1850 Charge to the Graduates of Jefferson Medical College

J. K. Mitchell, MD

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PROFESSOR MITCHELL'S

CHARGE TO THE GRADUATES OF

JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE

OF PHILADELPHIA,

MARCH 9, 1850.

WITH A LIST OF THE GRADUATES.
CHARGE

TO THE GRADUATES

OF

JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE,

OF PHILADELPHIA,

DELIVERED AT THE

PUBLIC COMMENCEMENT,

HELD MARCH 9, 1850.

BY

J. K. MITCHELL, M.D.

Published by the Graduating Class.

PHILADELPHIA:

C. SHERMAN, PRINTER.

1850.
CORRESPONDENCE.

JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE, March 2d, 1850.

PROFESSOR J. K. MITCHELL—

Dear Sir,—At a meeting of the Graduating Class, held this evening, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to solicit for publication a copy of the Charge to be delivered by you at the approaching Commencement. In discharging this pleasing duty, we would take occasion respectfully to urge your compliance with the wishes of the Class.

Yours, very respectfully,

JACOB PRICE, Pa., Chairman.
M. I. BOWLAND, Ohio, Secretary.
W. H. GALE, Md.
W. J. GILMORE, Pa.
G. C. RICKETTS, Va.
J. S. BUFORD, Miss.

J. H. FITTS, Ala.
T. B. ELLIOTT, N. Y.
D. D. WRIGHT, Canada.
G. W. DOSSEY, Va.
J. R. BULLOCK, N. Y.

Committee.

Walnut and Eleventh Streets, Philadelphia,
2d March, 1850.

To Messrs. JACOB PRICE,
M. I. BOWLAND,
W. H. GALE,
W. J. GILMORE,
G. C. RICKETTS,
J. S. BUFORD,

J. H. FITTS,
T. B. ELLIOTT,
I. R. LEIGH,
D. D. WRIGHT,
G. W. DOSSEY,
J. R. BULLOCK,

Committee, &c.

Gentlemen,—Your polite note, announcing the desire of the Graduating Class of Jefferson Medical College to have, for publication, the Charge which I shall have the pleasure of delivering to them this season, has been received. The Charge is cheerfully placed at your disposal, and a manuscript copy of it will be put into your hands on Monday morning at nine o’clock.

Hoping to have the honour of seeing you at that time,

I am, Gentlemen,

With great regard,

Your friend and preceptor,

J. K. MITCHELL, M.D.
GENTLEMEN:—It is just one hundred years since Doctor Franklin, and a few public-spirited persons, instituted, in the then small town of Philadelphia, an academy for the better education of the youth of the place. In the year 1753, an act of incorporation gave greater weight to the new institution, which was subsequently, in 1755, raised to the dignity of a college, under the title of the “Trustees of the College, Academy, and Charitable School of Philadelphia, in the Province of Pennsylvania.”

Ten years elapsed before a medical school was engrafted on the college. In the year 1765, just eighty-five years ago, Dr. John Morgan, and Dr. William Shippen were respectively appointed professors of the Theory and Practice of Medicine, and of Anatomy and Surgery. In January 1768, the trustees of the young institution, appointed Dr. Adam Kuhn professor of Materia Medica and Botany, and in the following May, Dr. Thomas Bond became professor of Clinical Medicine.

Thus constituted, the Medical Department of the “College, Academy, and Charitable School of Philadelphia,” held its first commencement, and conferred, in 1768, upon ten young gentlemen, the degree of Bachelor of Medicine. Thus,
eighty-two years ago, an American student of medicine, was for the first time, made a doctor, by American authority.*

The year 1769, was signalized by the appointment of Dr. Benjamin Rush to the professorship of Chemistry. The eminent talent of Rush, and the able lectures to the students of medicine upon Natural Philosophy, given by Dr. Smith, the provost of the College, failed to countervail the disturbances of the revolutionary spirit; for, up to the period of the Declaration of Independence, only eighteen graduates were added to the ten who received the honours of the first commencement.

During the war of the Revolution, no students were taught in Philadelphia, or at least, no register of matriculants or graduates appears from 1773 to 1779, although the academical department of the College continued its labours.

In 1779, this College, founded by private liberality, and endowed by funds industriously collected for it in England and South Carolina, was unconstitutionally deprived, not only of its charter, but of its buildings and revenue, all of which were transferred to a new institution, denominated in the act by which it was created, "The University of Pennsylvania." The new seat of learning was farther endowed, by bestowing upon it a part of the property of individuals which had been confiscated during the Revolution.

Notwithstanding its republican freshness, its wealth and its exemption from the competition of any rival, the Medical Department of the University suffered under public displeasure and private feuds, so that until the year 1783, resignations followed appointments in rapid succession. For the ten years immediately following the dissolution of the old College, the

* A week ago, an old gentleman, ninety-two years of age, came to consult me for an imperfection in his hearing. He was ten years old when that first degree was given, and is yet a strong, lively old gentleman.
University graduated only fifty-one students; at the rate, therefore, of five annually.

In 1789, ten years after the arbitrary extinction of the old school, the Legislature, conceiving the act of 1779 to be "re­pugnant to justice, a violation of the Constitution of the Com­monwealth, and dangerous in its precedent to all incorporated bodies," repealed so much thereof "as affected in any way the ancient corporation of the Trustees of the College, Aca­demy and Charitable School of Philadelphia, in the Province of Pennsylvania." Of course, the college tenement and reve­nues were thus restored, the new school, the University, re­taining only its peculiar property, as obtained from the con­fiscated estates.

So soon as the old institution recovered its house and revenue, the medical school was reorganized, and the then little town of Philadelphia boasted of two rival medical semi­naries. The University was sustained by only three pro­fessors, Drs. Shippen, Kuhn, and Hutchinson; whilst the College boasted of Shippen, Rush, Griffitts, Wistar, and Bar­ton. Dr. Shippen held the chair of Anatomy and Surgery in both schools.

In 1790 and 1791, the old College graduated ten pupils, five in each year, whilst the University, after graduating twelve in 1790, gave a degree to only one pupil, in 1791. This sudden decline in the numbers of one institution, and the want of en­couraging progress in the other, brought about a compromise, by which, with the consent of all parties, the rival colleges were united in one institution, and the seven professors of the two schools became the faculty of one, under the title of "The Medical Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania." The old school voluntarily merged its name, functions, and property in the other. The act of Assembly which completed this arrangement, is dated on the 30th September, 1791, and the new faculty was fully organized on the 23d of January, 1792.
In the following year, began that famous succession of epidemics of yellow fever, which, with occasional interruptions, prevailed during the summers, from 1793 to 1805, inclusive. To this cause must be ascribed the want of success of the united schools, and of their gifted faculty; for, from 1792 to 1807 inclusive, the number of graduates amounted only to two hundred and sixteen, being at the rate of only thirteen annually. In 1808, the number of graduates was sixty, and in the session of 1810, the number of matriculants rose to four hundred and six, a class which is within sixty of the average number of the matriculants for the last five sessions, and exceeds the mean for the twenty-five years from 1810 to 1835.

This stationary character of the class with respect to numbers, whilst the population of the country had advanced from seven to eleven millions, led to the opinion that classes have a natural limit, and that the students of medicine were beginning to resort to other places for medical instruction, and that therefore there might be placed in Philadelphia, another school, without detriment to the University, and with much advantage to the scientific and pecuniary interests of Philadelphia.

Accordingly, a medical school was organized in Philadelphia, in 1824, under the title of the Jefferson Medical College, of which the first faculty consisted of

Joseph Klapp, M.D., Professor of Anatomy.
John Eberle, M.D., Professor of Theory and Practice.
Jacob Green, A.M., Professor of Chemistry.
George M'Clellan, M.D., Professor of Surgery.
Benj. Rush Rhees, M.D., Professor of Materia Medica.
Francis S. Beattie, M.D., Professor of Obstetrics.

Of this faculty, which met regularly for the first time on the 20th of December, 1824, not one individual survives to participate in this triumphant ceremony. All of them are dead, whilst,
owing to the dissensions by which its early history was marked, only one* died in the service of the College. You have therefore, gentlemen, in this part of my narrative, two useful lessons,—one, the uncertainty of life, and the failure of the greatest skill to blunt the arrows of death, the other, the tendency of dissension to poison the sources of both honour and profit.

Before the commencement of the first course, Dr. Klapp resigned his post, and Dr. Nathan R. Smith, now a distinguished Professor in Baltimore, accepted the chair of Anatomy.

With a faculty so constituted, commenced the session of 1825–26, the first effort of the school to which you owe the honours which you are now receiving. The contrast is a strong one between that, and the present session. One hundred and ten students constituted the first class, and twenty graduates, just twenty-six years ago, listened to the first charge, which was delivered to them by Professor Smith. There is something especially creditable to the young College in the fact, that whilst there were strong temptations to make as large a list of graduates as possible, five were rejected for want of competency, and one, who had passed creditably through his examination, was refused a degree, because he had not studied for the entire time prescribed by the rules of the College.

Up to the close of the session of 1832–33, a period of eight years, the new school remained nearly stationary, having an average class of matriculants, of about one hundred, and of graduates, about twenty-eight. During these eight years, the young and struggling College, assailed from without, and disturbed by intestine broils, appointed and lost no less than nine professors.

In the session of 1832–33, Professor Granville Sharpe Patison lectured upon Anatomy. A period of repose followed

* Dr. Green.
his arrival, greater exertions were made by the faculty, and the institution for the first time began an ascent, which was so rapid, that in the fourth session, that of 1835–36, the class amounted to 364, and the graduates to 134, being in that season, the largest graduation list of the Union.

In the following session, the force of the College was greatly increased by the assistance of one of the Professors of the present faculty, the very able and eloquent lecturer upon the Institutes of Medicine, Dr. Dunglison. But despite his best efforts, and his great address as a pacificator, dissensions again disturbed the faculty, and reduced the number of pupils in 1839–40, to 145, and the graduates to 57.

At this time, the Trustees of the College, who have ever maintained a faithful and disinterested guardianship over the interests of the school, made some removals, and introduced two able members of the present faculty, Professors Huston and Pancoast.

The death of Professor Green, and the removal of Professors Pattison and Revere to the University of New York, placed it in the power of the Trustees to make farther changes in the faculty; and accordingly, in the spring of 1841, Dr. Meigs, Dr. Bache, Dr. Mutter, and myself, were selected to complete the corps, which, for the last nine sessions, without a single change in its list, and without a single dissension in its deliberations, has, *Deo favente*, seen the class of "The Jefferson" rise from 163 to 516 matriculants, and the graduates from 57 to 211.

Gentlemen, whilst, with a very natural pride, you exult in the immediate and unrivalled prosperity of your school, it may not be without interest to you to learn, that for the last seven years, the whole number of our matriculants has been 3,184, making an average annual class of 454, whilst the annual average class of the oldest and most distinguished school of our country is 455. Our average class for six years, is even
higher than that, being 474; whilst the highest average for the same time, in any other school, is 461. It is gratifying to us to perceive from these statistics, that our success has not retarded the progress of our eminent rival, whose average class is steadily on the increase, never having been so high as it is now, in any other six consecutive years of its brilliant existence.

The value of the degree, which has now been so deservedly conferred upon you, is acknowledged by the country, which manifested its opinion to that effect, by sending to us the largest class that has ever assembled under the roof of an American medical school. From twenty-eight States of our vast confederacy you have come, to sit as citizens of our common country, as associates in a common cause, as friends, as brothers, in science; and you will go back to your widely scattered and distant homes, with feelings of regard to each other, widely at variance with sentiments of disunion, and eminently imbued with the love of the great country, one and indivisible, which can continue its wondrous career of power and beneficence, only by retaining every wheel of the chariot of state.

Whilst Vermont and Rhode Island alone, have sent to us no student of medicine, we see among you, strangers, from the schools of Canada, and Nova Scotia, and inquirers after truth, from Switzerland, and Germany, and England, and the coast of Africa. Wherever, therefore, you may go, within or without the country, the degree you now receive, will have at least a respectful estimation.

To the value of your degree, the other schools of the country bear unanswerable testimony, in the great number of their students, who, after listening for one or two sessions, to the valuable lessons of their enlightened teachers, resort, for their final accomplishment and graduation, to the Jefferson Medical College. One hundred and sixty-two students, from thirty-
three schools of medicine, assist in swelling the catalogue of the session, which is to-day brought to a close. Of these students, thirty-nine are from the University of Virginia; sixteen from the Medical School at Louisville in Kentucky; twelve from the University of Pennsylvania; eight from each of the institutions, of Hampden-Sydney, Bowdoin, and Augusta, in Georgia; seven from Randolph-Macon, in Virginia, Transylvania College, in Kentucky, and the University of Ohio, at Cincinnati; five from Dartmouth, and Charleston; four from Albany; three from Cleveland, the University of New York, and from Memphis, and the Pennsylvania College, of Philadelphia; two from Castleton, Harvard, Berkshire, Geneva, Toronto in Canada, the University of Missouri, and the University of Maryland; and one from each of the following places of medical instruction, the Franklin College of Philadelphia, the University of Louisiana, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New York, the Medical Schools of Fairfield, of Woodstock, of Willoughby, of Yale, of Buffalo, of the city of London, and of Zurich in Switzerland.

But perhaps, the most valuable testimony to the dignity and worth of your degree, is afforded by the fact, that ninety-four doctors of medicine, many of them practitioners of mature age and high standing, have attended the course of instruction during the past session. Many of these gentlemen have applied themselves diligently to the entire routine of study, for the whole session, thus giving evidence of their laudable devotion to the cause of science, and of their favourable appreciation of the value of your degree. Nay, some of them have submitted to a second examination of their acquirements, and have come up along with you, to-day, to receive a diploma from this institution. A gentleman who graduated nine years ago, in the excellent medical school in Washington City, and who has, for six of these nine years, presided with great credit, over the medical department of the Republic of
Liberia, receives, at his own request, the *ad eundem* degree of the "Jefferson." This degree, which we feel gratified in bestowing upon one so worthy of it, Dr. Lugenbeel hopes to carry with him as a medical missionary, to the distant field of future labour, in China or India.

Among you, have been seated, during the last session, medical officers of the Army and Navy, who, true to the spirit of their noble service, have listened to the lectures with a most flattering attention. Their disinterested testimony to the value of the instruction of the school, cannot fail to give you a higher estimate of the character of the honours now conferred upon you.

But with an especial interest have these older graduates and practitioners watched the progress of the clinical instruction, by which the school is enriched.

In May, 1825, *in advance of the first session*, the Jefferson College established an Infirmary within its walls; and on the 9th of that month, Dr. George M'Clellan performed the first surgical operation in the anatomical theatre. The system of collegiate clinics thus established, has been ever since sedulously promoted, until it has reached an extraordinary degree of importance and usefulness. In illustration of its bearing upon the value of your diploma, I may state, that during the past session, one thousand and twenty-two cases have been medically treated within the College. Of these, six hundred and one pertained to the medical, and four hundred and twenty-one, to the surgical department. In the medical department there were sixty-four diseases of the nervous system; one hundred and thirty-eight of the Chylopoietic viscera; one hundred and five of the respiratory, and twenty-five of the circulatory apparatus; one hundred and six cases of fever; forty-eight chronic cutaneous affections, and a curious variety of other diseases, some of them of rare occurrence.
The four hundred and twenty-one surgical cases, comprised almost every variety of local disease, of which one hundred and forty-one required operations, some of them of the most extensive character.—Fractures were set, dislocations reduced, and large tumours removed. Almost every variety of operation was performed upon the eye and the club-foot; upon extensive cicatrices; and indeed, upon diseases of almost every part of the body; so that it would scarcely be rash to say, that within the period of the session, no hospital in this country has presented a greater variety and number of important cases, especially in the surgical department.

The value of your degree has not been impaired by paying too dearly for it in the loss of health. Whilst every professor takes pride in proclaiming his admiration of your untiring devotion to the trying means of fitting yourselves for the rigorous examination, through which you have so creditably passed, he rejoices that, of so large a class, not one student of medicine has been cut off by either accident or disease. According to the tables of mortality, at least two of your number should have been removed, even if you had been placed in comfort and ease at home; but the chances of life are always less among persons of your age, who, when absent from home, are exposed to the physical and moral trials of a city life, and to exhausting studies. For six long hours, you sat, daily, upon hard benches, in crowded rooms, tasking to the utmost your powers of memory and analysis; and when evening came to relieve the tired citizen from labour, and to give him rest, you trimmed your lamps for a toilsome study, and retired to sleep long after the great city around you had been buried in profound repose. Many a time, in the midnight rambles of my medical duty, I have looked up from the street to the pale light of the student’s room, and heaved a sigh at the thought, that one so young and playful should there be thwarting the gentle instincts of his nature, over the
mouldering bone of the anatomist, or the musty folio of the physician. I thought of faded cheeks and aching brows; of the bed of sickness and of the funeral train, of the blighted hopes of youthful ambition, of the tear of the disconsolate mother, the sigh of the gentle sister, the blanched lip of the silent father. But I forgot, gentlemen, in the sentimentality of my sympathies, the iron will, the manly purpose, the hope of usefulness, the pride of fame, the glorious thoughts that fly from the dim, heated chamber of the student, to his home, his friends, his community, and his honourable future. These stimulants of toil, and supporters of almost superhuman efforts, were, for a moment, forgotten when I drew the sad picture of sorrow and death. Thanks to the Great Giver of health, there has been no death! The soul, hidden within common bodies, comes out to cover, as with a coat of mail, him who labours for fame and usefulness.

The profession, as well as the community, seems startled at your number, for it is great beyond example, and begins to calculate the lessened value, which mere frequency may attach to a degree. That thought may have intruded itself unpleasantly even upon your own minds, and dimmed in some degree the natural feeling of exultation at the honourable and auspicious termination of the first great essay of your professional life. The public and the profession have in this respect almost opposite interests, and may therefore entertain different views of the subject. As all who pass through the ordeal of a medical examination, are not equally qualified by nature for the practical application of their acquirements, the public might reasonably desire to have a choice of physicians, an option only to be gratified by creating many more graduates than can be fully employed. On the other hand, it is to the interest of the profession, that by reducing the number of graduates below the practical demand for their services, too great competition should be avoided.
The immediate effect of making an inadequate number of educated physicians, is to throw into practice, those who have not been properly educated, and to encourage empiricism. The remote effect of creating too many graduates will be to render the professional rewards so small as to drive the best talent of the country into other employments. To avoid either extreme, seems therefore to be the proper policy of the schools; and that can be done only by \textit{gradually} increasing the pre-requisites for a degree; for a hasty alteration of the present system, would but increase the number of uneducated practitioners, by exalting the means of instruction to a point of expense, beyond the pecuniary resources of the community. This is demonstrated by the fact that in those parts of the country where the average means of the people do not permit them to meet the expense of the present medical requisitions, the great majority of practitioners have not attended even one public course of professional instruction.

The number of medical men in the city and suburbs of Philadelphia is four hundred and ninety-seven; which, supposing the population to be three hundred and fifty thousand, gives one physician for seven hundred and four persons—a proportion about equal to that of the capital of Prussia. If we suppose that the same proportion extends to the country at large, there should be, in a population of twenty-two millions, thirty-one thousand two hundred and fifty physicians. This result is singularly confirmed by the fact that a great publishing house in this city distributes a gratuitous medical monthly paper to upwards of thirty thousand physicians, of whom it has the names and addresses. If each of these physicians continued to practise until he died, and if none of them abandoned the profession, from indolence or the temptations of more lucrative occupations, and if professional exposure and unhealthy places did not exalt the proportional mortality beyond that of the most salubrious residences, four hundred and
thirty-nine physicians would die annually in the United States. If we suppose that old age, bad health, the seductions of other employments, and the acquirement of a competency, may carry out of the profession not more than two individuals of every one hundred, or two per cent., the profession will, from all these various causes, lose six hundred and twenty-five persons annually. The increase in the population of the United States by birth and immigration, amounts now, to not less than seven hundred thousand souls annually; for whom, according to the rate assumed, there will be required not less than nine hundred and ninety-four doctors. Thus then, to supply the loss by death, by desertion, and by the annual increase of population, there should be created every year, two thousand and fifty-eight graduates. But the army and navy are to be supplied with physicians, and there must be a large migration of medical men into the newly-acquired territories of the nation. Adventurous physicians are also scattered over the world. One of my private pupils is practising medicine in China, another at Manilla, and a third in California, while two of them are seeking for knowledge in the capital of France.

A great number, perhaps a tenth of the existing practitioners of the United States, who are among the enumerated 31,250 doctors, are by ignorance, totally unfit for the duties which they have assumed. They have never seen a college, and many of them have scarcely entered a school of any kind. To supersede such men would demand the creation of at least three thousand graduates in medicine. To say, therefore, that twenty-five hundred physicians should be annually created, would be to make an assertion much within the bounds of truth.

A reference to the statistics of the medical schools of the United States, made by an able committee, to the National Medical Association, in May last, shows that the mean number of graduates for the last five years, was twelve hundred
and eighty-three, the greatest number being, in any one year, fourteen hundred and twenty-one, and the least, one thousand and thirty-one.

Thus you perceive that scarcely half as many persons receive a degree in medicine, as the wants of the country demand, and that the growth of empiricism is unhappily on the increase, because the expenses of a medical education, place its proper attainment beyond the reach of most of the practitioners of the country, or because the masses are not yet sufficiently educated to perceive the priceless value to the community, of a well-instructed physician.

I have often said, that independently of their religious function, the clergy of a country like ours, are inestimable, because they carry letters, and manners, and morals, to the people. If the magnificent Girard College be worth all its great cost, as a superb specimen of one of the grandest of the arts, and as an improvement to public taste, how shall we estimate the value of the good men, who convey to every sylvan retreat, pure English, sound learning, corrective example, and persuasive precept; so, my young friends, your degree in medicine, however estimable, is not the sole good which you will carry back to the loved homes which you are now to revisit. The grand supplement to the clergyman’s boon is in your hands. If he conveys learning, you transmit science; and whilst both will elevate and refine the place which may have the happiness to receive you, you will be the grand interpreters of nature, as she speaks from the thunder-cloud, as she rustles in the breeze, blushes in the flower, or shines in the mineral. Yours will be the noble task of making dumb nature speak in charmed accents to unlettered ears.—Moses-like, at the stroke of your wand of science, will gush forth from rugged rocks, the sweet waters of knowledge; Pygmalion-like, you will convert the beautiful statue of nature, into a living and a breathing thing;
Rossini-like, you will animate the dull language of truth with the music of a divine philosophy.

Go then, in the spirit of the Grand Master of our Faith, on the noble mission of the assuager of pain and the healer of disease. Go then, with the soul of a Rush and a Wistar, into the temple of nature, to be her Priest and her Interpreter.

Go, gentlemen, back to the homes of your childhood, to show to the loved ones of your house, that you have not given to them in vain the pangs of a separation; but that, whilst your sojourn in the great world has enriched you with knowledge, improved you in manly character, and left you untainted by temptations, you have not lost, by the way, even the least of the gentle virtues of domestic life.
GRADUATES OF JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA,

MARCH, 1850.

At a Public Commencement, held on the 9th of March, 1850, the degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred on the following gentlemen by the Rev. C. C. Cutler, President of the Institution; after which a charge to the Graduates was delivered by Professor Mitchell.

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Lillington, George, Massachusetts. Dysentery.
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James W. Lugenebel, M. D., of Virginia, late physician to the Colony of Liberia, 
was admitted to the ad eundem degree of Doctor of Medicine. Total, 211.

R. M. HUSTON, M. D. Dean of the Faculty.