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A

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

OF

WRIGHT POST, M. D.

born in North Hempstead L.I.

LATE PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY, AND PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.

DELIVERED AS AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE, ON THE 4th OF NOVEMBER, 1828,

BY VALENTINE MOTT, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF SURGERY IN RUTGERS COLLEGE, NEW-YORK.

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At a meeting of the Rutgers Medical Faculty of Geneva College, held on the 13th *day of November*, 1828,

On motion, RESOLVED, That this Faculty have listened with pleasure to the interesting Discourse delivered by Professor MOTT, on the Life and Character of the late DR. WRIGHT POST, and that a copy of the same be requested for publication.

BY ORDER,

JOHN W. FRANCIS, M. D. *Register.*

New-York City, December 9th, 1828.

SIR,

In pursuance of an unanimous resolution of the Students of Rutgers Medical College, passed at a Meeting, held on the 8th December, 1828, the undersigned Committee, in behalf of their fellow-students, do respectfully solicit the publication of your Introductory Address, on the life and character of the late Dr. POST, of this City, whose professional attainments, and private worth, are there so ably eulogised.

With sentiments of the highest respect and esteem,

THOMAS WARD, Jun.
H. HOLMES, Jun.
BENJ. W. SANDERS, } Committee.

PROFESSOR MOTT.

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25 *Park Place, December 9th*, 1828.

GENTLEMEN,

The resolution of the Students of Rutgers Medical College, has been received; and if the Discourse on the Life and Character of my late valued friend, Dr. POST, delivered as an Introductory Lecture, can be of any further use, or the least gratifying to the class you represent, it is at your service.

Accept the assurance of my sincere esteem.

VALENTINE MOTT.

To THOMAS WARD, Jun.
H. HOLMES, Jun.
BENJ. W. SANDERS.

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR.

GENTLEMEN OF THE MEDICAL CLASS,

AND FELLOW CITIZENS,

The annals of Science afford to the attentive Student, a twofold variety of instruction. On the one hand, they exhibit the resources of the human mind, in removing the difficulties which impede its ascent to the temple of knowledge, and display the rich treasures which have been gained from the wide domain of nature: on the other hand, they make known the peculiar character of the intellectual instruments by which those great achievements have been effected.

In entering upon a career of study, whatever department of nature or art may be our subject, or in whatever profession we may seek to become accomplished, it is of great importance that we turn our attention to those characteristics in others, which have evidently led them on to eminence, and laid the foundation of their claim to the respect and gratitude of mankind.

So few, indeed, compared with the mass of a nation's population, are they, whom the visitations of genius, or the favouring influence of external circumstances, have

qualified to act the part of pioneers in the road of discovery:—so small the number, that have attained the "envied heights of science," it might seem to the youthful aspirant, who is not conscious of possessing superior powers, to be a hopeless endeavour on his part, to bend the bow of his feeble strength, or risk his unfledged energies in an attempt to gain the lofty heights of fame.

But the history of Philosophy affords us, in this respect, the greatest encouragement. By recording the lives of those to whom science is indebted for its progressive advances, and even by giving us the biography of men, who by the patient and faithful exercise of ordinary talents, have become eminent in the sphere in which they have moved; it teaches us the important lesson, that many of the most splendid discoveries have had their origin in accident;—that industry oft-times serves as a substitute for genius—that the talent of patient and accurate observation, and the habit of persevering application, are of themselves sufficient to surmount all obstacles, and to kindle around every real votary of art or science, the lambent flame of an excellent reputation, if not the higher honour of an improver and benefactor of his profession.

History (it has been weightily observed) is "philosophy teaching by example." Chronology and Geography have been styled the two eyes of History. To this we would add the opinion, that Biography is the very *heart* of History. There is surely no earthly circumstance which has so important a bearing upon the destinies of a nation, as the lives and character of its most eminent

citizens. It is only by the study of those, that we can attain to any just perception of the causes of a nation's prosperity, or trace with precision, the events of its decline or extinction. The impulses which the conduct and example of these men create, produce in the atmosphere of social life, those moral undulations which go far to determine the history of an age,—the progress or decay of a nation's felicity and honour.

How often have the most important political events arisen from insignificant occurrences in the conduct of a small number of persons, or even an individual. The whims of a minister—the affront of some proud and influential personage—the almost accidental firing of a shot from a fort, or a vessel at sea,—the defect of raising or lowering a flag, all dependent on the temper and character of one man, may prove the germ of national war, or the seeds of a mighty revolution. The shooting of an apple from the head of a boy with an arrow, is said to have given rise to the establishment of the Helvetian Republic. A motion for taxation in the British parliament, led eventually to the independence of a nation, and we trust, to the progress of freedom throughout the world. Such is the concatenation of human affairs, and so interwoven is the happiness of millions, with the virtuous or vicious energies of a few of their cotemporaries.

The social temper so natural to man, the principle of imitation, so indelibly impressed upon our infant faculties, and the enthusiasm produced by numbers, all conspire to enhance the importance of exhibiting to the

view of the world, the lives and characters of those who have acquired eminence for their attainments, or have been conspicuous for their virtues.

If, in the biography of such men, we can clearly perceive the motives which urged them forward in their career of usefulness, and discover the principles which guided them in their decisions; or if, on the other hand, we can detect the foibles which effaced the lustre of their fame, we are furnished with those moral landmarks which serve as beacons in our eventful voyage—a voyage, which in every case, must either increase or diminish the aggregate of human happiness.

The biography of those who have devoted their lives to our profession, cannot fail to instruct the student, on points intimately connected with his success in life. It is from this copious and delightful source of information, that the precepts of medical ethics derive their authority, and the teacher of medical jurisprudence, much of the information which goes to establish the doctrine he wishes to illustrate. But it is greatly to be regretted that examples of perfect medical biography are so rarely to be met with.

Were the lives of those who have distinguished themselves in the career of medicine and surgery, either by superior talents in any of the branches which compose the great body of medical science, or by the high public estimation which they had acquired in professional practice, more frequently given to the world, with that degree of minuteness and discrimination which would unfold those moral and intellectual traits, which are to

a certain extent, inseparable from a great reputation. Who can doubt that the student, with these bright examples before him, would find in them a stimulus to exertion, and an encouragement in difficulty, of great and lasting importance.

It is under a full persuasion of the truth of these positions, that I am induced to avail myself of the opening of our present session in this College, to attempt in compliance with a call which has been made upon me, to furnish a statement of the life and character of one who has for many years filled a conspicuous station in the medical corps of this city and state, and whose reputation is by no means limited to this state, or to the United States. I mean our late friend and colleague, *Dr. Wright Post.*

It would be doing injustice, however, to this attempt, were I in the outset to withhold the remark, that I have found it impossible to procure from any of the sources to which it is natural and proper, on such an occasion to resort, any other than a very imperfect statement of many of those particulars which it would be profitable to introduce in a biographical memoir.

Dr. Post was born at North Hempstead, in Queen's County, Long Island, on the 19th of February, Anno Domini, 1766. Of his juvenile habits, I have received but little important information. It is very possible that if some of his early and more intelligent associates could now be found, some anecdotes might be obtained, indicative of his physical temperament, and the character of his mind, during the early stages of his education.

Such traits are by no means uninteresting or unimportant in the delineation of character; and it is much to be regretted that there is not a more general care among parents, teachers and friends, to leave behind them such memorials of infantile dispositions and boyish propensities, as might serve as starting points in biography, and valuable hints to those who are interested in the science of education. But few there are, who in these respects, possess the discrimination of an Edgeworth, or who in comprehensiveness of observation, and vividness of description, approximate the talents of a Scott.

The subject of our memoir possessed, as we are informed by one of his relatives, a remarkably quiet, amiable, and accommodating disposition, but was resolute and firm in his purposes, and industrious and active, both bodily and mentally. His morals during his boyhood, are said to have been very correct. He was never known to engage in the mischievous sports, or dangerous intrigues, too common at country schools, and his mother has been heard to remark, that his conduct was never such as to afford her occasion for uneasiness or trouble on his account. He was placed under the tuition of David Beatty, a teacher of respectability, in the neighbourhood of his parents' residence, from whom it is believed he received a portion of classical instruction, and from whom it may be presumed. he derived a rather more than ordinary taste for learning; for it was probably from some evidences of this kind, that his parents were induced to place him, at the early age of fifteen, as a student with

Dr. Richard Bailey, at that time one of the most celebrated and skilful Surgeons in the city of New-York. With that gentleman he entered with becoming diligence on his professional studies; and although we are not furnished with any special account of his progress, there can be no doubt, that there were both in his early scientific attainments, and in the general stability of his character, decisive evidences of great respectability.

After remaining about four years with Dr. Bailey, he was judged at the age of nineteen, to be a suitable candidate for the advantages of a more enlarged sphere of instruction. He accordingly proceeded to London, and became the house pupil of Mr. Sheldon, whose reputation as a teacher of Anatomy and Surgery was at that time deservedly celebrated.

The acute and playful mind of his London teacher, gave interest to the study, and induced the American youth to estimate more highly the lessons and opportunities he enjoyed. Those of you who have heard the admirable Lectures which Dr. Post was in the habit of delivering for successive years, on the important subject of diseased Spine and fractures of the Patella, may remember the frankness of his acknowledgments to Mr. Sheldon. They were among the master copies of his preceptor's Lectures. The Monograph of Mr. Sheldon on the last named disorder, is universally known and appreciated.

The zeal of the master was soon imparted to the pupil. The latter became quickly imbued with the love of Anatomy, and it was here that he learned those les-

sons, which in time were matured into the most masterly use of the scalpel, in the tedious and frequently disgusting duties of practical and laborious dissection.

His teacher possessed in an eminent degree, the requisite qualifications for making his pupils excellent Anatomists. He would often throw aside the reserve and formality of a preceptor, and become himself the pupil, working with his students with the greatest diligence, and mingling his cares and wants with theirs. With such advantages, few young men, it may be presumed, with any taste for science, would fail to become enamoured with his pursuit, and to catch a portion of the zeal of a master thus ardent and accomplished.

Such advantages were not lost upon the subject of our memoir. He united with great industry and patient perseverance, that peculiar readiness in the use of the scalpel, which is seldom known to fail in producing a consummate Anatomist.

His first visit to London was in the spring of 1784, and he returned in the fall of 1786, having been absent about two years and a half; which time he spent in attendance upon the Lectures and Hospitals of this great metropolis, most of the time residing in the house with his preceptor, the illustrious Sheldon.*

It does not appear that he resorted to any other school or means of instruction, than those which he en-

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* Mr. Sheldon, on taking leave of his American pupil, presented him several beautiful Anatomical preparations, made by himself, as tokens of his affectionate regard.

joyed in London. As a school of Anatomy and Surgery, there were no others in Great Britain which could come into competition with it, or afford inducements to one whose object was mainly a perfection in this fundamental part of a medical education.

Immediately after his return from Europe, he commenced the practice of his profession in this city. As early as 1787, the year after his return from Europe, Dr. Post delivered his Lectures on Anatomy, in the unappropriated apartments in the New-York Hospital, while Surgery was taught by Dr. Bailey. But these efforts, though laudable, were entirely interrupted by the occurrence of the *Doctor's Mob*, as it has been called. Owing to an imprudent exposure of an Anatomical specimen by some students, the populace broke into the building, and destroyed almost every thing. In 1790, having been four years engaged in practice, he married the daughter of his preceptor, the distinguished Dr. Bailey, with whom he soon after (in 1791) became associated in the practice of Physic and Surgery.

Dr. Bailey now held the Professorship of Anatomy and Surgery in Columbia College; and as was natural to one thus circumstanced, who was anticipating a release from those active and onerous duties, he looked around him for a successor, and doubtless discovered in his son-in-law, the qualities which afforded a most rational promise of success in this important and responsible station. Fully aware, however, of the great advantages of ample preparation, and with a noble view

to the future elevation of his youthful relative, Dr. Bailey advised his return to London.

Two years after his marriage, viz. in 1792, he was appointed Professor of *Surgery* in Columbia College, at the same time that Dr. Bailey was appointed to the Anatomical Chair.

His appointment to the Chair of Surgery took place in the spring of 1792, and immediately thereafter he sailed again for Europe: and in addition to the further extension of his knowledge, it was a *desideratum* with our traveller, to lay the foundation of a Museum, which might be rendered subservient to the purposes of instruction, when he should afterwards assume the business of a teacher.

In this interesting object he was eminently successful. The collection which he brought out with him, on his return in the autumn of 1793, was then, and we believe is still, the largest and rarest in this country.

It was during this visit to London, that he enlisted as a pupil under the learned and distinguished Cruickshank; and while attending to his instructions, he also availed himself of the lessons of his then assistant and dissector, the late celebrated Dr. Bailey of London.

In this great school, and under these great masters, it was, that Dr. Post prepared some of the finest and most beautiful injections of the absorbent system which we have ever seen. His specimen of the lacteals of the large turtle filled with mercury, and the delicate and complicated structure of the *Testis* in all its multifarious

parts, possess a finish and beauty, which are rarely, if ever surpassed.

It was at this period that Cruickshank was prosecuting with great zeal, his researches into the hidden structure of the absorbent system, and in which the merit of his discoveries will be as imperishable as the science itself.

Having again accomplished his visit, and gained what appears to have been the exclusive object of his ambition, a thorough knowledge of Anatomy and Operative Surgery, as taught and practised in the greatest school in Europe, Dr. Post returned home, and entered with great devotedness upon the duties of practical life.

Such accomplishments in the scientific part of his profession, could not remain long inefficient. His practice as a Physician was sought after, and his Surgical skill very soon exhibited itself in characters so unequivocal, as to gain the highest confidence, not only of the public, but of his medical brethren; who in due time assigned to him, with universal assent, the most elevated station in the circle of *Operative Surgeons* in this region of our country. His early operations were marked with that freedom of thought and action, which could arise only from a thorough knowledge of the principles upon which he was proceeding—principles essentially dependent upon a minute acquaintance with the Anatomy of the parts, and of the best modes then known or practised, of conducting an operation.

One of his early performances gained for him no inconsiderable share of celebrity both at home and abroad.

It was the case of a false Aneurism of the femoral artery near the ham, from the wound of a bayonet. The patient was a respectable farmer of Westchester County, a member of the Society of Friends, who confiding in the reputation and judgment of Surgeon Post, resolved to submit to an operation which had never been performed in America; and at that time but seldom in Europe. For this purpose he came to the city in the summer of 1796, and placed himself entirely at the disposal of the operator. It was a triumphant case, as it fully established by its successful termination, the important principle of the immortal John Hunter, the pride and ornament of British Surgery.

The femoral artery was in this case tied, agreeably to Hunter's plan, below the middle of the thigh, a place sufficiently remote from the disease, for the artery to unite kindly by adhesion. It has subsequently been common among Surgeons, to select the lower part of the upper third of the thigh for the application of the ligature; not that the place chosen by Hunter was not remote enough from the aneurism, but because the artery is there most accessible, and the operation interferes less with the surrounding parts.

The patient rapidly and perfectly recovered, and survived the operation about thirty years. The friendship and gratitude which he felt for his Surgeon, he believed his duty to testify, by paying him at least an annual visit ever afterwards. On one of these occasions, he found his benefactor at dinner with a company of friends. He entered the room and was urged to take a

seat with them, but perceiving that it was not a convenient time, he remarked, "I have come to pay my usual visit, but I will not now interrupt thee—thou know'st the rest"—and departed. What feelings is a communication of such simple but pathetic energy not calculated to excite? Here is the proudest triumph of Philosophy. It is at such a moment, that virtue receives the highest boon which this world can bestow. Compared with mere pecuniary gratification, such a testimonial of the "*memory of the heart*," is like "*a spot of azure in a cloudy sky*."

Dr. Post's surgical fame continued to increase with his age and experience. His knowledge of the power of art, or more properly, of the remedial powers of nature, when its ordinary course is interrupted within the limits which science may prescribe, taught him to foresee to what lengths a Surgeon might attempt to go, without incurring the hazards of a too fearful responsibility, or of a criminal temerity.

Long before the distinguished British Surgeon, Sir Astley Cooper, established the safety and propriety of tying the Carotid Artery for Aneurism, we have heard Dr. Post assert in his Lectures, that he believed, that not only might one be tied for Aneurism, but that both might be interrupted by ligature, and the patient recover. This opinion he lived to see confirmed by example; and in two cases did he himself contribute to the small stock of facts which the history of Surgery at that time afforded. In two cases did he operate for Caro-

tid Aneurism, upon the plan laid down by Sir Astley Cooper, and in both did the patients recover.

Our late esteemed friend, Dr. Dorsey, of Philadelphia, was the first person in the United States, who performed the great surgical operation of tying the external iliac artery for inguinal Aneurism. Dr. Post was the second; but the case of the latter was much the more formidable, as the situation of the tumour, and the attachment of the peritoneum, rendered it necessary for him to divide the latter membrane to get at the artery, thereby opening the peritoneal cavity; a circumstance which greatly augmented the danger and difficulty of the operation.

In this case he adopted the plan of Abernethy and Freer, of making the incision nearly parallel with the linea alba, and a little to the outside of a middle line between it and the spinous process of the ilium. In this way the incision through the parietes, is made directly upon the peritoneum, and may endanger its division. We think the operation has since been greatly improved, by going through the internal abdominal ring, by which the Surgeon gets readily under the peritoneum, and the danger of cutting this membrane is thereby avoided.

But the master stroke of Dr. Post in Surgery, remains yet to be mentioned. It is certainly for the honour of our time, for the credit of America, and for the pride of our city, that the first successful operation of tying the subclavian Artery above the clavicle, on the scapular side of the scaleni muscles, for a brachial Aneurism,

situated so high in the axilla, as to make it expedient to tie this Artery, was first successfully performed by him, whose skill and science we are now endeavouring to commemorate. To succeed in an operation of such delicacy and danger, and which had failed in the hands of such master spirits in Surgery, as Ramsden, Abernethy and Cooper, was a triumph reserved for our friend; and it was certainly an achievement, which, if nothing more had been done in this country, must have removed the imputation of inferiority in one of the most important arts of civilization and humanity, and furnish the most complete rebuke to the taunting inquiry, "what have your American Physicians and Surgeons ever accomplished?" We esteem it our good fortune to have had the honour of being selected to assist at this memorable and great performance in Operative Surgery.

We believe we may also claim for our friend, the exhibition of opiates in large doses in inflammatory diseases, long before the publication of Dr. Armstrong's treatise on Fevers.*

The diligence and success with which Dr. Post had availed himself of the opportunities he had enjoyed in the study of Anatomy, had fully qualified him for assuming the station which had been designed him by his friends at home; and accordingly, soon after his second return from London, in 1793, an exchange of Professorships took place between himself and Dr. Bailey,

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* See Dr. King's Letter to me, in the Appendix.

who during Dr. Post's absence, had lectured on both subjects. By this arrangement Dr. Bailey taught Surgery, and Dr. Post delivered the Anatomical Course, executing for a long time, all his own dissections, acting as demonstrator and lecturing on the art of making and preserving Anatomical specimens, and daily adding to his Cabinet.

From this time till 1813, he discharged the duties of Professor of Anatomy and Physiology, with what success we shall presently give our opinion. During this long period of more than twenty years, he was sustained in the Medical School of Columbia College, by several eminent coadjutors. For a while, in conjunction with his preceptor, Bailey, on Surgery, Mitchill, on Chemistry, Hamersley, on the Theory and Practice of Medicine, and Hosack, in the Chair of Botany and Materia Medica.

Upon the union of the Medical Faculty of Columbia College, with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, in September, 1813, Dr. Post was appointed to the Chair of Anatomy and Physiology, in the now concentrated Medical School of New-York, in conjunction with Professor John Augustine Smith. This far-famed union of rival institutions for medical knowledge under one head, by the Honourable the Regents, was thus composed.

The venerable Samuel Bard, M. D. *President.*
Benjamin De Witt, M. D. *Vice-President.*

WRIGHT POST, M. D. and J. AUGUSTINE SMITH, M. D. } *Joint Prof. Anat. Phys. and Surgery.*
DAVID HOSACK, M. D. *Prof. Pract. Phys. & Clin. Med.*
WM. JAS. MACNEVEN, M. D. *Prof. Chemistry.*
WM. HAMERSLEY, M. D. *Prof. Clin. Pr. Med.*
SAM'L L. MITCHILL, M. D. *Prof. Nat. His.*
JOHN C. OSBORNE, M. D. *Prof. Midwifery.*
JAMES S. STRINGHAM, M. D. *Prof. Med. Juris.*
JOHN W. FRANCIS, M. D. *Prof. Mat. Med.*
VALENTINE MOTT, M. D. *Prof. Principles and Practice of Surgery.*

Since this memorable confederacy of Medical and Surgical talents, death has summoned away from us, besides the illustrious subject of our Eulogy, the venerable President Bard, and his associate Vice-President De Witt, and Professors Stringham and Osborne.

The station of Professor and Teacher of Anatomy, our friend continued to fill through the various modifications which the Medical School of this city has undergone, during a period of nearly forty years—and it may perhaps be safely asserted, that the distinction which he acquired as a teacher of Anatomy, has not been excelled in this country.

For perspicuity and accuracy in unfolding the complicated structure of the human frame, he was peculiarly happy. His habits of patient and persevering attention, laid the foundation of this perspicuity, so essential to the qualifications of a good instructor. Multiplied as are the evidences of Dr. Post's extensive

and accurate knowledge of Anatomy, I am happy to add the following fact favoured me by a friend.

During Dr. Post's last visit on the continent of Europe, he visited with much interest, the anatomical collections and museums of the renowned Medical Schools of France. At his visit to that of Paris, he was deeply engaged in a close examination of the great Cabinet at that place. In looking at some valuable preparations in Anatomy, he was struck with one which betrayed, in his opinion, a wrong disposition in minute structure. He noticed this to his learned friend who accompanied him. The preparation was submitted to examination; Dr. Post was found to be correct, and the preparation was removed.

We are not sensible of having ever listened, during the course of our studies, to any teacher, either in this country or in Europe, whose lessons were better calculated than his, to furnish accurate information. His elocution, though plain and simple, was easy and natural. He rarely, if ever, aimed at the graces and elegances of diction, or soared into the regions of imagination. But his delivery, if it had not the power of the mountain torrent, or the rapidity of the tempest; possessed in general, the attractiveness of the velvet lawn,

"Shorn by the scythe and levelled by the roller."

The literary acquirements of Dr. Post were not very extensive. He entered at so early an age, upon the special duties of his profession, and pursued its avoca-

tions with such unremitting inductry, but a very small portion of his time, beyond that which the cares of his family demanded, could have been left for literary indulgence, or the cultivation of science, out of the immediate sphere of his professional obligations.

His constitution was feeble; and although he kept so careful a guard over himself, as rarely in his life to be laid by for many days together, yet the fatigues of a very extensive practice, were beginning so perceptibly to undermine the remaining portion of his physical powers, he deemed it prudent and necessary, about thirteen years before his death, to relinquish his duties altogether for a season, and travel for health.

He now made a third voyage to Europe in 1815, and after travelling for a few months in several countries, but especially in France, visiting the celebrated Schools and Hospitals of Paris and Montpellier, he returned home with greatly renovated health, and resumed, but with more caution and selection, his attentions to the calls that were soon accumulated upon him.

It is our belief that few professional men, in any country, ever enjoyed a larger share of the public confidence and esteem than Dr. Post; and certainly no man among his professional brethren, was ever consulted with a more general willingness than he. In his intercourse with his fellow practitioners, his deportment was uniformly correct. He was remarkable for great punctuality in his engagements, and for a scrupulous exactness and delicacy in his deportment, in all cases in which private advantage is too apt to interfere with

mutual interests and the rights of individuals. He was never, on those occasions, officious, or overbearing in his views or opinions, but took pleasure in increasing the confidence of patients and their friends in the judgment of their Physician or Surgeon, and appeared gratified by the opportunity of thus promoting the respectability of the young practitioner. He was therefore emphatically a friend to the junior members of the profession. He never trampled upon their rights, nor intentionally on their feelings.

It will hence be naturally inferred, that the moral character of Dr. Post was of an elevated order. Such we believe was unquestionably the fact;—and that his moral principles were founded, not upon the mere speculations of worldly convenience, but upon the essential basis of all sound morality—religious conviction. He was a member of the Episcopal Church, and amidst the engagements of an anxious profession, he was strict in his attendance upon public worship; thus giving the weight of his example in support of the important duty of social and religious exercise, while in his general intercourse with the world, he exhibited the fruits of practical christianity.

He was for many years one of the Vestry of the Church to which he belonged, and at the time of his death the Senior Warden.

At the Annual Medical Commencement of the University, held in April, 1814, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred on Dr. Post by the Regents; a well merited honour, for his varied profes-

sional talents. The recommendation for this testimonial in his behalf, was unanimously concurred in by all his colleagues. In 1816, he was chosen by the Board of Trustees of Columbia College, one of their body, which honour he held till death. Upon the organization of the Literary and Philosophical Society of New-York, he was one of its members by charter—he held the office of one of its Board of Counsellors for several years. He was also a member of the New-York Historical Society. He was for more than thirty-five years, one of the Surgeons, and a Consulting Surgeon of the New-York Hospital. He was for several years an active officer of the Medical Society of the County of New-York.

In 1821, upon the decease of President Bard, he was appointed his successor as President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons,—which station he retained until his resignation of all the offices he held in the College, in the spring of 1826.

The only foreign distinction that I have learned was conferred on him, was that of a foreign associate of the Medical Faculty of Stockholm.

Among his most active and personal friends abroad, we may enumerate as best known to fame, Percival Pott, Esq. Dr. Fordyce, Sir Astley Cooper, Charles Bell, John Abernethy, Sir Everard Home, the late Henry Cline, sen., Mathew Bailey, and Sir William Blizard.

Such, in general, was the professional, moral and religious character of Dr. Post. As an Anatomist, his

knowledge was *minute*, *thorough* and *comprehensive*;—as a Surgeon, he was *acute*, *dexterous*, *elegant* and *masterly*;—as a Physician, *discerning*, *practical* and *judicious*;—as a teacher, *correct*, *lucid* and *impressive*;—as a citizen, *moral* and *exemplary*;—as a husband and parent, *kind* and *affectionate*.

To say that he was faultless, would be to claim for him more than belongs to any of the descendants of Adam. It is not our intention, in commemorating the merits of our departed friend, to indulge in the strain of fulsome panegyric.

It is our opinion, even, that the often repeated advice,

"De mortuis nil nisi bonum,"

is too restrictive in its adaptation to the object of a just delineation of character, how pure and exalted soever the personage, whose worth we celebrate. As the great end of Biography is the instruction of the living, it should with all needful fidelity, exhibit whatever may have been prominent in its subject, which can aid the cause of virtue, or shed a useful light upon the principles of our common nature.

It has been our object in this brief memorial of our late venerable colleague, to exhibit those traits of excellence to which we trust all will allow him to have been justly entitled. That with other advantages in early life, and with a more decided taste for literary acquisition, he might have shone with greater brilliancy, we do not pretend to doubt. Dr. Post was not, either from education, or from his natural or acquired habits of re-

flection, qualified to distinguish himself in the ranks of medical literature. Excepting a very few papers descriptive of some of his most interesting Surgical cases, he has left nothing behind him as an evidence of literary talent. There is reason to believe that he was greatly averse to the exercise of writing. His introductory lectures seldom exhibited proofs of originality of thought—nor did his anatomical and physiological lectures evince any great research beyond the plain and obvious track which duty and decency prescribed.

With far more judgment than imagination, his mind was well fitted for the demonstration of truths attainable only by patient industry. With more learning, he would have been more attractive and amusing, even among his bones and muscles; but it is questionable whether he would have been equally plain and intelligible in his illustrations. With more erudition, he would have descanted more wisely upon the history of Anatomy, and animadverted with more authority upon the blunders of his predecessors;—but it is doubtful whether the light which beamed from his scalpel, would not have been less brilliant, or the appropriate and practical instruction which issued from his lips, less edifying and impressive. With more extensive reading, he would doubtless have been a more able Physiologist. His acquaintance with Chemistry, was very much confined to the general principles of that very imperfect science which was taught in his youth, and of course, the modern doctrines of Physiology were not much attended to by him.

His devotedness to his patients, and the extent of his practice, would necessarily lead him to a frequent examination of the changes in the Materia Medica; while his thorough acquaintance with the varying features of disease, and of the powers of all the well known medicaments, were guarantees against any obvious, and perhaps we may add, any important defect in the practice of his latter years.

After his health had become too feeble for the exercise of his accustomed skill in Surgery, and attention to his patients, he felt his hold of the world to be loosened; and he waited with the calmness of a Christian, for the moment which should separate him from it. He informed me some time before his death, that if his life was spared, he should never more attend to the duties of his profession, or if it pleased God to take it, *he was satisfied.*

Having removed to his country residence at Throgsneck, about fourteen miles from the city, he remained for about three weeks very much detached from society, but in the full possession of his mental faculties. His bodily strength, always feeble, had been for several months rapidly wasting, and at the period we now allude to, decay and debility appeared to have arrived at an extremity barely sufficient to support the connection between the immortal mind and its feeble tenement. On the morning of the 14th of June, 1828, perceiving a change in his own symptoms, he called his servant, and uttering a few words indicative of great tenderness and

kindness, he quietly yielded his breath, like a taper wasting to a point, and expiring in its socket.

——— "Exhausted by the storm,
"A fatal trance hung o'er his pallid form,
"His closing eye a trembling lustre fired,
"'Twas life's last spark,—it flutter'd and expired!"

That countenance,* bearing in every lineament the expression of calmness and goodness, has often been the harbinger of joy and gladness to the bosoms of thousands languishing on the bed of pain and sickness;—and when, from necessity, it became the messenger of solemn tidings, the inevitable decree was intermingled in every feature, with a mildness and self-possession, which inculcated the feelings of Christian resignation.

"What dire necessities on every hand
"Our art, our strength, our fortitude require!
"Of foes intestine what a numerous band
"Against this little throb of life conspire!
"Yet Science can elude their fatal ire
"Awhile, and turn aside Death's levelled dart,
"Soothe the sharp pang, allay the fever's fire,
"And brace the nerves once more, and cheer the heart,
"And yet a few soft nights and balmy days impart."

He now lies mouldering in the lone Country Church Yard. Cold as the clod of the valley is that heart, which till lately, beat in unison with ours. Light be the sod that rests upon the bosom of our friend. May the dews of night be distilled in mildness, and may the winds of heaven pass gently o'er his grave.

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* Referring to an excellent likeness by Jarvis, which was kindly loaned to me by my friend Dr. Barrow, for the occasion.

In life, he pursued the even tenor of his way, unelated by the distinctions he had gained—confining his modest pretensions to the ordinary rewards attendant upon his daily avocations—leaving it to others to proclaim his merits—but remembering that

> " To know
> " That which before us lies in daily life,
> " Is the prime wisdom ;"

his highest aim was to acquit himself to his own conscience ; and *so to live*, as *peacefully, to die.*

Though his name and his deeds may not be emblazoned on the costly monument—his worth will long be embalmed in the memory of those who were encouraged by his kindness, and cherished by his skill.

STUDENTS OF MEDICINE,

May the name and the example of WRIGHT POST, impress upon you the important lesson, that,—to become a Physician truly skilful,—and a Surgeon truly great,—there are not wanting the eagle flights of genius, nor the depths of cumbrous lore—but the perseverance of untiring industry,—the discernings of an enlightened judgment, and the integrity of an honest heart—

> " And if YOU pant for glory, build your fame
> " On this foundation, which the secret shock
> " Defies, of envy and all-sapping time."

APPENDIX.

New-York, Feb. 5th, 1829.

My Dear Sir,

In reply to your inquiries as to the use of Anodynes and Opium by the late Doctor Post, I have to remark, that in conversation with him some two years past, relative to Dr. Armstrong's practice in Inflammatory Diseases, he told me that the use of Opium, as recommended by that gentleman, (except in *larger doses,*) was corroborated by his own experience for a long series of years, and that to him it was by no means a novelty: for that in 1804, he was called to a child about three years of age, suffering under a violent Pneumonic attack, accompanied by pain, cough, and great febrile excitement. That he accordingly bled, blistered, and evacuated the patient, afterwards placing him under the use of Antimonials, but all without benefit. Matters proceeded from bad to worse, until the child, exhausted by constant cough and excessive restlessness, seemed nearly at the point of death. Under these circumstances, he determined to quiet all these irritating symptoms by a powerful Anodyne, and accordingly exhibited 60 drops of Laudanum. Two hours after, he was called to the child, then supposed by its parents to be dying. He found the features sunken, the surface covered with a cold clammy sweat, and secretions of an unpleasant appearance about the eyes and nostrils, but the pulse had diminished in frequency, and was more full; the respiration was slower, and every thing indicated the full and desired action of the Anodyne. The parents were astonished to hear the physician say that the child would soon be better. The next morning all untoward symptoms had subsided, and the child became rapidly convalescent and recovered.

This was his first trial of Anodynes in such affections; his *experiment,* if you please; but a few months afterwards, a similar case occurring, he immediately resorted to the Anodyne; depletion and evacuants having been premised, and with similar success, since which period he has generally continued that mode of practice; latterly, however, substituting the Dover's Powder in place of Laudanum, in Pneumonic attacks.

In 1810, he was called in consultation upon a gentleman in Jersey, suffering under Enteritis. He found that he had been repeatedly bled, blistered and evacuated, but to no advantage; the pain still continued acute; the pulse was small, frequent and corded; the skin dry and hot. Under these circumstances he suggested the propriety of exhibiting a powerful Anodyne, in order to quiet all irritation, and give nature an op-

portunity of recovering herself. After a little hesitation on the part of the attending physician, it was finally determined to adopt the course proposed, and 100 drops of Laudanum were directed; an hour elapsed—no sensible effect having been produced, when the *dose was repeated*, and in half an hour the patient was under its full influence. He awoke the next day free from pain or tenderness, and so recovered. The same gentleman has been frequently attacked since with the same affection, and uniformly after being bled and evacuated, he has recourse to his Anodyne, which rarely fails to quell the disease. But to be efficacious, the dose must be *heroic*, at least such was the opinion of Dr. Post, who often remarked that practitioners, especially in England and France, were not aware of the value of Opium in Inflammatory Diseases, for even when employing it in such cases, their doses were too trivial to exert any marked influence over the malady. He himself always exhibited it under the opinion, that to obtain its soothing effect upon the system, and its *paralyzing* influence over the disease, it must be given in large doses. In Diarrhœa and certain conditions of Dysentery, after having cleansed the passages, he employed Laudanum or Dover's Powder with the happiest effect; in fact, he rarely used much else than Salts and Dover's Powder in Diarrhœa, in adults. In his own case he was no less prodigal of Anodynes than with his patients. Being as you well know, for many years a constant prey to Pleuritic affections, his treatment of himself was short and efficacious, viz. blisters and purgatives, followed by 80 or 100 drops of Laudanum, which quieted his cough—allayed pain, and soon placed him in condition to resume his business.

In conclusion, permit me to state an occurrence which took place under my own eyes, two years previous to his death. He was then violently attacked with Pleurisy, accompanied with much fever, for which he had been purged and blistered, and at the period in question, was under the use of Antimonials. At this time he directed me to give him 70 drops of Laudanum. I remonstrated, directing his attention to the dryness of his skin, its increased heat, and the frequency and hardness of his pulse. His answer was, "believe in my experience rather than in your theory; give me 70 or 80 drops of Laudanum, and an hour will convince you of its propriety." It was given, and within the hour his pulse became calm, full and slow; his skin was covered with a gentle perspiration, and his condition strikingly improved. He left his bed the next day, and frequently since has said to me, "I think I have given you a clinical lecture that you will remember."

Such, my dear Sir, are the facts concerning which we some time since conversed, and if they can be of any service to you, employ them as you think proper. Yours truly,

F. G. KING.

To V. Mott, M. D.

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