

Bishop (S.S.)

THE DOCTORATE ADDRESS DELIVERED
AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE
ILLINOIS MEDICAL COLLEGE.

BY SETH SCOTT BISHOP, M.D., LL.D.

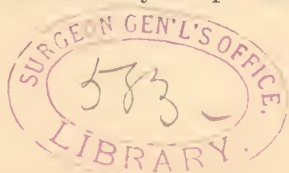
Professor of Diseases of the Nose, Throat and Ear; Professor of Otology
in the Post-Graduate Medical School and Hospital; Surgeon
to the Illinois Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary, etc.

Members of the Graduating Class: In conferring the degree of Doctor of Medicine upon you to-day, the honor and privileges conveyed with the title are not likely to be underestimated or forgotten. But you should be reminded that in accepting the privileges of physicians, you assume at the same time duties of the gravest nature. Your relations to the members of the community who will entrust themselves to your care are changed. Such relations become as sacred and inviolable as those existing between priest and parishioner—between lawyer and client. Your duties will involve an intimate knowledge of their affairs, their habits and their characters, such as no other professional relation in life conveys.

Our laws recognize, protect and dignify this high position which is maintained by every honorable physician. In the safety vaults of your memories will be treasured those confidences and secrets that are poured, confession-like, into every Doctor's willing or unwilling ears. In your power may rest the integrity and the happiness of families, the destiny of citizens and the sanitary welfare and safety of communities.

Let your influence protect the home and the family. Let your force of character encourage and uplift the fallen victims of disease and despair. Let your superior knowledge, skill and judgment protect the community from the devastating contagion of epidemics.

Modern medicine has increased your power for



good many fold over that of your ancestors. It is truly a great privilege to practice medicine in the closing years of the nineteenth century. We possess a mastery of medicine not dreamed of by our plodding forefathers. The refinements of diagnosis made possible by the microscope, and the improved processes of the laboratories of chemistry and bacteriology; the prevention of diseases and their spread by vaccination and the antitoxins; the concentration of drugs and the extraction of their alkaloid principles, united with the palatable and elegant products of advanced pharmacy; the various adaptations of electricity to the service of medicine, with the Roentgen ray accomplishing the seemingly impossible; the economic division of labor, typified in the various specialties of medicine, permitting and enforcing the highest degree of perfection in every branch of medical achievement, place the advancing science and art of modern medicine above all others of vital importance to the well-being and the life of mankind.

No sphere of human activity excels the achievements of the coördinate sciences of medicine, and the brilliant accomplishments of surgery; and we may be permitted to indulge a pardonable pride in the part played by members of our own local profession in the great scientific drama of our day.

Let these truths broaden your views and stimulate you to put forth your best endeavors to achieve the highest ideals of attainment. Be not content to drone your lives away like tow-path mules of medicine. Rise above mediocrity. Strive to out-strip all runners in the race. With every nerve and muscle tense, leap forward to the goal.

Above all things, be studious. Be the first to know each new discovery. An ignorant doctor is an unpardonable sin. Doctor means learned. You should be learned above all your neighbors. You should be looked to as a leader in your community. You should diversify your learning beyond the confines of medicine, and to broaden your culture, you should strive

to excel in some important branch of learning. If you live in a mining country, let geology occupy your leisure hours, for they will not be few in the first years of practice. Geology and mineralogy may lead you to a mine of wealth.

The profession and the people would profit alike if the able physicians of America, like the brilliant professors of foreign lands, of whom the erudite Virchow is an illustrious example, would engage in the study and actual practice of political economy. The philosophy of good government is a subject worthy of the work of the best minds a great country can produce. In such lands as Germany, Italy and the South American Republics, physicians of culture honor themselves and their profession in the highest councils of their governments.

When will the people of America awaken to their own most vital interests, and dedicate a government bureau, with a medical head, to the cause of disease-prevention, State medicine and higher education? We are blessed with a department of agriculture that predicts the weather; a department of war that relieves us of our surplus millions; a department of law that really fights the nation's battles. The time must come when State medicine shall be represented in the National government, to protect against invasions of contagious diseases and to safe-guard the nation's health in every quarter. Our local profession contains within its ranks the ability and the experience to organize, equip and properly conduct such a department of State.

Not until the government of the United States recognizes the vast possibilities of State medicine to conserve the health and vigor of the nation, and to save the great waste of human life that modern scientific research has rendered preventable, can it lay claim to being abreast of the times and the first of the nations of the earth.

It has been the custom in the past to say to graduating classes: "Your school days are ended. You now

enter upon a life of activity, a career of usefulness," etc., but in these days of post-graduate schools, in which a college education can be supplemented by actual experience in the practice of medicine, your schooling should not end with a blue ribbon and a sheepskin. Time was, when no physician was considered to have been initiated into the highest degrees of proficiency until he had crossed the Atlantic and walked the wards of the Old-world hospitals.

The conditions are changed. American teachers of to-day stand abreast of the world. These are not idle claims. They are not only verified by Americans conversant with European teaching and practice, but are substantiated to the satisfaction of European scientists who visit our schools, laboratories and hospitals. It is evident, then, that you may enjoy the advantages offered by home institutions of learning to perfect yourselves in post-graduate work with far less loss of time and money than it cost your predecessors. But travel enlarges the views, expands the intellectual horizon and broadens culture. Visits to foreign countries lend polish to the manners, evoke the spirit of tolerance and stifle bigotry. The diversified teachings of Old-world medical centers will arm you with those principles and methods that contribute to a finished education and a successful practice.

Therefore, let those who have walked the beaten path you are to tread exhort you to cap the climax of a collegiate course with the practical knowledge and skill obtainable under the direction of eminent specialists in hospital and dispensary practice, first at home, and afterward abroad.

It is appropriate at this time to tone down the roseate hues of your imaginative pictures of the future, with the neutral tints of reality.

'Tis pleasant, sure, to think you'll own a mint;
A mint's a mint, although there's nothing in't.

A diploma is not a lien on the public for a living. That pretty and attractive sign you have in mind, with the big M.D., in shining letters of gold, or of

glittering silver, is not an unfailing magnet to draw the masses of suffering humanity into your health-giving presence. The fund of knowledge you have stored within the temple of the mind will not find quick appreciation and admiration. Then let the truth be spoken, and faced without flinching.

You now set sail under the smiles of heaven and the plaudits of teachers and friends. Good wishes and flowers illuminate your pleasant pathway; but no bouquets of rhetoric can screen you from the harassing storms or the dangerous breakers ahead. Your schooling, good sense and self-reliance must sustain you in the time of need.

We speak from experience when we predict that you will meet with that wise old doctor who will welcome you with a machine-made cordiality to the precincts of his practice. He has gone through the same formality many times before, and recalls the ghosts of practice abandoned by the little army of doctors who have pitched their tents in his door-yard, spent their little all, and moved on to new fields, a little wiser than before. This grizzled veteran, who can not boast like you of a real parchment and ribbon, owns the community in which he lives. Sooner or later this fact dawns upon your mind. He magnanimously promises you all his night work—that does not pay. He will help you out of your hard cases. He does. He helps you out of your cases, your fees and your patrons. This great-hearted individual volunteers to teach you how to make money while you appear to be sacrificing yourself for the benefit of the poor public. He tells you how you should charge less, and make many more visits; how you should ape the artful dentist who makes holes to fill, when he can not find them ready-made. He is a devotee of the black art. Beware of this Mephistopheles of medicine.

Another neighbor, you will meet, grown fat and sleek, who casts a withering glance as you pass by. You, poor novice, are an intruder; but you have heard that it is your duty, being new, to call on him. You

honor tradition. He receives you with a fraction of a nod, a blighting look and a condescending wave of the hand toward his most uncomfortable chair. You inform him that you have come to—"Ah," he has heard of it—"bad place to locate; next town would be better; here, it is every man for himself, and ——" and so forth. Are you discomfited, discouraged? No; you know your preceptors have been through the same mill, and still they live. You are a little stirred in the depths of your soul, but every fiber of your being vows that eternal success shall crown your life.

Undaunted, you make another sally. You visit the brother of your neighbor, less fat and sleek, but beneath his more careless exterior he reveals unconsciously a soul of truth and honor. His sympathetic words of cheer and sound advice anchor in your heart. He stands like an oasis in a desert, like a cross of hope, and you linger in his presence and cling to his personality. You feel him worthy of your fraternal love; no trust is violated and no confidence is betrayed. With a mind well stored with medical lore; with a wealth of the richest professional experience; with a broad philanthropy that the world has blessed with material abundance, this noble son of the healing art rescues the name of physician from the selfish and sordid estate to which the unworthy would drag it, and adorns it with the transcendent glory of a great manhood.

These three types of medical men, and more, you will meet. You will have no quarrel with any. You will cultivate the society and friendship of your equals and, perhaps of your betters. You will be guided by the principles of the immortal Hippocrates and the code of ethics of the AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

With homeopaths and eclecticies you will have an honest, but good-natured difference. Life is too short, and charity is too broad to permit of bickerings. Be generous enough to credit every competitor with sincerity, as you would be credited. Remember our laws, to which we all are alike amenable. Your privileges

and theirs are identical, and their respect and friendship are worth many times their hate.

To your patients be true. Their interest and yours are one, for the greater good you do to them, the more success it will reflect on you. In the alleviation of suffering you will derive much satisfaction; in the conquering of disease you will delight. Commit one robbery at every opportunity—rob Death of his prey. While you may not be able to realize for this service a fee commensurate with the law's estimate of the value of a human life—\$5,000—you will enjoy the consciousness of having rendered a fellow-being an inestimable service, and of having fulfilled the utmost requirements of a most exacting profession.

Adopt correct business methods. Whether you practice general medicine, or confine yourselves to a specialty, especially obstetrics, let your rule be “cash on delivery.”

Finally, your personal influence over the sick and dying may turn tears into smiles, and darkness into light. The attributes of the true physician, united with an inspiring Christian character, present an ideal type of manhood and useful citizenship. Such a physician instills the dew of courage into the drooping soul; refreshes the withering heart with rainbows of promise, and paves the pathway of the dying with the peaceful flowers of hope.

