AN INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

the Education of a Physician,

SUBMITTED TO THE

PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND MEDICAL FACULTY

OF THE

University of Nashville,

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

BY

Wm. Dixon Houston,

OF

Tennessee.

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Inscribed to

J. Berrien Lindsley.
I have selected, as a proper subject, to receive gentlemen, for the topic of my discourse to be much thought on by all who are in any manner connected with the science of medicine, whether as students or practitioners. Especially this should it be familiar with you, gentlemen who combine with the student and practitioner, the teacher that is as far as is in the power of man the maker of physicians.
Of course engaged must it would be thought. For some thought on what their profession demands of them—that they be qualified to practice it.

Though there are many, I admit, especially since the facilities for obtaining a medical education have become so much increased. Who on an idle moment rush blindly into it, seemingly without giving a single serious thought when (or without having a rational opinion of) that which is to become
Their business for life.
And why judging from the
manner they pursue their
studies or rather the man-
ners they spend the time
which I should be devoted
to those studies, look upon
the science which has been
dignified by the lifetime
devotions of such minds
as Hypocrate, Harvey, Hu-
ter, Physick and a host
of others, both ancient and
modern, and which claim
now as sincere and ar-
dant devotees some of the
greatest intellects of
the nineteenth centu-
ry. Who look upon this en-
lightened age?
which has required many and long years of laborious toil for these great minds to master to a degree still unsatisfactory to themselves—
as a business too small to insignificant and futile in its nature. Such a plaything in fact to their gigantic intellects as scarcely to merit their cursory attention, for a few years even. But enough for it is not my intention at present to consider the views of these men who attach themselves to Medicine with such
conceit, and by whose conduct our noble profession is brought down in the eyes of many, to a vulgar par with the narrow and contemptible intellects of these men. But to consider the Physician—that is one who deserves that name and the qualifications which entitle him to it. But first I will speak of his peculiar creation. Medicine is the art of applying sanitary measures to diseased conditions of the system and of removing causes which may produce those conditions and the
science which embraces a knowledge of all that is requisite in the practice of that art, i.e., an anatomical and physiological comprehension of the human body, a knowledge of all the diseases which it is subject their nature, treatment, and objects, to restore the diseased system to that state wherein every part and organ shall perform its individual office or function in a manner natural to itself and in due harmony and concert with the others. To assist nature to bear
up and recover from diseased action. To guard the camps of life from the chilling and mortifying breath of disease, to protect the citadel of life from the bold attacks and devastating invasions of death, which inevitably gather millions to an untimely grave, to frustrate the still greater to be dreaded secret wiles, which the insidious and treacherous foe is ever ready to practice, and watch lest impudence within may invite those attacks. This is
the province of medicine. How vastly important then to mankind is this great science, how universal and close its application to all men. For what man is there so fortunate as to escape all the diseases to which man is heir? Who does not at some time of life require medicinal aid and comfort? What an extensive field does it comprehend, the most extensive indeed of all sciences for in its broad scope it takes in as collateralals some of the greatest of sciences. How noble its objects, how
essentially philanthropic to alleviate the sufferings of man to restore the afflicted to give strength to the weak.

Surely this is noble, for it is prompted by the highest attribute of our nature and the practice of that great commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Thus think that ancients at the profession and call its followers impure, as a substitute of heart as they are of sense. They say not have never done good but will but refer them to that discovery
which has immortalized
Dinner, by which we are en-
abled to divest of all its hor-
rors, one of the most awful
maladies that ever pla-
ged humanity, and ask
if the world is not indebted
to us for some good, at least?
But mark these same men
when they become prostrate
with some burning fever.
Oh, whine! This is their consis-
tency, that they call so lovely
for these false impostors.
If we are an evil, then we are
a necessary one, for the world
surely cannot do without us.
Such being the nature of the
profession, I will next speak
of some of the qualifications, which he who is to practice it should possess.

In commencing the study of a science as extensive and abstruse as that of medicine, to obtain a thorough knowledge of which is probably the most difficult and onerous task the human mind ever undertook, the student should ponder well the magnitude of his undertaking and remember that he is beginning no schoolboy task but one that will require for its
Comprehension, the earnest and devoted exercise of all the faculties of a nature and cultivated mind. He should be well prepared "for" he begins else, he will be like a man going into deep water without having learnt to swim. He should have, if not a thorough knowledge of, at least an tolerable acquaintance with those languages, from which the peculiar phrasology and nomenclature of the science is mostly derived. That he may the more...
philosophically comprehend and more surely retain the complicated technicalities, with which the books abound.

And if Logick is the science of investigating truth and detecting error surely then he will need it in his studies, and where is discriminate judgment and foresight more necessary than in the practice of medicine. Of knowledge of the mathematics is frequently required. And how is he to understand clearly and rationally the intri-
eat and ingenious mechanism of the human frame, with its wondrous working. Without knowing something of the laws of mechanics, hydraulics, statics, pneumatics, optics, electricity, etc.

In short, for the position which he is to occupy in society, as well as to properly understand his occupation, he should have a classical and scientific education. But to deal with disease in his peculiar province and the object and end of his professional
learning, and though such preliminary requirements will vastly fa-
cilitate him in his professional studies and relieve him from many
simplerities yet they are not as much important as to preclude a man from
eminence in the profession without such systematic knowledge.
But that he should be familiar with, thoroughly, minutely so, with every
organ and tissue of the hu-
mam body, their situation,
connections, size, form, con-
figuration, structure, growth
and office that he should know what changes they undergo through disease, both as to their structure and function, that he should have a clear understanding of all the diseases to which each and all the tissues are liable. Their nature and the peculiar signs by which each is known — and what is still more important — how to prevent, alleviate and cure. And that he should have an accurate knowledge of all the therapeutic agents, is directly his duty—the sine qua non of his oeuvre.
Opation. And surely is ther
not enough in the strict part
of the profession ever to en-
gaage the attention of the mighti-
rest intellect, enough to task
the loftiest powers of thought?
Must it not to the greatest genius
constitute a magnum opus
And is it possible for any man
to become learned in Medicine
and skillful in its practice
without devoting to it many
years of earnest labor?
And can such knowledge be ac-
guired in a short time, that is
usually spent in a Medical insti-
tution? Most certainly not.
For there is no Medical institution that
sends forth her graduates as full-fledged
Physicians, how indeed can any young man, fresh from the walls of a college, expect to converse with disease when he has only read of it or heard it lectured on. Let me, therefore, the student, for such I shall still call him, as he goes forth into the world arrogantly supposing that disease will yield to him as darkness doth to light, or that the diploma which he bears will impart to him a talismanic influence over disease; but rather let him consider himself, but fully prepared for his great work to be properly fitted to practice medicine. He must have also physical qualifications. That is the organs of his senses.
Must not only be naturally perfect, but trained and educated to his purposes, particularly a firm, skillful yet delicately sensitive hand, a quick and searching eye, and an attentive ear. Most essential points in a physician, and their importance cannot be too fully impressed, for in the examination of a patient, his treatment will in a great measure depend on the evidence of his senses. But this is not alone sufficient that the success professional knowledge and professional skill, but this heart also
must be educated and endowed with the highest morality, else he cannot be fully fitted for his high and responsible calling.