

Bedford (G. S.)

PROFESSOR BEDFORD'S

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MEDICAL CLASS

OF

The New York University.

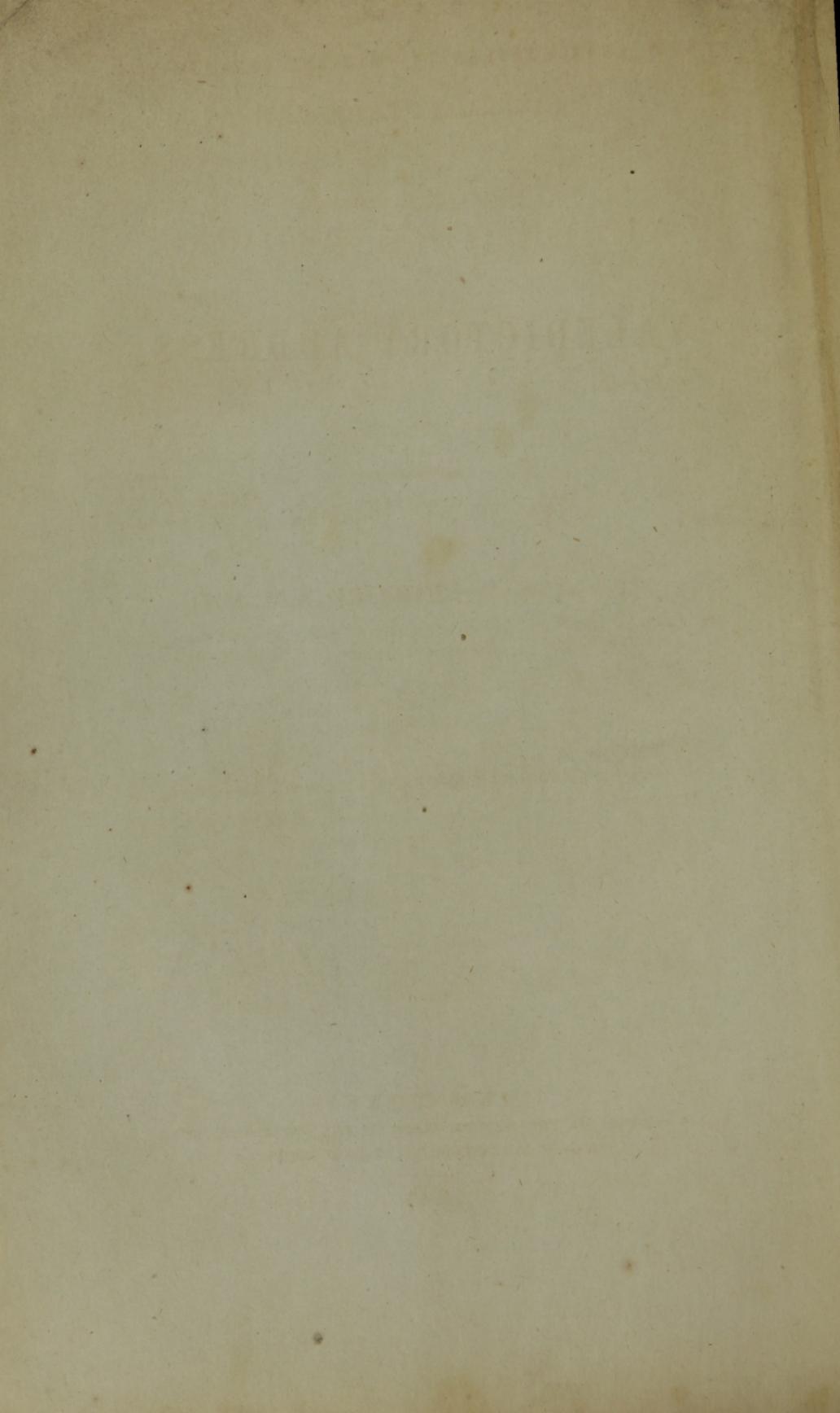


NEW YORK:

PRINTED FOR THE MEDICAL CLASS OF THE NEW YORK UNIVERSITY BY

JOSEPH H. JENNINGS, 111 FULTON STREET.

1845.



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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY—MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

A

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS,

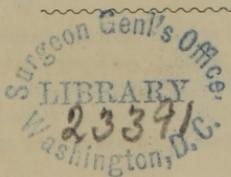
DELIVERED BY



GUNNING S. BEDFORD, A.M. M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF MIDWIFERY AND THE DISEASES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN, IN THE
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY:

ON THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 28, 1845.



NEW YORK:

PRINTED FOR THE MEDICAL CLASS OF THE UNIVERSITY, BY
JOSEPH H. JENNINGS, 111 FULTON STREET.

1845.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK.

NEW YORK, FEB. 20th, 1845.

PROF. BEDFORD:

SIR:—A Committee of the Medical Class of the University have been appointed to request you, in behalf of the class, to deliver a *Valedictory Lecture*, at such time between this and the close of the present session as may suit your convenience. The Committee have instructed me as its chairman, to make known to you this request.

Anxious as I know the class to be that you should deliver such a Lecture, and believing as I do that it would tend to the continued elevation of the University, I take particular pleasure in communicating this wish of my fellow students, and allow me to hope, sir, that under the circumstances of the case you will not refuse to gratify so unanimous a desire.

Truly yours,

S. S. SATCHWELL,
Chairman of Com. of the Medical Class.

FEBRUARY 22d, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR:

Your letter in behalf of the class, requesting that I would deliver a Valedictory Address, I have received with feelings of great pleasure. This mark of kindness from my friends and pupils, I shall not fail to appreciate. I will cheerfully comply with the request, and will appoint Friday, February 28th; this being the last day of the session, for the delivery of the address.

Be pleased to make my acknowledgments to the class, and accept for yourself, personally, my best wishes for your success and happiness.

Very truly, your friend,

G. S. BEDFORD,
743 Broadway.

MR. S. S. SATCHWELL,
Chairman of Committee.

MARCH, 1, 1845.

PROF. BEDFORD:

DEAR SIR:—The undersigned Committee are instructed by the Medical Class of the University of New York, to request in its behalf, for publication, a copy of the able and eloquent Valedictory Lecture, delivered by you last evening.

In performing this agreeable duty, permit us to convey to you the gratification

we experienced during its delivery, and respectfully to add our personal solicitations to those of the body we represent.

With great esteem,

We are yours, etc.

S. S. SATCHWELL, Chairman, N. Carolina.
 EDMUND R. DABNEY, Secretary, Tennessee.
 PHILIP A. AYLETT, Alabama.
 DIEGO ALVEAR, Spain.
 CYRUS ARNDT, New Jersey.
 JOHN M. K. ALFORD, N. Carolina.
 JOHN W. ALBURY, West Indies.
 ROBERT M. BOYKIN, Virginia.
 W. A. BURLEIGH, Maine.
 J. BROWN, New Hampshire.
 A. BRUSH, Michigan.
 E. T. CURRIE, Maryland.
 G. W. CLIPPINGER, Pennsylvania.
 R. H. CLARKE, Delaware.
 OLIVER CROOKS, Ohio.
 W. G. GREENE, Indiana.
 JAMES DARBY, England.
 G. G. GAITHER, Kentucky.
 W. M. HUNTINGDEN, Vermont.
 B. S. JAMES, South Carolina.
 JOHN MCGREGOR, Rhode Island.
 C. D. JOHNSON, Oregon.
 J. S. MENG, Mississippi.
 F. H. MILLER, Iowa
 CHARLES T. MOUNT, Canada.
 VALENTINE MOTT, Jr., New York.
 EDWARD PERRY, Connecticut.
 GEORGE W. PARKHILL, Florida.
 WILLIAM M. RYER, Illinois.
 J. B. SELBY, Wisconsin.
 G. A. SMITH, Texas.
 GEORGE M. TUTT, Georgia.
 T. D. WASHBURN, Massachusetts.
 JOHN WITHERELL, New Brunswick.
 D. E. WARREN, Tennessee.

Committee.

743 BROADWAY, MARCH, 1, 1845.

GENTLEMEN:—

I have this moment received your kind letter in behalf of the class, requesting for publication a copy of my Valedictory Address. The manuscript is at your disposal; and allow me to say, that I fully appreciate the feelings which have actuated your fellow students in making this complimentary request. Be pleased to assure them of my high regard, and accept for yourselves, personally, my best wishes.

Very truly your friend,

G. S. BEDFORD.

To Messrs.

S. S. SATCHWELL,
 EDMUND R. DABNEY,
 and Committee.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN :

ALLOW me to offer you my congratulations on the gratifying close of the present session of Medical Lectures. To you who have passed through the arduous duties of the season with a zeal and assiduity, which have not failed to attract, in a signal manner, the attention of the Professors, the prospect of repose cannot be otherwise than acceptable. It affords me no slight pleasure, on this occasion, to bear my testimony to the uniform kindness and respect which you have all manifested towards the officers of this Institution; and permit me to assure you that this feeling of regard is most cordially reciprocated.

A few months since, you left your homes, full of hope and fervent aspirations, in pursuit of professional knowledge—and, after a careful survey of the various schools of medicine throughout our country, you declared your preference for the University of New York. The Faculty, therefore, felt the weight of responsibility which this preference imposed on them; and you must allow me to say that they have not been unmindful of the high trusts confided to their care.

Four years ago, the doors of this Institution were thrown open to the medical public; and in this Hall, and from this very place, my respected colleague, the Professor of Surgery, proclaimed that the Faculty of the University of New York had presented themselves as candidates for the favor and patronage of the Medical Students of this country. It would be affectation in me to say that, with all the advantages of this city for the establishment of a great Medical School, both my colleagues and myself did not feel some degree of doubt as to the immediate success of our enterprise. The reputation of older and kindred schools, it cannot be denied, presented a formidable rivalry; and we entered the field of competition fully apprised of the difficulties we should have to encounter, and the unequal chances of success under which we should neces-

sarily labor. We went into the contest, prepared with all the legitimate means of an honorable warfare, to test our strength with the Institutions of the land. We feared not the issues of the conflict, for, although most anxious for triumph, we were resolved to be content under defeat, if victory could not be won by the energy and efforts of those, to whom had been committed the honor and interests of this University.

It must be admitted that the design to build up in this city a School of Medicine, which should take an honorable stand by the side of those which had already earned their measure of fame, was one of no easy execution. Public prejudice was against us, and the predilections of the medical profession were all directed to another quarter. The celebrity of the schools of a neighboring city—the strength which they had gathered through the affection and interest of their numerous alumni—and, above all, the fact everywhere known, and everywhere conceded, that medical science in New York had, for years past, been in a declining state—all tended to augment the difficulties of the enterprise in which we had embarked. When the Medical Department of the University of New York was first organised it was the cordial wish of the Faculty, and it certainly was their firm determination, to be on terms of friendship with all—they were anxious to conquer under the becoming standard of *peace and science*; and whilst others might prefer bitter and unrelenting controversy, it was their choice to yield the field of disputation, and devote themselves to their pupils, and the great principles of the profession, which it was their object to elucidate. Nor will they, on the present occasion, depart from their determination. Circumstances, indeed, render it desirable that some allusion should be made to the condition of medical education in New York during the last few years; but lest the retrospect should be construed into a feeling of hostility to those who were then the guardians of medical science in this city, I forbear.

If New York, from causes which to my mind are almost inexplicable, has heretofore suffered in comparison with other cities as a place of medical instruction, there is the more reason for triumph now, enabled as she is exultingly to point to her present position, and challenge the world for an example of more brilliant success than that which has attended her recent efforts in medical teaching.

It was, therefore, under circumstances such as I have stated—when all the facilities for medical education had been allowed to

pass unimproved—when a general indifference seemed to prevail among our professional brethren—it was, I say, under these circumstances that the feasibility was conceived of building up a medical university in this metropolis, which should carry out the high hopes of its projectors, and prove equal to the enterprise and wants of the commercial emporium. On the instant, the attention of those engaged in this scheme, in the scheme of introducing a new era in the history of medical science in New York, was concentrated upon a man, who was identified with all that was glorious and honorable in American Surgery—whose name was as high throughout the civilized world as it was in the city, which had been the field of his professional triumphs, and the seat of his surgical achievements. Yes! it was the anxious desire of those most interested in the enterprise, to secure for this young Institution the eminent services of our own honored Mott. At this period, he had just returned from Europe, and, thanks to a kind Providence, his sojourn there had resulted in the restoration of his health, which had become impaired by unceasing devotion to his arduous professional duties. He returned a renovated man—able and willing to resume the labors of the profession, and assist in creating a School of Medicine, which should prove worthy of his fame, and the character of his country. The attention was next directed to the chair of Anatomy. This important department, it was determined, should be filled by one who could bring to it an amount of reputation and ability equal to the wants of the University, and the expectations of its best friends. A calm survey was made of the country—the merits of the various professors were deliberately considered, and, by unanimous decision, a gentleman was selected, whose life had been devoted to anatomical pursuits, and whose eloquence and tact as an accomplished demonstrator of human structure no one has ever presumed to question. The physicians of this country owe much to your professor of Anatomy; many of them have received from him the basis of their medical education. The graduates of the University of Maryland and of Jefferson Medical College will not soon forget the lessons which they received at his hands. During his connexion with those institutions, he drew around him crowded classes, which will ever be prompt to promulge his praises, and testify to the zeal and devotion with which he discharged his duties. The professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine in the the University of New York was for many years the associate of Professor Pattison in

Jefferson Medical College. Their united efforts did much to give character and distinction to that school. Professor Revere was not a novice in teaching—his mind had been disciplined by long years of faithful and devoted study, and his reputation as an effective and classic teacher was not confined to the city in which he labored, but was spread throughout the extent of the land. I know full well with what pleasure and profit you have listened to his instructions during the present session. The chair of Institutes and Materia Medica was confided to a gentleman, accomplished and profound in professional learning; one who has obtained for himself a proud place among the medical philosophers of the age. And my distinguished friend will excuse me, whilst I avail myself of this occasion to congratulate him and you his pupils on the honors recently paid him, as a tribute to his exalted merits, by the learned Societies of Europe. I thank him for the distinction he has thus conferred on his country, and I revere him for his independence of thought and action. The interesting department of Chemistry was assigned to Professor Draper, a gentleman well known as an eloquent teacher of this science in Hampden Sydney College; and whose subsequent writings have placed him in the front rank of distinguished chemists. I trust I may be pardoned for the opinion that a brilliant career awaits my learned friend; and that the University of New York, as much as she has been benefitted by his genius, is yet to be the recipient of far greater advantages from his well-stored mind.

There remains one member of our corps to whom I have made no allusion. I feel, however, authorised to say in his behalf that, however much his colleagues excel him in ability and reputation, yet he is second to none in zeal and enthusiasm for the great interests of the University—nor will he consider any sacrifice too heavy which may be necessary for the consummation of the object so dear to him and his associates—the *creation of a national medical school which shall meet the wants of the profession, and confer honor on the country.*

Thus fortified in their organization, the Faculty of the University commenced their irksome duties. And, gentlemen, allow me to tell you that few institutions have ever come into existence under circumstances more inauspicious and embarrassing than the one of which you are now members. Imagine six gentlemen empowered with the legal right of teaching medicine and surgery and entering upon the doubtful enterprise of establishing a medica

school in a city, which had become almost bankrupt in medical teaching; imagine them without state endowments, without a building and the various necessary appointments; with the scoffs and jeers of their opponents, on the one hand, and the doubts and the fears of their friends, on the other, and you can, perhaps, form some estimate of their true position. Some members of this Faculty, too, it must not be forgotten, had attained that maturity of age and thought, incompatible with the impetuous rashness of youth, which does not always look to consequences. The numerous questions connected with our enterprise were deeply and calmly considered. It was an enterprise which, if successful, could not but prove gratifying to our pride, and place New York in her proper position among the seminaries of medical learning; but had we failed, it would have brought ruin and disaster on ourselves and our families—we hazarded all—our fortunes and character were perilled. But such was our confidence in the elements presented by New York for the establishment of a great Medical School—such was the love we bore our profession—such the determination to use every legitimate effort to obtain success, that we were willing to incur the hazard of the sacrifice, great as it might have been, in the attempt to rescue the fame of our city, and assign her a prominent rank among the medical schools of the world.

But it may very naturally be asked—What was it that gave such confidence to our hopes, and, in opposition to public opinion, induced the conviction that we should ultimately succeed in our enterprise? To this I reply, that we knew we had the advantage of position—and we were not ignorant of the extraordinary facilities of this great city for the completion of the object in view. The city of New York has for a long period been the commercial emporium of this growing country—it has been the point towards which much of the commercial enterprise of the world has been directed—and the advantages of its geographical position, its immense population, numbering 400,000 souls—the activity of its citizens, its Hospitals, its Infirmaries, its Dispensaries, its numerous charities, its unrivalled facilities for anatomical study, the enthusiasm and devotion of its medical men, the character and probity of its merchants, were all so many circumstances, which clearly designated this as the fit point for the metropolitan school of the Western Continent. You who have so thoroughly availed yourselves of these advantages are the best judges as to their real value.

Here, you have studied disease in all its varied types; and the facilities you have enjoyed for clinical observation have prepared you to appreciate how indispensable this mode of instruction is to an accomplished medical education. The New York Hospital has been open to your *daily* visits—in it you have had an opportunity of seeing the treatment of maladies, you have heard their history and causes, and all matters appertaining to them learnedly discussed by competent instructors. You have visited the wards, and your minds have become properly imbued with the details of the sick chamber. In this hospital, too, you have had frequent occasion during the present session of witnessing the various surgical operations—many of them having proved of extraordinary interest. You are now prepared to pass an opinion on the advantages of this charity—open to your *daily* visitations throughout the year.

In addition to the other facilities offered by the Hospital, you have access to an extensive and select Medical Library. But this Hospital, admirably adapted as it is to your wants, and tributary as it proves to the cause of Medical Education in this city, is, as it were, but one link in the chain of advantages presented to the industrious student. The different Dispensaries in which the poor of the city congregate, open to you a wide and instructive field for observation—the diseases treated in these establishments are grouped into classes, thus affording an opportunity for such as may desire it, of special study. Those of you, whose predilections may have disposed them to make a speciality of the Eye and Ear, have had every facility in the Eye and Ear Infirmary, to which there is gratuitous admission; and you have enjoyed in that Institution the advantage of instruction from gentlemen skilled in these departments.

The Surgical Clinique held every Saturday throughout the year in the College Building, under the immediate direction of Prof. Mott, has been the means of arraying before you a number of most interesting cases; and you have received from the lips of this great Surgeon, opinions and views, which must have made a lasting impression on your minds, and which I have no doubt will receive from you due appreciation. The Obstetric Clinique, too, has afforded you facilities for practical midwifery, which, I know, are not enjoyed to the same extent in any other portion of this country. Many of you have had the opportunity of attending cases of labor—and, during the present session, several interesting incidents connected with this charity have occurred—such as hemorrhage, convulsions, three cases of twins, one shoulder presentation, and one case of

forceps delivery ; all of which were managed with great skill and entire success by those of you to whom they were entrusted, without the slightest aid from me. It is due that I should mention these facts, and I feel proud that I am enabled to pay this public tribute to my class. Since the organization of the University, 1028 cases of Midwifery have been given out to the students, who have attended lectures in this Institution. As I have repeatedly stated, on former occasions, you will be prepared to appreciate the value of this charity, when you shall have become engaged in the practical duties of your profession.

I think it must now be obvious that New York, in all that appertains to Clinical Instruction, is without a rival on this Continent. But, gentlemen, this city possesses another advantage—one which is absolutely indispensable to the success of medical teaching ; and, in the possession of this important advantage, she is equal to any city in the world—I allude to the extraordinary facilities for dissection. The *materiel* is abundant and cheap—and you will be somewhat surprised when I assure you that New York has formerly supplied almost all the medical schools north of the Potomac, but so enormous was this traffic in dead bodies, and so gross the abuses connected with it, that the municipal authorities have become vigilant, and put an end to the disreputable trade.

In addition to the facilities to which I have thus briefly alluded, I must not omit to mention the numerous private associations established by competent medical gentlemen, for the purpose of affording instruction to students in the various departments of the profession. Lectures have been given on anatomy, surgery, chemistry, Lithotripsy, auscultation, diseases of the skin, midwifery, operative surgery, &c. &c. I bid these gentlemen a cordial welcome to the field of science ; I invite them to continue in their laudable efforts ; they will always receive the approbation of the Faculty of the University ; and I trust the next session of lectures will stimulate a still greater number of our medical friends to enroll themselves as co-laborers in a cause, in the support of which we all have a common interest.

The very partial statement I have made of the advantages presented by New York for the creation of a national school will, I believe, suffice to show you the basis on which we founded our hopes of success, and on which we were content to hazard our reputation and property. What has been the result of this enterprise—has it ended in disappointment—or have our efforts met a noble and unexpected response from our professional brethren throughout the coun-

try? Is the University of New York, this night, which closes its fourth session of lectures, bankrupt in character and in pupils, or does she proudly challenge the country for an example of more unequivocal prosperity than she at this moment enjoys? We invite investigation on this subject—we invoke the deepest scrutiny—and await with confidence the verdict of an intelligent and just public. What are the facts? We opened our first session of lectures in 1841-2 with 239 students—in 1842-3 we numbered 271—in 1843-4 we were greeted with a class of 325, and we terminate the present session with 378! Is not this more than success—is it not an unexampled achievement! This is, indeed, a proud night for the University of New York—it is a glorious spectacle to contemplate—and the pleasure which the heart feels at such intellectual triumphs is far greater than language can tell.

This noble victory I assure you, gentlemen, has not been achieved without great and unceasing effort—by night and by day have we toiled for the honor of this our favorite school, and our success has been purchased only by our devotion to her interests. Do not however, suppose that we are content with the results, unprecedented as they are, which we have attained in the brief period of four years. Our aspirations are not so easily satisfied. We desire to make New York, what New York can be made by energy and properly directed effort, a seat of medical learning equal, in all respects, to the great Parisian school. The Faculty of this University do not intend to stand still—nor do they intend that their school shall lose one fraction of her present elevated position. They know that they have formidable competitors in the field—and they feel that even yet they have deep prejudices to contend with. They are prepared for both.

But, gentlemen, I had almost forgotten that this is my valedictory address—that this night terminates the agreeable relations, which have subsisted between us during the present winter—relations, to which I shall always recur with sincere pleasure. This is a most interesting occasion to those of you, who have just completed the prescribed term of study. The period to which you have long looked forward with alternate feelings of hope and apprehension has at last arrived. You have passed through the ordeal, which the law has provided—you have afforded evidences of industry in the pursuit of professional knowledge, and you are now to be admitted to an examination which, if successful, will clothe you with all the honors of this Institution, and constitute you

our peers. The distinction of pupil and preceptor will no longer exist; and you will be entitled to divide with us and with others the favors of the community, and the rewards of the profession. The duties, which are soon to devolve on you, and the sacred trusts you will be called upon to assume, are of a nature calculated to awaken in your minds profound and earnest thought. The profession of medicine, it has been truly observed, is the profession of peace and good will, of endless harmony, and unceasing philanthropy. Instead of recording the desolations of war, and the growth of immorality—the deadly effects of human passions, and the bloody triumphs of senseless ambition—her province is to note the diminution of human suffering; and the only triumphs, which she records are those obtained over sickness, death, and sorrow. In the hour of peril, and amid the fierce assaults of disease, your counsel will be invoked, and your skill severely tested. And you will discover, gentlemen, that in order to attain excellence in the healing art, you will be required to make sacrifices of no ordinary kind. The time of the physician is not, like the time of others, at his own disposal. Whilst they enter with gay heart into all the festive enjoyments of society; and whilst, in their various pursuits, their minds are far removed above the contemplation of human affliction, it is his place to commingle constantly with the sick and the dying; his daily and nightly walks are in the midst of pestilence and death; and when disease makes a mockery of his skill, it then becomes his duty to soothe, by kindly attention, the last moments of expiring nature. To become imbued with the principles of his science, and to penetrate its hidden mysteries, it is necessary for him to make the very charnel house the theatre of investigation; and amid the impurities and loathsomeness of the scene, which no heart would be found stout enough to encounter, were it not animated by motives of philanthropy, he extracts that knowledge by which alone he is enabled to heal the sick, and give comfort to the afflicted. That most necessary pursuit, without which no progress can be made in medical science, and which forms the very basis of your studies—I mean the dissection of the dead—is too apt to be regarded by unthinking men, as a mere desecration of the tomb; and it has been seriously charged that this familiarity with the dead leads to doubt and infidelity. This is a fallacy—nay it is a foul slander on our profession, and I thus publicly repel it, knowing it to be utterly false, and without the shadow of foundation. The study of medicine, so far from tending to unbelief, fortifies the Christian mind, and elevates Christian hope. The splendid

demonstrations of anatomy—demonstrations which take a deep hold of the human heart, expose the fallacies of the sophist, whilst they portray most emphatically the absurdities of the skeptic. The contemplation of the dead, after the spirit which animated the cold clay has taken its flight, is indeed a fit occupation for the reviler of God's works: he there finds, what all the lessons of the moralist have failed to show him, positive and undoubted demonstration: his reason becomes convinced by the eloquence of nature, and her silent, yet graphic displays, force him to exclaim—the finger of Omnipotence has directed this beautiful, yet inexplicable mechanism!

No! Gentlemen, the study of medicine can never be made subservient to the purposes of the materialist. On the contrary, if he should perchance cross the threshold of this temple, consecrated as it is to medical science, and unite with us in our daily pursuits, his philosophy will not be found adequate to resist the evidences which every hour will reveal to his mind. The skeptic, who revels in doubt, and who is anxious to perpetuate the delusion, must not come here if he would wish to preserve from destruction the idol of his heart. You will find, on perusing the history of the great men who from time to time have adorned our profession, the names of some of the purest and most exemplary Christian philosophers recorded on the page of biography. It was a maxim of the illustrious St. Francis of Sales, that, "a good Christian should never be outdone in good manners." Is it not equally true that the most enduring trait in the character of an accomplished physician, is probity of purpose and respect for Christian truths?

It is also said, that familiarity with disease and suffering, and daily contact with the scenes of affliction exhibited in the chamber of death, blunt the sensibilities of the medical practitioner, and make him indifferent to the agonizing distresses of his patient, and the bitter anguish of surviving friends. This charge too, is without foundation, and rests entirely on popular delusion.

I cannot, gentlemen, permit this occasion to pass without making some brief allusion to the duties connected with my chair in this University. I have not for one moment, from the first organization of this school to the present hour, failed to appreciate the solemn trusts which have been confided to my care. The various departments of medicine and surgery are embraced in our curriculum of instruction; and whilst I am willing to concede to my colleagues the importance of their respective departments, I must be permitted to claim for the one which has been assigned me, great and

abiding interest. My associates have made every effort, and I am confident not without a measure of success, to qualify you for the faithful performance of duty; and if I have failed to furnish you with every facility of becoming accomplished practitioners in obstetric medicine, it is not that I have been wanting in zeal, or that I have not devoted every energy of my mind to the consummation of this object. I fully appreciate the position in which I have been placed. It has been my duty day after day to lay before you the principles which are to guide you in obstetric practice. To me has been given the important trust of inculcating upon your minds the rule of conduct to be pursued, when danger pervades, or death menaces the lying-in chamber, and upon the character of those precepts may depend the safety of unborn thousands. May Heaven grant, gentlemen, that I may have proved adequate to the proper discharge of these momentous duties!

It must not be supposed, however, that obstetric medicine is limited to the details, important as they are, which the accoucheur has to discharge at the bed side of the parturient woman. It has a more comprehensive bearing, and embraces within its scope various topics, with some of which the best interests of society are intimately associated. In its most extended acceptation, that in which we have always regarded it, it includes not only the knowledge and art of treating the female and her offspring during pregnancy, labor, and the puerperal period, but it embraces also the interesting subject of embryology, and the important obstetric questions connected with legal medicine; and in close alliance with these topics are the diseases of women and children. You see, then, that comprehensive as this department is, it is not without reason that I claim for it some degree of interest; and, at the same time affirm, that it is second to no other in value and importance to the practitioner. The diseases of women alone constitute a brilliant chapter in your medical education; it is one that is full of interesting enquiry; and you will discover, when engaged in the duties of medical practice, that an intimate acquaintance with the maladies peculiar to females, will add much to your professional reputation. You can form no just idea of the happiness and permanent good which, if skilled in the treatment of these diseases, you will be enabled to dispense to suffering humanity. Look for one moment, gentlemen, at the womb,—see its multiplied relations with the entire economy—the numerous sympathies by which it is bound to every portion of the system, and you will then understand how derangements of

this viscus will necessarily involve the well-being of the individual, and, if left unchecked, occasion the most disastrous results. Truly did Vanhelmont exclaim, "*propter solum uterum est mulier id quod est.*"

But this very class of diseases, more perhaps than any other, will require the nicest discrimination—your diagnosis here is the very foundation of success—without it, you can effect no good, but you will assuredly conduct your patient to the grave, after years of suffering and unavailing treatment.

The uterus is liable to a greater variety of diseases than any other organ in the system. Its structure is necessarily complicated, consisting of several kinds of organization, adapted to its peculiar functions. The internal surface of this organ is covered by a mucous membrane, and is liable to all the diseases of this species of tissue—the external coat is serous, and often becomes the seat of disastrous inflammations. The uterus possesses also a muscular structure, in which sometimes become imbedded fibrous and other growths, requiring all the sagacity of the accoucheur, in order that he may not fall into error, which, while it would compromise the character of the individual, might likewise lead to her physical destruction. Again, the neck of the womb is essentially glandular, and becomes the seat of diseases peculiar to glands.

Among these is that scourge of the female sex, *Cancer of the womb*—a disease as insidious in its inception as it is frightful and loathsome in its termination. No physician, unless lost to all sensibility, can watch the fearful progress of this fatal malady through its various stages, without having his keenest sympathies elicited, and the best feelings of his nature excited in behalf of the unfortunate sufferer. From day to day he witnesses the declining strength of his patient—he marks her gradual approach to the grave—and every hour discloses fresh ravages of this unrelenting malady; the adjacent parts soon participate in the fatal destruction that is going on—and, after months of agonizing torture, the unhappy woman, so reduced in flesh as to exhibit all the outlines of the skeleton, and having become an object of disgust to herself, and deeply tested the affection [of her friends, yields up her life with a prayer of thankfulness to heaven that her time has at last come! Now, gentlemen, Carcinoma of the womb, after it has reached a certain stage, is generally acknowledged to be an incurable disease; but, in its incipiency, when the first indication presents itself, if treated with judgment and persevering effort, it may be arrested,

and the patient saved from its appalling consequences. You see, therefore, how weighty the responsibility, and how sacred your professional duties, when you assume to treat diseases which, if misunderstood at the commencement, lead to certain and distressing death.

But, gentlemen, there is another division of obstetric medicine, to which it is necessary to make some brief allusion. As practitioners of midwifery, you will be called upon to perform certain obligatory, sacred offices—offices involving in their issue the gravest considerations, so far as society and individual character are concerned. Take, by way of illustration, the subject of pregnancy. Your opinion will frequently be invoked in questions of doubt by the judges and lawyers of the land; it will become your province to stay the arm of the law in the execution of retributive justice; and on the accuracy of your decision may depend, not only the well-being of society, and the happiness of individuals, but human life itself will often be at your mercy. Imagine the case of a woman who, in the hope of gain, or urged on perhaps by some more malignant motive, charges the father of a family with having violated her person; and thus, with a view to a successful plea, feigns pregnancy. The accoucheur is requested to institute an examination, and on his statement rests the issue of the case. A woman, who has strayed from the path of virtue, and whose abandonment results in impregnation, studiously endeavours, if not lost to all sense of propriety, to conceal her situation; and when she approaches the medical practitioner for counsel, will have recourse to every art and subterfuge, by which she may hope to delude his judgment, and accomplish the fiendish object of throwing a mantle around her own shame by the destruction of the child she carries within her!

When you shall have become engaged in the practical duties of your profession, you will frequently be consulted by persons of this description, and if you suffer your judgments to be dazzled, or your feelings to become too keenly interested, the most painful consequences may ensue. To distinguish between actual pregnancy and the numerous diseases capable of simulating it, requires on the part of the accoucheur extraordinary circumspection; and as he is the only earthly tribunal to which appeal is made, in cases involving the dearest interests of society, it follows that the responsibility imposed on him is most fearful.

A case occurred some years since in this city, which is calcula-

ted not only to arrest attention, but to fix on the mind the necessity of positive knowledge in obstetric medicine, and the value of accurate diagnosis in disease. A female applied for professional advice; she had for some time previously labored under general derangement of health, and was most solicitous for relief. The practitioner whom she consulted being much embarrassed by the history of the case, requested the opinion of several medical friends. The consultation resulted in the unanimous decision, that the patient labored under *Dropsy*, and it was proposed that the operation of paracentesis, or tapping, should be performed. The medical gentlemen assembled according to appointment, and the trochar was thrust into the abdomen of the confiding woman; no fluid however escaped, and you may well imagine the astonishment of the spectators. A few days afterwards, the patient died from the effects of inflammation, and the autopsy revealed the interesting fact, that the instrument, instead of passing into what was supposed to be an accumulation of fluid, was thrust into the heart of a living fœtus!

With a view further to point out to you the importance of the topic we are now discussing, I shall take the liberty of citing the following interesting case which, I trust, whilst it places this subject in its full light, will serve as a check on those members of the profession, who are prone to express premature opinions on matters of vital interest, without at all regarding the distressing consequences involved in their decision.

A lovely and accomplished girl, a resident of a neighboring city, had just attained her seventeenth year—she was the ornament of every circle in which she moved—the idol of her friends, and the object of universal admiration. At this period, her health began to decline—there was a manifest change in her habits—she was no longer fond of society—its pleasures ceased to allure and prove attractive; and the friends whom before she had caressed with all the warmth of a sister's love, became objects of indifference. In a word, she was a changed being—her personal appearance now exhibited alterations evident to the most superficial observer—her abdomen was enlarged—the breasts fuller than usual—the face pale and care-worn—and the appetite capricious with much gastric derangement. Many were the efforts made to account for this sudden change in the conduct and appearance of the young lady in question—speculation was at work, and numerous were the surmises of her friends. At last it was bruited that she had fallen the victim of seduction, and fear of exposure had induced her

to seek solitude, and renounce all social pleasures. A rumor of this kind could not prevail long without reaching the ears of her against whom it was intended to operate. On being informed of the report in circulation, her heart was torn with grief, and finding herself alone, as it were, borne down by the weight of calumny—her virtue suspected—life a burden to her, she at once, conscious of her own innocence, resolved to prove the baseness of the slander by submitting her case to a medical witness. Accordingly a physician was consulted, and, after full investigation, declared promptly and without reserve, that she was at least five months advanced in pregnancy. Still undaunted, so well did she know her own spotless virtue, and so firmly did she rely on the protecting providence of her God to sustain her in this her hour of trial and affliction, she requested four of the most eminent practitioners in the city in which she lived to institute a critical examination for the purpose of arriving at an accurate decision. After a most rigid investigation of the case they stated unanimously, *that the lady in question was not pregnant, and that all her symptoms were caused by an imperforate hymen, which had prevented the escape of the menstrual blood.* The poor creature, on hearing this opinion, in a flood of tears, that must have come warm from the heart, returned her thanks to the guardian spirits, who had thus nobly rescued her character. From that hour, she continued to decline in health, and such was the impression made on her by the atrocious calumny, that in less than one month death brought her repose; and she was placed in the silent tomb, *there* to rest from the wicked assaults of her persecutors.

This case, gentlemen, it appears to me, should not be passed in silence—it is full of interest to the practitioner, and presents a graphic demonstration of the sacredness of professional responsibility. It contains an important moral, and should be inscribed in letters of gold on the memory of every individual who contemplates devoting himself to the study and practice of obstetric medicine. There is not one of you, after you shall have received your commission to practice, who may not be called on to pronounce judgment in cases similar to the one to which I have alluded. You see, therefore, gentlemen, the magnitude of the trust soon to be reposed in you—your duties will not be limited to the treatment of disease—you will often, in the course of your professional life, be summoned to protect character and sustain

innocence; and your ability to discharge these offices properly will be in direct proportion to your professional acquirements.

Before drawing this address to a close, I desire to make a few observations in reference to your position as students of this University. There is not a state or territory of this great confederacy, which is not represented here this night. The sons of the north have met their brothers of the south, as have those of the east and the west. Wisconsin, Oregon, and Iowa are also represented; and even Texas, at this moment the exciting topic of political controversy, has not forgotten us. Canada, Nova Scotia, the West Indies, and England too, have sent on their respective delegates. Nearly four hundred gentlemen, coming from various countries and sections, their minds imbued with prejudices peculiar to each, would not, it might be supposed, readily assimilate. Sectional influences, and the impress of education, are calculated to awaken feelings by no means congenial to the spirit of harmony and friendship. But such influences have found no foot-hold here; and experience has shown that the elements of discord, and the bickerings of party can neither live or become developed in this Institution. You are here a band of brothers, engaged in the attainment of a common object, and devoted to a common interest. The fraternal feelings which you have exhibited towards each other, have not escaped the observation of the Faculty; and it is a subject of congratulation to all of us interested in the prosperity of this school, that the members of the class of 1845, separate in kindness and friendship for each other, with sentiments of respect and attachment to the Faculty; and with a consciousness that these feelings are most sincerely reciprocated. You are now about to return to your homes, to receive from your parents and friends the testimony of their approbation; and when you reach the paternal roof, you will gladden the hearts of those who have watched over your infancy, and have looked to the period of your manhood with feelings of anxiety, which a parent's heart alone can experience. See that you do not disappoint their hopes; suffer not yourselves to relax in effort; and remember that he who would rise to fame and distinction, must labor with an energy and a determination equal to the object to be achieved.

When I cast my eye around this Hall, I cannot but feel that the same principle operates here, that we find prevailing throughout society generally—there are some here who, from their earliest infancy to the present moment, have been strangers to want—they know not the inconveniences of dependence, nor have they ever experi-

enced the bitter and harassing cares of poverty—to them life has been one glorious gala-day. But again, there are others here to whom fortune has not extended the same bounty ; and whose existence has been a continued strife between hope and despondency. To all I would say, you are about engaging in a splendid contest, and victory will depend, not on worldly possessions, but on persevering industry and intellectual labor.

In conclusion, gentlemen, allow me to say that it is the intention of the Faculty to multiply from year to year the facilities for medical instruction, and send out from these Halls cohorts of thoroughly educated alumni, competent and ready to speak the praises of their *Alma Mater*, and, if needs be, protect her honor. No matter how zealously the Faculty of this Institution may labor to perpetuate her fame, yet much will depend on you, her sons. Soon you will leave these Halls to enter on the mission of practical duty, carrying with you the diploma of this University, the benedictions of her Professors, and bearing her name in triumph to the remotest portions of this Continent. We shall entrust her honor and her interests to your keeping, relying on your ability and willingness to defend both the one and the other.

Gentlemen, I bid you a cordial farewell,—may health, happiness, and success attend you ; and, after the shadows of this life shall have passed away, may you enjoy the blessings of a future and better world!

