

Pease (6.)
ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
GRADUATING CLASS,
IN THE
MEDICAL DEPARTMENT
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT,

JUNE 4, 1856,

BY

✓
CALVIN PEASE,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY.

box 6

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30202

BURLINGTON:

FREE PRESS PRINT.

1856.

“Therefore, here is the deficiency which I find, that physicians have not, partly out of their own practice, partly out of the probations reported in books, and partly out of the traditions of empirics, set down and delivered over certain experimental medicines for the cure of particular diseases, besides their own conjectural and magistral descriptions. For as they were the men of the best composition in the state of Rome, which either being consuls inclined to the people, or being tribunes inclined to the Senate ; so in the matter we now handle, *they be the best physicians, which being learned incline to the traditions of experience, or being empirics incline to the methods of learning.*”

ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING, B. I.

BURLINGTON, *June 5, 1856.*

PRESIDENT PEASE :

*Sir*—At a meeting of the graduating class of the medical department U. V. M., held after the exercises last evening, the undersigned was appointed a committee to request of you a copy of your very excellent address, delivered on that occasion, for publication. We should feel under grateful obligations if you should respond favorably to this request.

In behalf of the class, yours very truly,  
CHAS. F. TAYLOR, M. D.

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UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT, *June 10, 1856.*

CHAS. F. TAYLOR, M. D. :

*Dear Sir*—Your note of June 5th was received in due season, but a crowd of cares and duties prevented my answering it at the time. Permit me now to thank the gentlemen of the graduating class of the medical department of the University, for their kind reception of my address before them at the time of their graduation. In compliance with their request I place the manuscript at your disposal.

Your obedient serv't,  
C. PEASE.



## ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN :—By the ceremonies of this occasion you pass from the sphere of ordinary life into the ranks of a *learned* profession. The event is one of lasting interest to you, and of vital importance to community—interesting to you, because your subsistence, your usefulness and your reputation are intimately connected with your professional character—important to community, because the dearest earthly interests of many persons are henceforth to be entrusted to your intelligence, fidelity and skill. I refer, of course, to the interests of life and health. It is, therefore, with no ordinary emotion that I congratulate you,

Gentlemen, on your arrival at this interesting and important point in your lives and studies, and welcome you into the ranks of professional life, which, I trust, it will be your ambition and earnest purpose to advance and adorn.

The occasion renders it proper, and it is perhaps expected, that I should address you briefly with reference to the new sphere of duties upon which you are about to enter. I shall glance, therefore, in a cursory manner, at some things, which, if you properly regard them, will enable you to advance and adorn your profession; and the disregard of which will result, sooner or later, in disaster and disgrace.

I. In the first place I would re-

mind you that the profession you have chosen is *called*, and *is*, a *learned* profession. It becomes you, Gentlemen, to illustrate this fact, and thus justify the designation. You should make it your business to become *learned men* in your profession. You have already gone through with the ordinary course of *preparatory* reading; you have attended upon the usual course of formal lectures, whereby you are in a measure prepared to study and observe for yourselves, and are furnished with the methods and the means which are intended to enable you, on good and substantial grounds, to confirm, or modify, or reject, the formal instructions you have received. The necessary light has been furnished; the road is before you, and directions have

been given you to facilitate and secure your progress in it. It has not yet been trodden by you. That remains to be done.

Now, for the successful prosecution of your profession, you must have two kinds of knowledge. The one kind is that which, in its complete form, is called *science*; the perfection of the other is *skill*. In your profession, Gentlemen, both these kinds of knowledge are, to a great extent, to be derived from *observation* and *experience*. There is a *general* knowledge of principles which may be best derived from books. But the elements and *data* of that knowledge which is to become *practical science* in your daily studies and practice, can be gained only by *personal inspection*. If, therefore, you



consider that while this is true, still all your observation and experience, unless they rest on a basis of solid science, and are guided by accurate reasoning, and are weighed by the most careful reflection, are only empiricism — are sheer quackery — you will be prepared to appreciate the remark that you must be both students and observers: you must think as well as act, and *in order* to act. You must *act* also, both to test the validity and accuracy of your thinking, and in order to have something definite to think about.

But what sort of a man is he who is able to comply with these conditions of true success? To answer the question in one word, he is the *cultivated* man — the man who has the control of

his faculties, in their fullest and fairest harmony. You should seek therefore, Gentlemen, for true culture; you should discipline your minds; you should improve and train your powers not merely in the studies immediately connected with your profession, but also by wide and choice and careful reading. There is need of this in order that your faculties may be capable of nice and delicate working. It is the nature of literary culture to refine the mind; to make it clear and pure. And there is no profession which so imperatively demands the exercise of a clear, sagacious and delicate power of thought as the medical profession. You need, therefore, you *must have a good literary culture.* You should form your tastes to literary

pursuits. You should find in them, as Cicero did, your habitual recreation, and your repose. For such recreation and repose, are reinvigoration and refreshment also. Such pursuits, therefore, once begun, by you, should never end until you have reached the termination of your professional labors.

You need also the power of *sound and solid reasoning*. The physician, more than any other man, has occasion to reason in this way every day of his life. The health and often the life of his patient depends on it. Why! consider the great variety of condition and temperament amongst men; think of the changes constantly going on in the physical condition of the same individual; the ever varying type of disease according to the season, or climate, or

habits of the individual and of society. These are things which cannot be, to any great extent, except in the most general way, prepared for before hand. The thinking must be mainly done at the time. There is required an *original* diagnosis in almost every separate instance. To do this requires great resources and the most perfect training. And when men put their lives into your hands, they expect you to have such ; they presume that you have an actual *intellectual ability*, in an important sense, *to take care of* their lives. If all this is justly required of a physician, he certainly *ought* to be the *wisest man in community* ; he ought to be able to instruct us in the things which most nearly and urgently concern us ; and it is assumed

that he *is* able, and therefore he is always called *the Doctor* ; that is, *the Teacher*. There are other kinds of Doctors in learned circles ; but there is no other class who are universally addressed by that appellation. In other relations it is mostly complimentary, but in the case of the physician it clings to him as closely as the name of his baptism. The physician is always called : *the Doctor* ; *the Teacher* ! This fact is significant, and suggests as pointedly as anything can, what you ought to make yourselves by study and discipline. It suggests also a caution and a warning.

The *caution* is that you do not too readily presume that you are sufficiently skilled in your profession, because society is disposed to think so.

Be not content with the name ; but be diligent to merit it and justify it, by acquainting yourselves with your business in the broadest and most thorough manner possible. You can never know enough. I should have little confidence in the man, young or old, who had laid aside his studies and his books and was content with what he had already acquired. That is not the habit of the men who have gained a valuable reputation in your profession, or in any other. When a man ceases to learn, he ought to cease to live ; this world is no longer any place for him. The *warning* is, that unless you do become, in a sense, masters of your profession, you will meet, in the end, with disaster and disgrace. The physician from whom the community is compelled by expe-

rience to withdraw its confidence is a most forlorn and desolate object, whether he be an ignoramus or a quack.

In the case of the man who is suspected of quackish tendencies, the indignation which is felt towards him after his detection is in exact proportion to the confidence reposed in him before. He may, indeed, still enjoy for a while, a bar-room popularity, but to all true intents and purposes he is a ruined man. I mention this as a warning, because in the case of the physician, there is a peculiarly strong *temptation* to rely on such a superficial popularity ;—I say, *strong*, because at the very start, there is a confidence reposed in him, such as no other man enjoys ; interests are committed to him on a mere presumption, before he has

had much opportunity to show himself worthy of such confidence, because he is supposed to know—and men generally are known *not* to know. Now if he is a weak man, or an unprincipled man or a lazy man, which amounts to the same thing, he will be in danger of resting satisfied with this, trusting to luck and the helpless credulity of society, rather than to any science and skill which should support and justify such confidence. *How often do you see this exemplified!*

And not only is the *temptation* strong, the *mischief* of such a course is immense. You may employ an unfaithful or an incompetent lawyer and lose your cause and your money. But industry may regain the one, and the other may be committed to better



hands another time. In the religious teacher, disastrous and dangerous as false opinions and erroneous instructions may be, the matter is still left open for re-examination ; and the results of error are often their own corrective : and reason and reflection are not put asleep by a false doctrine. But it is otherwise in the practice of medicine ; a wrong prescription may ruin the health for life or may destroy life itself ; and there is no remedy. The mistake is a fatal one. The physician should always cherish a lively feeling of this fact, and should bring to bear in every case which he has to handle, all the industry, knowledge, fidelity and skill which he can command.

II. My next remark is that the phy-

sician should be a man of high moral character. He should be eminently a *conscientious* man ; alive to every consideration of duty ; more solicitous about his own deliberate self-approval and the true interests of his profession than the ignorant applause of all mankind. Such a man will let no opportunity slip of augmenting his knowledge ; of improving his skill ; and of extending and giving value to his observation and experience. Such a man, too, will be scrupulously careful as to his own personal habits. His obligation to avoid all low and sensual indulgencies is twofold. I do not speak now of the obligation he is under as *a man* ; of the duty which he, like every body else, owes to himself, to admit nothing in his own conduct and habits

which is self-degrading and corrupting in its influence. But I speak of the duty he owes to his patients and to his profession.

1. Immoral habits first blunt the finer and more generous sensibilities of the mind. They tend to brutalize a man ; and just in so far as they do this, to make him indifferent to the feelings, the interests and the claims of others. He ceases, therefore, of course, to be a conscientious man. He cannot be safely trusted anywhere, and least of all in circumstances of the utmost magnitude, delicacy and importance, such as are occurring in the practice of a physician continually. A physician under the control of low passions and appetites, and therefore with a blunted moral

sense, is more anxiously to be shunned than the plague. He is capable of doing more harm, although with no direct intention of doing any at all, than all the diseases he is expected to remedy or relieve put together ;—and that merely from stupidity, indifference and negligence. The thing which it belongs peculiarly to him to do, he fails to do. He is indifferent to the thing intrusted especially to him, and which he was especially expected to care for ! In this way there may be abundance of *mal-practice*, for which not even the melancholy remedy of the law is provided.

2. But immoral and sensual indulgences not only blunt the moral sense, they also paralyze the vigor of the intellectual powers. The result is, that

the man not only fails *to care for* his duties, but he has rendered himself unable to discharge them properly, even if he did care for them. The faculty of keen discrimination is gone. The power of exact and thorough reasoning fails ; and the mind can only run in the old rut of habit. If he has been furnished in the outset with a tolerable set of prescriptions and a general knowledge of symptoms, he will, perhaps, in many cases, do but little harm. But a homœopathic book and box is just as good as he, and usually much better. The only spot where the judgment and skill of the physician are really needed at all—the case where the “book and box” are useless—he is no better.

Now, if any man on earth needs a

clear head, the most perfect control of his thoughts, and a power of delicate and subtle discrimination, that man is the physician. How vast, how varied, how delicate the sphere of his investigations ;—the whole subject of structure, organic action and all the phenomena and functions of life, both in their normal and abnormal working ; and all the minute and complicated agencies by which these are to be influenced and controlled, come within his sphere. He who has the best knowledge of these things may well be regarded as the wisest of men, capable to communicate the most important knowledge ; he is most emphatically *the Doctor*. But there is probably no subject so difficult to understand in a controlling way. That knowledge of it which gives

power over it is the profoundest kind of scientific knowledge. To understand and define the powers and functions of the human system ; to know how to control and correct them when their action is diseased, requires the most remarkable and rare combination of powers ;—a quick and accurate eye ; a profound and penetrating mind ; an acute and steady logical faculty ; a great power of concentration and self-control, and great rapidity of combination and comparison. And all these rare talents should respond with steady and instant obedience to a tender conscience and a delicate moral sense.

And the combined experience and research of the whole faculty of medicine is not a head or a hand too much to give any tolerable certainty or even

safety to the course to be pursued in cases which may arise in your practice any day you live. You must yourself *observe* ; but the observation of another may materially *modify* your own ; and that of a third may first detect the *principle* which rules in them all, making all *one*, with an *assignable* difference. You must *reason* on your experience, and on the experience of others, and must compare your conclusions with such as have been of good authority amongst judicious men, and see whether your results are thereby to be modified, or their conclusions require to be restricted or enlarged. You must study therefore with a spirit equally remote from servility and from presumption ; you must be both teachable and independent,—in a word you must



be *candid*. Be candid and earnest, and you will advance your profession, and cause to be no longer true, what Bacon says of medicine in his day, and which may not be altogether inapplicable at this day : “ Medicine is a science which hath been more professed than labored and yet more labored than advanced, the labor having been in my judgment rather in circle than in progression. For I find much iteration but small addition.”\*

Obviously, then, most obviously, the medical profession is no sphere for the besotted sensualist. As you enter it, Gentlemen, do so under the most serious conviction that its duties will demand all the purity of mind ; all

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\* Advancement of Learning : Book II.

the clearness of head ; all the depth and accuracy of knowledge ; all the concentration of powers ; all the patience and fortitude, which you can command or acquire. Every faculty and every susceptibility will be in constant requisition. The claims of the patient, and the claims of your profession, to which you should ever hold yourselves debtors, demand in you, therefore, an elevated moral character.

III. I remark again that the physician should be a *kind* and *courteous* man. He should be a gentleman, in the best sense of the word. He comes in contact with people in circumstances where sympathy and kindness and a delicate sense of propriety, are desired and appreciated, if they are anywhere. His attentions are required by all classes in

the community,—by children :—and he should cultivate the qualities and feelings which will enable him to soothe them and gain their confidence. The success of his remedies will often be materially affected by the soothed or irritated condition of the patient, induced by his own presence. *Men* of every degree of cultivation and character need his services ; and *every* man in the anguish and suffering of the sick-bed craves kindness and sympathy ; will appreciate then, if never before, a sympathizing look, a gentle word, an encouraging smile, a solicitous and kind behavior. If the physician is a truly kind and courteous man, his very presence may sometimes do more for the relief of his patient than all his “ nostrums.” No matter

how rude and coarse the patient's nature may be, when he is in health, he craves gentleness and sympathy when he is sick.

The physician is called to attend upon females ; and in a lady's sick-chamber, the accomplishments of a true gentleman are valued as perhaps nowhere else. And it requires no ordinary qualities of head and heart to discharge the duties of such a situation in a satisfactory manner. It may perhaps be necessary for you to have been sick yourselves, Gentlemen, and to have had the attentions about your own sick-bed, of a female friend, to enable you to appreciate rightly the kind of attentions which a female patient requires. How wonderfully soft and soothing the hand on your forehead ;

how tender and full of concern and sympathy the tones of her voice ; how patiently will she sit by you, and bathe your temples and anticipate your wants and seem to feel every pain which you experience ; how noiselessly she glides about, not like a spirit at all, not like an angel ; but just like a woman—which is far better,—and her satisfaction seems to be as great as yours when she has contrived anything to relieve you a little, or fixed you something which you relish. As a female can alone give such attentions, so can she alone fully appreciate them when given. A physician who can in any measure render them is a benefactor. Such a man's presence by a lady's sick-bed, has healing virtue in it. It works wonders. And well it may ; for

it is the product of the rarest of virtues and of gifts. On the other hand there is no object which a sensitive and well-bred woman dreads so much as a coarse and vulgar physician. She regards him as worse than the disease. Her chief alarm at the approach of sickness is the visit of such a Doctor ; and the visit will certainly be avoided if there is any other possible relief within reach.

This is a matter of great importance. Men and women ; adults and children ; the cultivated and the rude, all demand gentleness, sympathy and delicate attention when they are sick ; and they appreciate them then, if at no other time.

But one step farther : You will often be called to stand by the death-bed : and how necessary the gentle, kindly

graces I have mentioned, there ! How much an attentive and trusted physician may do to “ facilitate and assuage the pains and agonies of death ! ” And if any situation in the world requires of a man to feel, and to be skillful in administering, the consolations of religion, this is pre-eminently that situation.

These *four* things, then, Gentlemen, ought to characterize you as physicians. You should be *learned*, *virtuous* and *courteous* ; you should also be *religious* men. Cultivate assiduously these qualities and graces, and you will not fail to illustrate and adorn a noble profession. It is a profession which many enter, but in which few become distinguished. And the reason why so few become distinguished in it doubt-

less is, that so few appreciate as they ought the weight of responsibility attached to it ; that so few enter it with the careful and complete mental and moral discipline which is requisite, and pursue it with that conscientious devotion which its delicate and momentous interests ought to inspire. But, Gentlemen, there is no more promising and noble field for enterprise and distinction than this. It furnishes ample scope for your best powers ; it demands the exercise of every human virtue ; it furnishes occasion for the display of every accomplishment and every grace ; and therefore affords a basis for an enduring and honorable fame.

I have only to add, Gentlemen, that the Medical Department of this Uni-



versity, in strictest sympathy with the spirit of the University itself, has from the start, sought to produce in its students a culture of the kind which I have spoken of. The names of the men whose learning and virtues have formerly adorned it, sufficiently indicate this. An institution which enrolls among its instructors the name of *Arthur L. Porter*, could not lack scholarly earnestness and enterprise. The *Smiths* were a pledge of learning, industry and solid character. And the genius and enthusiasm of *Benjamin Lincoln*, the last in the list of its former professors, seem still to linger here as the *Genius loci*. And if I have not entirely mistaken the spirit of the instructions which your present teachers have given you, it corresponds essen-

tially with what I have just expressed, and has aimed to carry you forward towards high and manly ends, in a path of faithful and accurate learning. And they will naturally look to your enterprise and professional virtues and success as furnishing to the public the proof, that such are the real aims and influence of their instructions. The numbers already in attendance upon the regular lectures would seem to show that a Medical School of high objects and requirements, which it has been hitherto nearly impossible to sustain, has now become practicable ; and encourages the hope that its present flattering condition is but the beginning of a brilliant and useful career. And certainly the congratulations of the University and of the whole community

are due to those gentlemen of the Medical Faculty, to whose enterprise, judgment and perseverance, the present unexpected success of the enterprise is to be attributed.

Gentlemen ; it is at the recommendation of these, your instructors, based on a knowledge of your character and attainments, that I now present you, in the name of the University, the *Diploma*, which will accredit you, all over the world, as regular members of the Medical Profession. You have a noble career before you : fail not to pursue it nobly !

