removed, and the spirit introduced into a more fluent world, visiting perhaps the remotest realms of what we call space, on the rays of a thought; and summoning any spirit of all the past to its own presence merely by a wish—for Swedenborg announces these as laws of the spiritual world,—we cannot now know with certainty; we can only conjecture. But, while here, in this breathing world—subject to inexorable physical laws; knowing that fire will burn and water drown; that steel edges will cut, and rocky points pierce, that dynamic laws are invariable, and collisions will bruise; that matter is stiff, stubborn, intractable; that gravitation is opposed to flight; that the infraction of law brings inevitable penalty; that bad habits will induce dis-

ease—it is the part of wisdom to recognize these potent actualities and accept them, and it is your providence so to guide us as to give us the benefit, and not the enmity of these universal and unyielding decrees.

How many men who have spent their best years in the pursuit of pleasure or wealth, would gladly relinquish all their conquests, to be restored to that fullness of enjoyment which health alone can give! I can point you to men in this city who are abundantly able to give, and who would cheerfully stipulate to give, a million of dollars a year, for the rest of their lives, simply for the free use of their own limbs—whose impairment has come through the race for what now seems of such small value.

Those, therefore, who, for the good of their race, study the laws of health; who explore Nature's pharmacopœia, all over the world, for powers which combat disease; who bring the resources of the laboratory to the extraction and combination of medicines; who, with keenest knife and deftest fingers, search the mysteries of the human body, delicately touching its tenderest nerves and highest susceptibilities, that they may be educated to know and apply the quick remedy; these are men—yes, *you* are men, for it is your study—who minister in the very temple of the body, and become High Priests at the altars of happiness.

Sacred, indeed, that temple is. Reverently

should we regard this tabernacle of the soul. Though springing from dust, and returning to dust, it is, for a time, held worthy to be a tenement of immortality. It takes on itself, though it may be obscurely, the very lineaments of its spiritual tenant, which shine through and illuminate it. No wonder Paul declared that the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It was because of its high office that such infinite care was bestowed upon its organization, forming outer and inner channels for the currents of life, and its network of myriad telegraphs as avenues for sensation. It has been the abode of the worthiest and best of human kind while dwelling on the earth. In such a form Moses dwelt, Isaiah prophesied, and David sang. In such a form the beloved disciple lived and loved. In such a home Newton studied the worlds, Shakespeare clothed the most varied wisdom in poetic beauty, and Washington showed a patriotism impregably armored against temptation. Imparadised in such a shrine, fashioned and rounded into swelling beauty by the hand of the Almighty—the last and choicest work of creation—soft as the touch of heaven, and thrilling with the tenderest emotions, have dwelt and dwell the sweetest spirits of our race, without whom earth were solitary, and man left without a motive or an inspiration. But crowned with glory was this temple, and rainbowed with an aureole from on

high, when the Creator infilled it with the fullness of the Godhead, and made it the theatre for the union of the Human and the Divine. To keep this temple in order, to resist the invasion of its countless foes, open or insidious ; to stand by the integrity of this structure, as it comes fresh from the hand of its Maker, is the exalted duty to which you devote your lives.

If men differ as to the probabilities of its origin, it would seem that those most familiar with its complexities are best fitted for the examination of the question. This human continent, with all its marvellous possessions and adaptations,—which, even now, we are only beginning to comprehend,—how came it here? Was it the product of chance? Was it self-evolved from lower forms? Or was it spoken into being by the fiat of a God? The history of this strange entity,—whose conditions and relations, whose preservation and well-being is to be the business of your lives,—seems pertinent to your enquiries ; and its importance is recognized, when a faithful and untiring investigator,—who, whether we adopt or reject some of his conclusions, nevertheless reported his observations with absolute verity—has been so lately borne to his rest, in Westminster Abbey—the last home of the famous—amidst the honors of his country, and the tributes of the world.

Religion and science, between which the battle yesterday seemed so threatening, now give fair

token that they are to be at one. Canon Farrar, that accomplished writer, said, in his sermon on Darwin, whose echoes are yet in our ears: "The fundamental doctrines of religion are eternally true—the fundamental doctrines of science are eternally true. Scripture is God's Bible written with paper and ink. Science is His Bible written on the starry leaves of Heaven, and the rocky tablets of the world."

While here, we are enveloped in mystery. The soul looks out from its imprisonment with eager questionings :

Why was not man endowed, in infancy, with the knowledge given by experience, instead of gaining it only by rubs and knocks, contacts and trials, losses and diseases; thus obtaining some little light only at the end of life, when too late to be available?

Why were not epidemics of contagious health ordained, and diseases made incommunicable; whereas the plague, lurking perhaps in the texture of an India shawl, may even cross the seas, and set up business in a new country?

Why so many generations of suffering through thousands of years, ere the great discoveries affecting the body and its laws, organization and proper treatment, were made; ere it became known that the blood pulsed through all the frame; that nerves existed; that our direst foe might be counteracted somewhat as prairie flames are fought by back-running fires?

Why was not man endowed with the instincts in which some animals are his superiors, of knowing the very simples, as they grow in the fields and woods, which meet each disease?

Why must men wait for Hippocrâtes,—for so I prefer to call him,—Praxagoras and Aristotle, for Celsus, Pliny and Galen, for Hunter, Harvey and Jenner, and for the great doctors of modern schools, to make their slow and hesitating advances, ere they could have the benefit of these discoveries?

Why was the lancet permitted, under the guise of cure, to let out so many lives?

Why such agonies allowed, through the long, long ages, from hurts by accidents and battles, and from acute diseases, while, all the while, there lay close to the hand of the surgeon and physician, the easy means of pouring a grateful stupor along the nerves, and rendering the most terrific operations painless?

Why did chemistry so long withhold the light it was to shed upon the various processes of life?

And why did not the microscope earlier announce its minute researches, disclose the primal germs, and illustrate to the eye the progress of disease, and of repair?

But no answer comes to these, and kindred enquiries. It still remains that man must work out his own knowledge of remedies, as he must his own salvation. So may it come to pass, in revolving time, that the ingenious industry of

your profession may find, in the limitless laboratory of nature, redeeming forces to counteract all the ills that "flesh is heir to!"

There is no pursuit that calls for a wider study or a tenderer skill. Chemistry, leaving its useless search for the philosopher's stone, and the *elixir vitæ*, has become your servitor.

Your feet must be familiar with all the range of natural history. You must call to your aid all the collateral sciences; every clime must contribute of its growths those which hold the magic power of healing. Every nerve and bone, every muscle and tissue in the cosmos of the body, must be known—in its structure, function and location. If not good linguists, you cannot read intelligibly the writings of the masters, nor handle your own technology; the vials of the apothecary's shelves would be an unknown wilderness. And then, most responsible of all, the practical modes of operative procedure—needing the quickest perception and the most delicate manipulation. A dull susceptibility should seek some lower employment—a bungling hand should go to the plow or the anvil.

What though these studies and this discipline demand concentration and activity—for, do you not remember the saying of your own Doctor Good: "You cannot have too many irons in the fire; tongs, shovel, poker—keep them all agoing!"

It always seemed to me that I would scarcely

dare to assume the duties of your profession — requiring such large reading, such ample experience, such high courage, quick judgment and sudden use of all the powers. When entering on my own calling I was almost deterred from prosecuting it by the keen responsibility for my clients' property, which might be perilled by some mistake or inefficiency of mine. And yet, it was only property that was at stake. If, instead, it had been human life, I must have drawn upon my utmost courage to have stood the ordeal. I should be constantly enquiring, have I selected the right remedy, ere the disease shall pass all skill ; or will this sharp edge be so surely guided by knowledge and a steady nerve, as not to invade or wound some vital part ?

Your science is necessarily a progressive one. It may not stand still. If it had been appointed unto man to suffer from only one form of disease, it might reasonably be supposed that all possible modes of meeting and treating it would, by this time, have been known. But you cannot count the ills to which our poor humanity is subject, as, from time to time, they escape from the exhaustless reservoir of the enemy. New diseases come into being with each generation, while many, too many, of the old stand-bys remain. Consumptions, it may be, are as old as human lungs, and rheumatisms have an ancient date. We hear, all the while, of new diseases or new names of diseases, unknown to Chiron or

Paracelsus ; unknown, indeed, to the doctors of our youth. Some, perhaps, under new nomenclatures, may be the same old foes ; but there are some which a physician of fifty or twenty-five years ago would have been utterly inadequate to handle.

To meet these new forces of evil requires new remedies and adaptations. And I suppose it to be true that those affections which spring from the more refined and nerve-trying modes of modern life are, if not more acute, yet more difficult to cure or ameliorate. So is your study never done ; it is “still beginning, never ending,” and to every student there is the hope that some discovery may come to him which shall record his name amongst the benefactors of his race. If the Eucalyptus tree shakes health from its leaves and diffuses an atmosphere that banishes endemic fevers, then why may there not be, in the woods of the world, a protection against every contagion ?

And now, even while I am writing this discourse, there comes to us from Berlin, the results of the experiments of Dr. Koch, tracing consumption to a parasitic origin, and furnishing a hopeful augury that this terrible bane—which lays low one-seventh of the human family, and has hitherto bidden defiance to skill—may now soon be confronted with a triumphant antidote. Certainly no other subject in medical literature is now looked forward to with such transcendent interest and cheering hope.

You, of the city, can hardly imagine, I presume, the hardships of the practice, at a former day, in country settlements and villages. Among my early memories are those of two worthy physicians, the field of whose labors was at Skaneateles, "loveliest village" of the lake. These were Doctors SAMUEL PORTER and JUDAH B. HOPKINS. Each united, in himself, all the departments and specialties of Dentistry, Surgery and Medicine, and went always equipped with the instruments of torture and relief, and with a whole *materia medica* in his saddle bags. The mode then in vogue of drawing teeth, making [the yielding and sensitive gums a fulcrum for the merciless turnscrew, and when the sufferer could not for the moment tell whether the jaw itself was forsaking his cheek, or his head was parting from his body, seems like a cruel method now; but in the state of the art then existing was the only way. The farmer, who, it is said, on visiting the town, returned with the offending tooth still in its socket, might well have congratulated himself that he had lost the memorandum of his errands prepared for his visit by his faithful spouse.

Of all the instruments, the lancet, came into most frequent requisition, and oft have I held the bowl to receive the ruby currents that spouted, now from brawny, and now from white and rounded arms. I little thought that, before such an audience, I should ever commem-

orate the virtues of old JUBA—a horse worthy a niche in the pantheon of quadrupeds—who used so often to be saddled or harnessed for excursions of miles into the country on nights of cim-merian darkness, when Fahrenheit pointed far down towards the bulb; when fences were obliterated by the immaculate drifts, or when the clay seemed fathomless in the frost upheavals of the spring; and the good, brave Doctor HOPKINS would go out into the wrath of weather, on his errand of mercy, sometimes to splint or cut a broken limb, to minister to acute distress, or, it might be, to usher a young immortal into life. These men, and such as these, the country o'er, were the true heroes of practical life, worthy of crowns, and who have never, in this world, received their full reward, even of praise.

The tendency in modern times, to the restriction of your art and mine, to specialties, must, I think, be advantageous. Time was when a lawyer had to embrace the entire field of jurisprudence—the subtle principles applicable to real estate, with its contingent remainders and executory devises, and its differences between the whole of an undivided moiety and the moiety of an undivided whole; the sea-broad doctrines of admiralty; the stubborn, narrow technicalities of the common law; the rules of commercial transactions; the more benign administration of equity; civil and criminal practice; the State and Federal jurisdictions; and the whole code, applicable to

all the dealings of life. So, as I have already said about the two Skaneateles doctors, there was no field of medicine or surgery they were not expected to fill. And, yet, a life's study may well be bestowed on single organs.

The foot, whose beautiful arch upbears the frame, gives elasticity to the tread, and independence to its owner, may well reward the life-time devotion of those who select it as a specialty. He of the healthful foot is master of his own movements; may scale the mountain or traverse the plain; may seek with joy the city's unyielding flags, or find, indeed, a "pleasure in the pathless wood."

The mysteries of the eye, which give all nature entrance to the soul—now a painted butterfly, and now a twinkling star—that most wonderful organ, which hails the "holy Light, offspring of Heaven, first-born;" which opens the world of literature; which recognizes the faces of friends; which, at every turn and angle of wakeful life, comes into play, and without which no morn would dawn upon the eternal void—deserves the complete consecration of those who would venture to touch its most delicate and mysterious organism.

The ear, which catches with equal ease the soft murmur of the summer breath, the song of brooks and birds, the sweet touches of the reed or the massive diapason of the orchestra, or, indeed, the resounding thunders of Niagara—or, better yet,

the voice of friendship and the whisper of love—should only permit its porches to be entered by its especial priests.

Nor should one undertake, without peculiar preparation, to minister (as described by one of your order), to that

“ Cloven sphere, that holds
All thought in its mysterious folds,
That feels sensation’s faintest thrill,
And flashes forth the sovereign will.”

He would be a bold layman who, knowing only, perhaps, like Hotspur’s lord, that

“ the sovereignest thing on earth,
Was spermaceti, for an inward bruise,”

should, in speaking to your profession, think it safe to venture out beyond the edges of his subject; or who should not keep a vigilant eye for escape behind the fortress of some acknowledged generality. And yet, perchance, some gleam may strike the view of one standing outside the circle. Thus you, looking from a different angle, might give some useful suggestions to my own profession; perhaps rebuke our sometimes unseemly wrangles; our too vociferous and prolix addresses; or, at least, teach the proper education of those muscles and vocal chords which give volume and cadence to articulated speech. All science is so at one, and springing far back from the same general principles, that each department

and division may feel kindred with all the others, in the unity of a common parentage.

Were I, a layman, to formulate the best and most comprehensive rule of health and comfort, gathered from my own observation, I should define it as “the rule of not too much ;” a rule of universal application—to food and drink, to work and play, to excitement, enjoyment, exposure, study, recreation and repose, to medicine—to everything. In the exuberance of youth we think our supply of life unlimited, and draw upon it as on a bank that cannot break. So universal are the violations of Nature’s laws, from infancy to age, and in every age, that none can contradict me if I express the fancy that almost every healthy child is born with an endowment of near a century of vitality, which he may retain or forfeit, may expend or husband, as he chooses ; may, if he will, so keep and use, that wearing out evenly at every point, he may, like the deacon’s masterpiece, collapse all together, as the clock shall strike an hundred years.

Many think that they can habituate themselves to hardships, and toughen their bodies, as the schoolmaster, as some of us may remember, used to harden his birches in the hot ashes. But they learn sooner or later, that the muscles are not wrought from scrap iron, nor the nerves from gutta-percha ; and that, ere the process of hardening is completed, they are nests for stitches, cramps and rheumatisms, and,

with the gift of barometric prophecy, become the heralds of the storm. Thus it often happens that infant weaklings, by care and nurture, carry a long life within their breasts, while many a sturdy bantling, in his pride of constitution, surrenders by the way.

Some suppose that, through athletic exercises, they may guard the citadel of life by knots of swelling muscles and keep the enemy at bay, but find that they have drawn to the outlying extremities the very juices of life, and left the vital organs vacant and unnourished. The late Dr. Winship, though upholding on his shoulders two thousand nine hundred pounds—rivalling old Milo in his muscle—yet fainted in the presence of an audience, and quit his hold of life at an early age. Indeed, is it not true, that the average English statesman, say of 70 years, whose exercise has been judicious, but whose intense life-work has been with his brain, is fresher, more erect and exuberant, and in better possession of all his powers, than the American farmer, though ten years younger, with his continuous exercises in the field?

Excess of *study* is an equal infraction of law; sadly illustrated in the recent instance of the young clergyman of Pennsylvania, who, with exceptional qualities of intellect, memory and temperament, yet set himself such tasks, that with unthroned mind he is now a wandering wreck.

Nor is too much *rest* a compliance with nature's plan; for then rust sets in to disintegrate the very fibres of health. Better, even, the brightness and thinness of overwear, than the dull oxidation of disuse.

If we present a friend with the memento of a golden circlet, to keep the hours, wound up for a day, with its buzz of whirling wheels, and its complication of activities, how carefully he lifts the crystal; he turns his very breath aside, and dares not touch its inner mysteries. But, make him master of *himself*—a machine of infinitely more varied and delicate organism—made by God instead of man—wound up, it may be, for a century; with adaptations and forms too minute for the highest powers of the microscope to unveil; and capable of a dual life, and through which spiritual consciousness can manifest itself, uniting Heaven and earth in one organization, and lo! how rudely he handles it; carrying it, in the boldness of adventure, to the Equator or the Pole; now in the burning sands, now barriered by icebergs; subjecting it to sudden shocks and continuous strains, to unremitting toils and habits of evil, in the very phrensy of recklessness!

The romantic Harp, with its vibrant and sensitive chords—that form of beauty which comes down to us laden with poetic fancies, from the Judean King to Tara's halls—who would think of subjecting it to alternations of heat and cold,

of dryness and moisture, in hopes to improve or even retain its tone and resonance? And yet *that* Harp of a million strings, as Dr. Watts would sing,—attuned for supernal as well as earthly airs,—is tossed about, beaten with bars and mercilessly treated, as if it were made merely for combats and collisions.

How much easier and better to *preserve* than to *cure*! How much pleasanter to the patient and to the physician? If it could come to pass that your regular services should be invoked to teach us how to live; how best to nourish this wasting frame; under what conditions to work; how, and how much, to play; the best mode and tim of rest: and how best to breathe, that the vital air may carry vigor throughout the system—so that your studies may be directed not so much to the modes of restoration as to those of healthful preservation—then should we have, instead of a generation of complaining feebleness, one of robust and jocund health; painting roses on the cheek, giving lustre to the eye, timbre to the voice, elasticity to the muscle, making all things enjoyable, every movement a luxury; women of fulness of beauty; men of sturdy power: and so continued through the years while they now surrender to the assaults of disease and age. I find these thoughts confirmed by one of your own brethren,—whose

hand, with equal skill, guides the glittering knife and strings the tuneful lyre, who sings :

“And lo! the starry folds reveal
 The blazoned truth we hold so dear :
 To *guard* is better than to *heal*,—
 The shield is nobler than the spear.”

Young Gentlemen : you have had the benefit of the wisdom of the past. Men of science and experience have laid their knowledges at your feet. The recorded observations and reflections of the advance men of your calling have been studied, commented on, enlarged, enforced and illustrated by your instructors. But you are not to be content with this. You will find that Gibbon was right when he said, in his autobiography, that every man who rises above the common level has received two educations—the first, from his teachers; the second, and by far the more important, *from himself*. I assume that you are not the men merely to travel a beaten road because it is beaten; but that you will observe, think, explore, for yourselves; that you will use your present attainments merely as vantage ground; that you will not rest on the achievements of the past, but make them the stimuli for further acquirements. The advantages were never so great, the field never so ample, as now. The recent and great discoveries of M. Pasteur—adding so much to what the world already owes to France—who, it is said, “has seized the Angel

of Death, put it under the microscope, discovered the laws of its existence, and taught how to escape from its fatal influence: and who is now engaged in tracking typhoid fever to its lair, and searching into the nature of hydrophobia,"—these show you how the prospect widens. New problems continually arise upon the solutions of the old ones. Every new discovery and advance broadens the area of vision; hence, at this very day, standing on the mount of the magnificent discoveries in your science, there yet throng into the field, and stand up all around the horizon of the future—as it is in every department of life—more perplexing problems than ever before.

The faculty most eminently required for the successful practice and advancement of the healing art—and peculiarly applicable to that art—is that of *Observation*. Some men are born observers. Others, again, do not know how to begin to observe. And yet it is only thus that Nature can be explored; and it is only by studying Nature that men can learn. They cannot invent; they can only follow. We must go to her home and workshops; learn her materials and how she handles them. We must trace her back, by the microscope and all other aids, to her primordial elements.

The royal road to positive knowledge is *ob-*

servation. When Agassiz, the prince of naturalists, took possession of Penikese Island,

“Ringed about by sapphire seas,”

given to him by John Anderson, the prince of merchants, the first words addressed to his first class were: “My intention is not to impart information, but to throw the burden of study on you. If I succeed in teaching you *to observe*, my aim will be attained. I do not wish to communicate knowledge to you; you can gather that from a hundred sources—but to awaken in you a faculty which is probably more dormant than the simple power of acquisition. Unless that faculty is stimulated, any information I might give you about natural history would soon fade and be gone. I am, therefore, placed in a somewhat difficult and abnormal position for a teacher. I must teach and not give information. The methods of investigation you apply here will enable you to examine the same subjects wherever you live. So, put away all your books. Nature is our only text-book here. This school is to be distinguished from all others as being the school without books, the school of Nature, where pupils are to learn by experiment. I only want to prepare you to *observe for yourselves*. Explore the island and pick up specimens.” “What shall I pick up?” one asked. “*Anything, and find out what it is!*” One day an advanced pupil brought him a piece of

coral, worn smooth, saying, "I have been examining this two weeks, and I see nothing." "Break it open!" He did, and a new universe flashed on his sight. He had long been a student and teacher of natural history. Now his education began. Thus on Penikese Island this high-priest of Nature revolutionized the method of teaching natural history all over the world.

Neither the physician nor the surgeon does his work *alone*. There is an occult power standing ready to help him. He is to put himself in line to invoke its aid. This is the *Vis Medicatrix Naturæ*. He is the best physician and surgeon who follows its lead. Nature stands anxiously waiting to come to his assistance. She summons all her forces to the rescue. It is yours to do what you can to give her a fair chance. It is a grand thing to be able always to lean on Nature. If properly invited she is sure to hold her powers for you. How best can you remove obstructions and clear her path? Give her an opportunity to knit the broken bone, and all her activities are astir. Cut the affected flesh and bring together the healthful parts, and, with her tissued loom, she weaves them into perfect reunion. If circulation is impeded, help the great vital pump to send its ruddy flow from artery to smallest vein, till the whole clay is moistened with its life. Under all circumstances see how best you can invoke the *Vis Medicatrix Naturæ*. *This is the secret of your art.*

But Nature will not work so well against the disposition and fears of the patient; and, therefore, it calls for no small portion of your skill to make the patient mentally receptive. A cheerful hope is a part of Nature's power. The tie which unites the material and the spiritual is as yet undetected. It eludes the keenest knife, the closest scrutiny. How the soul lives within the body, vitalizing and informing it, is the great enigma for future solution. Is it an association or an infusion? If the soul permeates every portion of the body, then how is it that a rude touch at single points, piercing the heart, arresting the lungs, injuring that vital knot, the medulla, so quickly dissolves the partnership forever? Your savants have taught us, indeed, where the impingement is most imminent, and where the very throne of thought is reared. They have shown us that, to the grey matter of the brain, all impressions are conveyed by a system of telegraphic threads so invisibly minute that a hundred and fifty millions of them would only equal a cord of the diameter of a pencil; and that a nerve influence, generated by ganglionic batteries, is signalled over these highways at a speed of about 200 feet a second.

I have often thought how strange it is that the countless telegraphs and telephones, the microphones and photophones of the human system, which carry and report their constant messages,—which let in the beauty of creation to

the eye, the harmonies to the ear, the flowery fragrance and the delicacies of taste, and all sensation, should converge and be carried through the slender alabaster column of the neck, thus reaching, reporting to, and returning with answer from, the regal Court of the Brain, somewhat as all the innumerable railroads and telegraphs of the mighty South, and of the mightier Southwest, of this great country, do and must converge, and carry their freightages of material product and mental communication, through a narrow isthmus of an adjoining city, and report them here, to the head and brain of American navigation.

But it yet remains unknown *how* this nerve influence becomes transmuted into conscious intelligence. It has not yet been permitted to man to take this step. Beyond, there is no hint or explanation. Who knows but he may be amongst you who, by some fortunate experiment or intuition, may find the nexus?

This, at all events, we know, that, so intimate is the union, that mind and body act and interact, advantageously or disastrously, upon each other. They are deeply and mutually interested and potential in the welfare of each. This interaction opens an affluent field for the future conquests of medicine.

Was there not a basis of truth in the theory of Georg Ernst Stahl, when, two hundred years ago, he claimed that the moving power and

guiding principle of the human body, was the soul; that its influence was recuperative and superintending; guarding against injuries, and when they occur, taking the best means of repairing them; being the common source of all motion, of all secretion, and of all the vital actions? So far is this true, at least, that, to a large extent, the mind may aid, or may hinder, the efforts of the *vis medicatrix nature*. Perennial good nature, the absence of fear and fret, the acceptance of all situations amiably, is a habit of mind which lubricates the physical machinery, and may hold back the years by a decade. The habit of looking forward with hope, and not backward with regret, is a great agency of health. Many instances are recorded, besides that of MARIE ANTOINETTE, where a single night of terror has blanched the hair. Ill news, and sometimes even good news, by the very sweetness of its excess, has struck the recipient dead, and no autopsy could reveal the wound. The dart passed through the heart, like an arrow through the air, and left no trace, though it effected an eternal separation of flesh from spirit.

We know that the mind may sometimes so arouse itself as to expel disease. I knew a lawyer who, I think, held on to life for twenty years by the sheer force of will—somewhat like that Englishman—was it not Sidney Smith?—who said that he had long survived his Constitution, and was now living on—the By-laws.

An Irish farmer, of some eighty years of age, who tills a little ground of mine in the country, was sought out not long since, in his field, by some politicians, and persuaded to visit the polls on election day. To exercise this high privilege of the elective franchise, Dan Larkin must needs array himself in fitting costume, which, however, was less protective than his working wear against the bleak November day. A terrible cold set in, and made straight for a vital point. Intolerable pain ensued, and he was removed to a neighboring city—four miles away—for treatment. His three physicians agreed that he was past all hope; but they had not calculated on the restorative action of his will; for his keen sense caught the incautious words of the younger attendant, saying, “I should like to cut him up.” When they retired, the old man rolled out on the floor, summoned his landlady, ordered a wagon, was lifted into it, and, ere he reached his home, was sensibly relieved. A perfect cure ensued, with entire exemption since. On my asking what cured him, he replied, “*An Irish mad came over me.*” So intense were his mental emotions, I suppose, that they gave a new impulse to his blood, impelled it through its obstructed channels, revolutionized his condition, and started anew the rusty wheels of life.

Æsculapius—now still more honored than in his own time, since he has become the doctor of all nations—seemed to attach great importance to

celestial help; for when his cases passed beyond the modesty of his pretensions, he used to take them to the altars of the Temples of the Gods, and there implore divine aid, where humanity was too weak to help. Without a consciousness of human weakness there can be no faith in higher agencies.

May it not be true, that the subtler influences that surround us in this universe, are by far the most important, the less resistible, and the more determinate, than all others which we call physical motors? And may it not be that, in the domain of the imponderable and the invisible, the ultimate triumphs of medicine will find their home; and that, step by step, you will grow to be better healers, the closer you shall have studied the arcana of the human form, in its association with the higher, the ideal, the spiritual, the eternal existence of man?

While your profession has its special cares, labors and anxieties, so has it peculiar rewards and consolations. Yours, the privilege of ameliorating human suffering from life's beginning to its close. You preside at its advent, you administer at its departure. The physician of long practice can say of many a man, of many a woman, as Grattan spoke of the independence of his country, "I sat at its cradle, I followed its hearse." And during the progress from birth to age, through the sparkling vivacity of youth, through

the sober and freighted years of manhood, and in the days when the hold on earth is relaxing, and the "grasshopper is a burden," it is yours to ward the pain, to lighten the woe, to cheer the exit. The good physician may take joy, not only in the cures he has wrought, but in the comfort he has diffused. The pulse of the patient quickens at his ring. His voice is music, his presence balm. He is, himself, medicine and restoration. To have such wishes attend his steps, such hopes herald his approach, such benefits wait on his skill, should make him feel the blessing of his mission and the benignity of his art. To him shall come the consolations of age with especial charm, in the reflection of the gloom he has dispersed, the sorrow he has alleviated, the good he has accomplished. And, down at the bottom of things, in the very essence of our lives—however the selfish man, whose care, and thought, and labors are centered on himself may doubt if life be worth living—he cannot doubt, who has learned that the best and real use of life is to benefit others and make them happy.

GENTLEMEN OF THE FACULTY :

The arch-enemy of mankind,—against whom you are the army of embattled warriors,—has, of late, here and abroad, been quite busy in your shining ranks. But he has taken none more respected and honored, none whose life has been

more useful, none who furnishes a more encouraging example, than the late Doctor JAMES RUSHMORE WOOD. The service he has rendered to Demonstrative Surgery; the opportunities he has furnished, by the legislation which he induced, to pursue investigations, where, alone, knowledge can be obtained; the agency he had in inaugurating courses and systems of practical education, in his beloved art; the affections of his long line of students, who bear him in their hearts; the energy and persistence by which he overcame the adverse circumstances of his youth on the road to eminence, make it seem appropriate, at this first meeting after his transit, to lay our appreciative and commemorative offering upon his tomb.

GENTLEMEN GRADUATES :

Retaining ever, a love for Alma Mater, and a fond remembrance of your Instructors; keeping bright the chain of friendship which has been wrought between you and your associates, here; may you go out into the world, equipped with all that is now known in your art,—which is the greatest and best of all the arts, since *life* is the only thing in the Universe that can interest a human being,—disciplined in those habits of labor and observation, which will carry you far beyond; resolved to *learn* and *do* what you can, to relieve the afflictions of mankind; studying how fresh resources may be gathered, and how aid can be invoked

through the finer essences now so little known ; with no jealousy of any mortal man because he, also, may do something for our common humanity ; and determined, wherever your lot may be cast, to do a man's work in the great conflicts against the powers of evil. So may you go on to final triumph, and the blessings of a life well lived, be your coronal.

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