1847 Charge to the Graduates of Jefferson Medical College

Robley Dunglison, MD
CHARGE

TO

THE GRADUATES

OF

JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA;

DELIVERED MARCH 25, 1847,

BY

PROFESSOR DUNGLISON.

WITH

A LIST OF THE GRADUATES.

Published by the Graduating Class.

PHILADELPHIA:

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1847.
J E F F E R S O N  M E D I C A L  C O L L E G E,  M a r c h  6,  1 8 4 7.

Prof. D U N G L I S O N,

Dear Sir,—At a meeting of the Graduating Class, the undersigned
were appointed a Committee to request, for publication, a copy of
your Valedictory Address to be delivered at the ensuing Commenc­
ment.

Yours, respectfully,

G E O.  W.  W E N T W O R T H,  N.  H.
JOSEPH  A.  R E E D,  Pa.
THOS.  J.  M'CLENAHAN,  Ind.
GEORGE  W I L L I S  F O U L K E,  Pa.

Committee.

J.  D A W S O N,  British  Burmah,  Chairman.
A.  C.  M U R D O C H,  Ireland,  Secretary.

P H I L A D E L P H I A,  M a r c h  8,  1 8 4 7.

G E N T L E M E N,—Be pleased to express to the Graduating Class my
high sense of their kindness in asking of me for publication a copy of
the Valedictory Address which it will be my province to deliver to the
Graduates at the approaching Commencement. Such as it may be it
shall be at their service; but I can scarcely hope that it will merit so
much favour as they bestow upon it in advance.

Accept, gentlemen, my thanks for your agency in this matter, and
believe me,

Affectionately and truly, yours,

ROBLEY D U N G L I S O N.

Messrs. Geo. W. Wentworth, Joseph A. Reed,
Willoughby Walling, John C. Hupp,
Thos. J. M'Clenanah, George Willis
Foulke, and C. D. Patterson, Committee.

J. Dawson, British Burmah, Chairman.
A. C. Murdoch, Ireland, Secretary.
CHAPTER

The text of the chapter is not legible due to the quality of the image. It appears to be a page from a historical or academic text, possibly discussing a specific topic or historical event.
CHARGE.

Graduates of Jefferson Medical College.—

The last most solemn act on the part of this Institution—the conferring upon you of its highest honours—has been executed; and you have received the announcement thereof from venerable and venerated lips. The objects for which you left your homes to sojourn amongst strangers have been fulfilled, and you are enabled to return to them to gladden the social circle, and to rejoice with it, that the good work has been thus far accomplished. Permit me to congratulate you, not for myself alone, but in the name of the Trustees and Faculty of this College, on having attained the enviable distinction which has been just awarded you, and to welcome you into the ranks of a profession, of which you are all, I hope, destined to be zealous and efficient supporters.

Although this day, with most of you, terminates the period which you have been able to assign to instruction in the schools, guard against the fallacy of esteeming it as the conclusion of your studies. It is, in reality, but the commencement of independent observation and reflection. Your diploma shows to a discerning public, that your minds have been well imbued with the great principles of medical science; and that you are prepared, at the outset, to profit by every opportunity for observation, and to proceed to the treatment of human infirmities, guided by all the lights that illumine the profession in its present highly improved con-
dition: but in such a profession, demanding pre-eminently—in the
language of the learned philologer and divine, Dr. Parr—"erudition
and science," and "habits of deep and comprehensive thinking,"
he who is laggard, and ceases to study, must consent to fall far
behind his competitors, and to have his sphere of usefulness cor-
respondingly diminished.

At the commencement of your professional life, your time cannot
be fully occupied. Opportunity will still exist to improve your
knowledge on educational topics, which ought properly to be pre-
liminary, but which, owing to unavoidable circumstances, may not
have received from you due attention. The rich stores of informa-
tion contained in the classical writings of the Grecian and Roman
fathers—medice artis principes—to be fully appreciated, should
be read in the languages in which they were originally conveyed;
yet in the pursuit of such a luxury, it would be unadvisable for you
to dissipate that time which ought to be assigned to the attainment
of what is strictly necessary. Even in the desirable there may be
variety; and it may be a question with you, whether your future
leisure moments may not be much more profitably devoted to the
more immediately useful study of the productions of the moderns.

Where translations exist, the English language communicates to
the mind of the inquirer, if not the words, the thoughts of the
Greek and the Roman. Many, too—perhaps most—of the best
works on professional subjects that appear in the various Teutonic
and Romanic tongues are speedily transferred to it. Still, what a
treasure is contained in the literature, medical and general, of
Greece and Rome, and in that of modern France and Germany
more especially, which must forever escape one who is unac-
quainted with the languages of those countries; and hence a know-
ledge of them, and, if practicable, of the Italian and Spanish, be-
comes, certainly not indispensable, but as certainly most advis-
sable.

Of what can be effected in the way of those solid accomplish-
ments by enduring perseverance at the commencement of a profes-
sional career, we have a signal example in Dr. John Mason Good,
whose name and works are familiar to all of you. At the age of fifteen he quitted the roof of his father—who had the pastoral charge of an independent church, and superintended, at the same time, the education of a few young gentlemen—to be apprenticed to a general practitioner. He had then obtained some knowledge of the Latin, Greek, and French languages; but he had received no collegiate instruction. So ardent, however, was he in the pursuit of knowledge, and especially of languages, that we find him, in a letter to a friend written when he was twenty-five years old, and when he was engaged in the practice of his profession, stating that he had just begun the German, having mastered, with tolerable ease, the French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. In the following year, he was sedulously engaged in the study of the Arabic, the Persian, and the Hebrew; and, at a subsequent period, the Russian, the Sanscrit, the Chinese, and other tongues, occupied his attention.

But, as I have elsewhere said, we need not travel to other countries for examples of what unwearied industry, aided by adequate intellectual power, is capable of accomplishing, when we have one so shining in the poor, once almost friendless, and subsequently afflicted Godman. Notwithstanding the restricted nature of his early education, he had succeeded—we are told—in acquiring such a knowledge of the Latin, Greek, French, German, Danish, Spanish, and Italian languages, as to read and translate them with fluency, and to write some of them with elegance. Poverty and disease could not impair his intellect, although they fettered and clogged his exertions. He lingered for years under pulmonary consumption; understood fully the incurable nature of his malady; spake and acted—says one of his biographers—with an unfeigned and beautiful resignation; toiled at his desk to the last day of his existence, and still glowed with the love of science and the domestic affections. His existence was of meteor-like brevity, for he died at the early age of thirty-six; but his name is enshrined in the temple of fame, in the niche devoted to the successful cultivators of the natural sciences, of which medicine forms a part.
Such are the triumphs of the only real sources of true nobility—
talent and virtue.

Young members of a liberal profession! You are destined to
take your place in society in intimate association with the wisest
and the best. Spare no pains to fit yourselves still farther for
so important a position. Undoubtedly, your profession should
be the main object of your assiduous culture; but strive, in ad-
tention, to make yourselves distinguished for your general infor-
mation. Neglect not polite literature. Keep pace with the im-
provements of general science, as far as may be without detriment
to your main pursuit. In the ranks of your profession have
flourished some of the most exalted ornaments of physical and
moral science.

An unfortunate impression exists, not confined, it is to be feared,
to a few, that any attention paid to collateral pursuits may interfere
with the practical knowledge of the physician; and hence many
eminent individuals have carefully concealed their extraneous ac-
complishments until their reputation in their profession had been
established beyond cavil. In a pursuit so signally requiring a
cultivated intellect—active and accurate powers of observation with
the utmost precision of reasoning—whatever is calculated to ex-
pand the mind cannot fail to be of practical advantage; and hence
it is injurious and unjust to place what is termed the practical, in
unworthy contrast with the learned and scientific or—as he is
not unfrequently termed—theoretical physician. There can be
no sound practice without theory; and I know of no greater com-
pliment that could be paid you than the declaration, that whilst you
are thoroughly informed in your own profession, you are familiar
with the various liberal arts and sciences.

The illiterate, uninformed, and self-sufficient, are accustomed to
scoff at acquirements which they possess not, and to ridicule the in-
formation to be derived from books—"book learning" they contemp-
uously term it—as if the perusal of the best books were not in real-
ity holding communion with the best minds; and as if the lecturer
or speaker on any professional or other subject were not, in truth, reading from the book of his own mind; and they are apt to ad-duce the example of John Hunter, who was wont to affirm, that his great book for contemplation was the "book of Nature." Yet, if the preliminary education of Hunter had received more attention, the productions of his own pen would have been infinitely more attractive; the gnarled style and obscurity of diction, which pervade them, would have been more or less corrected, and they would have been at this day eminently worthy of being placed in the hands of the tyro, instead of being laid on the shelf, esteemed, however, as they ought to be, valuable books in which to seek for the physiological, pathological and surgical opinions of one distin-guished above all his contemporaries, for the light which he shed on various obscure points of the animal economy.

It is proper, too, to remark, that in Hunter's time, there were few books in the English language on the great subjects that engaged his attention, which were worthy of much consideration, and that those which were written in Latin and in foreign languages, owing to the defects of his early education, were sealed books to him. "Devoted as he was to physiological pursuits"—says a biographer—"and firmly persuaded that without an improved knowledge of physiology it would be impossible to attain to correct general principles in surgery, which he looked on as still in its infancy, he viewed with contempt those who were content to guide their practice by past experience alone, or by the erroneous theories of their ancestors. On the other hand, the majority of Hunter's contemporaries considered his pursuits to have little connexion with practice, charged him with attending to physiology more than sur-gery, and looked on him as little better than an innovator and an enthusiast."

Conscious of his great mental superiority, Hunter was too apt to exhibit this in a rude and overbearing manner towards men who in station were his equals; and the same feelings led him to underva-lue the published labours of others. From his general anathema against books, he, of course, would have excepted his own; other-
wise he would scarcely have laboured so strenuously to lay before the profession productions which he deemed it unadvisable for them to read.

To preserve yourselves on a level with the medical literature of the day, let me recommend you to peruse regularly, but with due caution in sifting the facts from the assumptions—the grain from the chaff—the pages of a good medical periodical. Whoever is remote from a large town has necessarily more or less difficulty in procuring the more ponderous works that issue, from time to time, from the press; but owing to the astonishing celerity of communication between every portion of this extensive continent, and between it and the old world, an acquaintance with the novelties of medical observation and reflection can be transmitted by means of the Journals with wonderful rapidity to every inquirer, no matter how distant he may be from the great centres of population.

You enter upon the practical exercise of your profession at a period when its domain was never so extended. Observers, everywhere, are vying with each other to enlarge its boundaries. Never has the medical mind been more energetically exerted. Forms and ceremonies, which, of old, too often retarded the course of true science, have been discarded; idle and baseless pretensions to learning without wisdom, of which so many examples have existed even in more recent periods, have become unfrequent; mystery, the foster-brother of credulity and superstition, is abandoned, and with the upright and honourable physician all is open and devoid of artifice. The onward course of medical science is steady, and so manifest, that to the imaginations of the ardent it has been conceived its velocity may be still farther augmented. Such may be the case; yet care will be required, that we do not neglect or diminish the mass of valuable regulations and materials already collected and proved by long experience to be worthy; and substitute in their place others more showy and captivating, but
still, perhaps, untried and unfeasible. In other words, whilst we attempt to increase the velocity, let us be careful that the momentum, the true measure of force, is augmented in a like ratio. In every forward movement of your profession, you will, I trust, actively participate; but satisfy yourselves, first of all, that the movement is really salutary, its objects laudable, and that the ends, proposed to be attained, will compensate for the agitation and confusion which it almost necessarily induces. Strive to advance your profession by the exercise of your intellectual qualities; adorn it by the excellence of your moral powers.

Admitted into the confidence of those who consult you; regarded, often, not merely as the physician, but the friend of the family, on whose advice reliance may be placed on many trying occasions besides those of bodily indisposition, how weighty are your obligations to secrecy, discretion, and honour! Possessed, as you ought to be, of presence of mind, to adapt you for every sudden and startling emergency, how indispensable are temperance and sobriety—virtues which, although expected and required of all, are peculiarly so of the physician. He must recollect that he is often the arbiter, as it were, of life or death; that the hopes of a sorrowing family are reposed on his well-directed efforts, and that a heavier weight of responsibility is cast upon him, before his Maker, than could perhaps exist in any other avocation; and let him reflect, for a moment, how utterly unfit—"with memory confused and interrupted thought"—he would become, to exercise a profession which requires, more than any other, accuracy of observation, clearness of thought, and absence from all perplexity and unsteadiness.

Let your manners and address be liberal and courteous, compassionate and gentle. With his wonted power of expression, yet with his wonted sarcasm, the leviathan of English literature designated the profession of physic as "a melancholy attendance on misery, a mean submission to peevishness, and a continual interruption of pleasure;"—yet did he at the same time admit, that "every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of
sentiment; very prompt effusion of beneficence, and willingness to exert a lucrative art, where there was no hope of lucre."

Repeatedly will you be doomed to contradictions, disappointments, and ingratitude. Constantly will you have to gratify whims and caprices, often of the most unreasonable character; but accustom yourselves to bear those evils with equanimity. "Experience"—it has been well said—"demonstrates, that a gentle and humane temper, far from being inconsistent with vigour of mind, is its usual attendant; and that rough and blustering manners generally accompany a weak understanding and a mean soul, and are, indeed, frequently affected by men void of magnanimity and personal courage, in order to conceal their natural defects."

Men have risen to unusual eminence in their profession by rare endowments, when their manners were coarse and presumptuous; but the cases are uncommon. The examples of Radcliffe, John Hunter, and Abernethy, have exerted a baneful influence on many a youthful aspirant for distinction, to whose minds it may not have occurred, that those gifted individuals would have attained, more rapidly, at least as high an elevation in the estimation of the profession, and a far larger amount of success with the public, had they possessed those refined gentlemanly feelings and conciliatory manners, which win a way for their possessors in every station of life, and are the cause of their frequently leaving far behind them those who are endowed with superior talents and acquirements. "He," says Bacon, "that is only real had need have exceeding great parts of virtue, as the stone had need be rich that is set without foil."

To all of you, however various may be the extent of your abilities, the pathway for professional usefulness and distinction is open. It is one, however, that is not always smooth and strewed with flowers:

—— "Rugged places lie between
Adventurous virtue's early toils
And her triumphal throne."
Difficulties and privations beset your course; yet patient and abiding industry will bear you forward, and enable you to surmount all obstacles. Unflinching devotion to your profession; conduct humane, charitable, and without reproach; a gentle, sympathizing demeanour; entire freedom from envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness towards your fellow men, and especially towards your professional brethren; and a rigid observance of the heaven-descended invocation of "peace and good will towards men," can scarcely fail to lead you to distinction; but should inevitable circumstances prevent this desirable consummation, you will have the heartfelt consolation of knowing that you have done all in your power to merit it; and to be regarded, at the close of, I trust, a long life, as the skilful, upright, benevolent, conscientious, and "beloved physician."

I know not that I could place before you a more encouraging example of what devotion to one pursuit, in the absence of transcendent abilities, is capable of accomplishing, than in the picture which has been sketched by Lord Brougham of an honoured member of a sister profession, who, by his own well directed exertions, succeeded in attaining one of the highest dignities in the gift of his sovereign.

"The contemplation of Mr. Justice Park's rise and success in life," says his lordship, "is calculated to be of material service, and to exercise a salutary influence over the minds of by far the most numerous class of well educated society. His talents were not above mediocrity, unless that he was endowed with natural quickness, and had some power of steady application. He had nothing profound in the cast of his thoughts; nothing remarkably perspicacious; no fury, no fire, no natural dignity or grace, except what a good voice and an unconstrained action bestowed. He had amassed no store of legal learning; he had no classical, no scientific attainments; he was without fortune, without rank, without any political or powerful connexions; yet did he live as happy and as respectable a life, for above half a century that he was in the profession, as any man could desire; and after having been one of its
leading members, he sat for four and twenty years on the bench, with the just reputation of being a good judge. He enjoyed large emoluments, high rank and general respect. To what did he owe these valuable possessions? To no rare genius, or even great talents, or extraordinary accomplishments, but to prudent conduct, sufficient but not excessive industry, steady attention bestowed upon one object—that object being his profession, from which nothing, either in politics or in literature or in amusement, diverted him; to uniform suavity of demeanour, to constantly making in business the success of his cause the paramount object, and never being drawn aside from the point of his client's interest by any selfish feeling of feeding his own vanity, or making any sacrifices either to amusement or to display. Such sacrifices, such gratifications, may with more safety be indulged, when the gifts of genius or commanding eloquence accompany the more homely powers which common business requires. Even then they are perilous relaxations from the severity of forensic discretion. But where such rare endowments are wanting, their place being supplied by prudence and by conduct, the ample measure of success, which Mr. Justice Park reached, may be pronounced as of tolerably certain attainment."

Graduates! Yesterday we held the relation towards each other of preceptor and pupil. To-day we are equals—members of the same great fraternity. You go abroad as the representatives of the largest medical class, and are yourselves the largest class of graduates, that has ever graced the halls of Jefferson Medical College, or of any similar institution in the country. Those halls, so recently replete with emulous activity, are now deserted; but the melancholy engendered by their still and void condition is diminished by the consolatory and inspiriting reflection, that in a few months the busy, animated scene, will be renewed; and that from them, as from a centre, intellectual and moral irradiations have proceeded, and will proceed, which may excite corresponding activity and usefulness in every part of this wide-spread country.
You are here from regions widely distant from each other—not from "Greenland's icy mountains," but from "India's coral strand"—for one of you is from remote Burmah. Representatives, too, are amongst you from Ireland, Canada, and New Brunswick, and from most of the States of this Union.

Of those on whom the degree of Doctor of Medicine has been this day conferred, seventy-two have spent one scholastic year in other incorporated institutions:—one in the Medical Department of Bowdoin College, Maine; two in that of Dartmouth College, New Hampshire; two in the Berkshire Medical Institution, Massachusetts; three in the Medical School of Castleton, Vermont; one in Geneva Medical College, New York; three in the University of New York; and two in the College of Physicians and Surgeons of that city; seven in the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania; and one in Pennsylvania Medical College; one in the Medical Department of the University of Maryland; and one in that of Washington University of the same State; six in that of Hampden Sidney College, at Richmond, Virginia; and fifteen in that of the University of Virginia; six in the Medical College of South Carolina; three in the Medical College of Georgia; eight in the Medical Department of the University of Louisville; and three in that of Transylvania University, Kentucky; four in the Medical College of Ohio; one in Willoughby Medical College; one in the Medical Department of the Western Reserve College, at Cleveland, Ohio; and one in the Medical College of Louisiana.

The afflux hither from other institutions must continue. It has been annually on the increase; and at no time, perhaps, has the ratio been as great as during the past session. The multiplication of medical schools, instead of diminishing the number of those that seek instruction in this city, augments it; for the facility of intercourse between the most distant places is so great, that a journey to Philadelphia is now within the means of a large proportion of medical students: hence it is, that so many visit her to pass at least one winter, in order that they may enjoy those ample opportunities for full medical instruction, which have obtained for her the
character of being the great centre of medical education on this side of the Atlantic.

As graduates of this College, you carry with you a testimonial, which "inter nos et ubique gentium"—at home and abroad—will obtain for you all the rights and privileges that attach to the diploma of any similar institution in the land. Go forth, then, as honourable members of a profession, which, by Christian and Painim, has been esteemed one of the most godlike of human vocations; as upholders of the dignity of your alma mater; and as skilful, benevolent, and sympathizing aid-bearers—opiferi per orbem—to your fellow man. Take along with you the blessings of those whose delightful duty it has been to instruct you. May your return to your homes—to those who are anxiously waiting to clasp you to their bosoms—be safe and joyous. May no domestic affliction intervene to mar the felicity of that reunion; and may the Almighty vouchsafe to prosper you in every laudable undertaking.

Farewell!
At a Public Commencement held on the 25th of March, 1847, the Degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred on the following Gentlemen, by the Rev. C. C. Cuyler, D.D. in the absence of the Rev. Ashbel Green, D.D., LL.D., President of the Institution; after which a Charge to the Graduates was delivered by Professor Dunglison.

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Subject of Thesis.
Causes influencing the Action of Therapeutic Agents.
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Pneumonia.
Coagulation.
Phenomena of Labour.
Acute Dyspepsia.
Intermittent Fever.
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Hysteria.
Anasarca.
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Vix Medicatrix Nature.
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Erysipelas.
Iritis.
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Symphocarpus Fapidus.
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Traumatic Hemorrhage.
Scarlatina.
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Scarlatina.
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Reflex Functions of the Spinal Cord.
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Intermittent Fever.
Differential Diagnosis of Typhoid and Typhus Fever.
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Name.                      State.                      Subject of Thesis.
Thom, Allan C.            Virginia.                    Uterine Hemorrhage.
Tinsley, Thomas           Virginia.                    Congestive Remittent Fever.
Torrey, Noah              Massachusetts.                Phthisis Pulmonalis.
Trenchard, J. Franklin    Alabama.                     Sthenic Hyperemia.
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Williams, James           Tennessee.                   Physiological Effects of Cold Water.
Williams, Willis A.       Virginia.                    Urethritis.
Wimley, George W.         Pennsylvania.                Variola.
Yates, La Fayette         Kentucky.                   Syphilis and Gonorrhoea.

The degree of Doctor of Medicine was also conferred on Benjamin F. Keene, of Georgia, and A. H. Baker, of Ohio; and the ad eundem degree of Doctor of Medicine on Robert C. Martin, M.D. of North Carolina, and William J. Weaver, M.D. of Indiana.

Number of Graduates, 181.

Number of Students, session 1846-7,—493.

ROBERT M. HUSTON, M.D.
Dean of the Faculty,
No. 1 Girard Street.