



LEWIS HANES Editor & Proprietor.

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WHOLE NO. 211

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Address, JOSEPH T. INMAN,  
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Jan. 15, 1866. tw-ly New York City.

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### ADDRESS BY

James G. Ramsay, M. D.,  
Delivered before the Rowan County Medical Society, at its Annual Meeting, held in Salisbury, N. C., on the 21st of May, 1867. Published by request of the Society.

GENTLEMEN:—The constitution of our Society makes it the duty of the President to deliver an address, at the end of his official year. Before proceeding further in the attempt to discharge this duty, permit me to congratulate you upon the reconstitution, not only of our County, but also of our State Medical Society, as pleasing evidence of unabated interest in the welfare of our time-honored Profession, to be hailed with delight, by every true disciple of the Healing Art, throughout the length and breadth of the State. Organized association and effort, conduce to improvement and indicate progress, and had at the commencement of the late unhappy war, attained to a considerable degree of perfection. Since that time individual effort has had, for the most part especially in our Profession, in the South, to battle, for recuperation and success, almost entirely alone and unassisted. In this emergency, it is a matter of regret that all the regular Physicians of the County, have not enrolled themselves as members of this Society. Let us not, however, abate our zeal; the pleasing anticipation of a united, harmonious and worthy brotherhood, of zealous, skillful and scientific Physicians, must yet be realized, if those of us who now constitute our County and State Associations, only remain true to the emergencies of the times, and the post of duty.

I desire therefore, to avail myself of this occasion, to vindicate the claims of the Regular Profession to the confidence and support of the public, and to the devotion of its members; and also to point out some of its dangers and safeguards, under the circumstances, in which we are placed.

We stand to-day upon the accumulated experience of ages. More than three thousand years ago, Moses informs us of the practice of Medicine among the Jews—how the Priests should prevent the contagion of leprosy and cure it by seclusion and ablation. This practice appears to have been a considerable improvement upon that the Jews had doubtless long before learned in Egypt, which consisted chiefly in magical incantations and operated entirely through the imagination. A thousand years later, and we begin to learn the names of some of those who healed the sick, in Greece and elsewhere, and who used external applications to wounds and had an imperfect knowledge of anatomy, derived most probably from the dissection of animals. Chiron, in the thirteenth century B. C., was noted for his skill in medicine and music—sciences which, even at a much later period, were

regarded as having a magical potency, as remedial agents, in the cure of disease. Asclepius, the fabled god of Medicine, was a real personage. His sons, to whom he transmitted his profession, after the custom of that age, accompanied the Greeks to the Trojan war. For a long time after his death, the practice of Medicine was confined to his descendants and disciples, who were called Asclepiades, for priests of the many temples erected to his memory; the most famous of which were those at Cos, Gubios and Rhodes. These temples became schools of Medicine, and considerable information, esteemed valuable at that day, accumulated within their walls, from the practice which prevailed of requiring the patients who were cured, to deposit votive tables, upon which were recorded the nature and history of their diseases, as well as the means used for their cure. The division of the Profession into that of the Dogmatists and Empirics, whose disputes, for a long time, agitated the medical world, grew out of the doctrines taught at the rival schools at Cos and Gubios—those of the former assumed more of the philosophical cast, attempting to unite reasoning with experience; while the latter attached themselves solely to the observation and collection of mere matters of fact.

In the sixth century B. C., the learned Pythagoras is supposed to have acquired some acquaintance with the anatomy of animals, which he taught to his Grecian disciples, at Crotona. A few years later, Democritus is supposed to have ventured upon the dissection of the human subject; while Herodius is said to have invented "gymnastic medicine."

And here, in the four hundredth and sixth year before Christ—more than two thousand and two hundred years ago—let us pause a moment to notice the birth of the Philosopher of Cos—the Father of Medicine—the great Hippocrates. It has been affirmed that the science of Medicine is more indebted to his genius and ability than to that of any single individual. He was an eminent teacher and writer in Medicine. His knowledge of anatomy was limited; but many of his remedies, taken chiefly from the vegetable kingdom, are still retained in our pharmacopoeias. Blood-letting, emetics, purgatives and other remedies, of a like character, were used by him. In his *physis*, we have the origin of our doctrine of the remedial powers of nature, and in his *dynamias*, the germ of that of the vital forces. He was the true father of Humoral Pathology, and the author of the doctrine of crises and critical evacuations, as well as of the epidemic constitution of the seasons, in the causation and cure of disease. Many of his aphorisms have stood the test of time; and the solemn oath, which he exacted from his pupils, never to indulge in libertine practices, nor to degrade their art by applying it to criminal purposes, is worthy of one the Athenians maintained at the public expense, whose head they decorated with a golden crown, and to whose memory they paid divine honors.

A century later Medicine was taught at Alexandria, by Erasistratus and Herophilus, who undoubtedly dissected the bodies of such malefactors, as were executed and relinquished to them by the Government. About this time, we have an account of the separation of the practice of our profession into the departments of Dietetics, Pharmacy and Surgery. Little is known, before the time of Celsus, of the history of Medicine, among the Romans. The assertion of Pliny that they were without Physicians, for six hundred years, must be taken with many grains of allowance. That Aratus was expelled from among them, about two centuries B. C., for the severity of his surgery, and that Asclepiades, a quack of Bythina, who is said a century still later to have divided disease into acute and chronic, practiced at Rome, with great acceptability is probably true. About this time, Themison instituted the doctrine of the Solidists, under the name of Methodic medicine, after which the Pneumatic, Eclectic and other schools speedily arose. But the great Celsus, who flourished in the times of Tiberius and Trajan, is the first native Roman Physician of which we have any positive knowledge. His knowledge of Medicine, especially of surgery, was very extensive, for his time. He describes an operation of couching for cataract and one for lithotomy, and is said to be the first author who makes mention of the ligature, as a means of arresting hemorrhage.

This brief historical narrative, designed to prove that our science is venerable for its antiquity, brings us to the christian era. I would love to speak of the great Galen, who flourished in the second century, of whom it has been said that, "he acquired a name which, for fourteen centuries, was above every other name in his profession, and even now stands pre-eminently illustrious,"—of how his disciples kept alive the medical spirit until the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, in the seventh century, and of the manner in which his writings were preserved and translated into the Arabic language, thus preserving a history of Medicine—to tell

of the rise of chemical medicine; of the application of geometrical proportions and of musical harmonics, in regulating the doses of medicine, in the sixth century; of Rhazes, who wrote on small-pox, and of Avicenna whose works, for a time, superseded those of Galen—to mourn with you the decline of Medicine, into the practice of the arts of magic, astrology and alchemy, during the dark ages, when the light of learning nearly left the earth, and when the most learned spent their time in the vain search for the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life—and then again I would especially delight to engage with you, in the more pleasing task of tracing the gradual revival of our science, through Mondini, an Italian, who overcame the prejudices of his age, so far as to succeed in dissecting the bodies of two human female subjects, in the early part of the fourteenth century; and even through the presumptuous Paracelsus, in the fifteenth, who gave an impulse to chemical medicine—through Eustachius Vesalius and Fallopius, in the sixteenth—Sylvius, Willis, the immortal Harvey, who demonstrated the circulation of the blood, and the great Sydenham, or as he has been styled the English Hippocrates, of the seventeenth—the celebrated Jenner, whose memory ages to come will probably revere as the author of vaccination, the good and illustrious Boerhaave, the renowned Haller, the philosophical Cullen and the bold and theorizing Brown, whose names, with those of their cotemporaries, will forever shed imperishable lustre on the medical galaxy of the last century; and to dwell upon the worthies of our own day whose,

"Footsteps on the sands of time," can never be effaced, but time will not permit, nor is it necessary to do so. The history of Medicine, as well as our own experience, demonstrates the fact that there are sects in the practice of our Profession. This is unavoidable, as the human mind is constituted to differ. If all men thought one way, no change would ever be made except through the intervention of miracles. There are sects in religion, in laws and philosophy, and Doctors differ in all these. But the sects, in religion, keep a watch upon each other and truth—the truth—is evolved and kept alive. Doctors learned in the civil laws differ and often render conflicting decisions, yet the law itself is styled "the perfection of human reason." Doctors dispute and wrangle over science and philosophy, and yet science and philosophy are continually advancing. And the same is true in Medicine. One idea men, whether in or out of the regular profession, are as a general rule to be avoided. They advance the cause of science, but they often do it at the expense of those upon whom they practice. Thus Clutterbuck, Broussais, Rastri and others, who have taken one idea and carried it to its extreme limit, have contributed to our experience and the general advancement of the profession, while their practice, defective as it is now known to be, was probably in advance of their cotemporaries.

But there are objections to our system of practice: of course there are. There are objections to every system, and to no system at all. But are these objections founded in reason? In the present advanced state of our profession mere theory gives way to facts, because we adopt the Baconian or inductive process of reasoning and adopt nothing which cannot be verified by observation and experience. Endeavoring thoroughly to understand the nature and functions of the human organism, in health, we the more readily detect those aberrations that constitute disease. The causes, nature and terminations of disease are determined with astonishing accuracy, considering their obscurity and subtilty, while the whole range of nature is employed for the remedial management of diseases themselves. Ours is the true eclectic system, for there is no element in the animal, vegetable or mineral kingdom—in the earth, the sea, or the skies,—which we may not lay under contribution for the benefit of suffering humanity. Water, fluid and solid, hot and cold, hard and soft, heat, from simple warmth to blow-pipe intensity; air, hot and cold freshened in the zephyr or fanned in the gale; light, in twilight shade, noon-day splendor, Drummond brilliancy, telescopic range or microscopic precision; electricity, galvanism—but why enumerate? the earth and all its fullness is the inexhaustible storehouse from which we draw the potent weapons with which we go forth, to battle with disease and death. The Thompsonian may confine himself to heat; the Hydropathist to water, and the Homeopathist to decillionth infinitesimal doses, or the Quack may lumber away with his panacea, but each and all of them have stolen their weapons from our well-stored armory; and succeed, in their moon-maniacal fury, about as well in proving that all diseases are amenable to one remedy, or even to one system, as Satan did in demonstrating that man should live by bread alone. How absurd then to speak of our system as "Mineral," or of its votaries as "Allopathists!" Even philosophers, on other subjects, are often fools in physics. Bacon could reason well about the judi-

gestion which mince-pies often produce, but practice most foolishly, upon himself with rheubarb and other medicines to dispel humors, in the blood, which most probably existed in the brain. Seeing how "the wisest of mankind" are deceived, we must not be impatient if the ignorant, who sometimes diet on "composition," or wax warm on "No. 6," should be incredulous when told that vegetables are often more poisonous than minerals, and that lobelia causes like tartarized antimony because the stomach becomes offended at its presence, and resents its poisonous impressions. No process of reasoning can be adopted to prove the utter fallacy of the Homeopathic doctrine of infinitesimally small doses, except that of the *reductio ad absurdum*, that none at all would be better. But what shall I say with regard to patent nostrums! The facility and zest with which these are gulped down, by the people, forbid the suspicion that there is any uncertainty, in the public mind, as to the power and efficacy of physis, and tends very greatly to modify the severity of our judgment upon those, of our own number, who dose without reason, and cure or kill, they know not why; as well as to palliate the crimes of empirics, who dishonor rational medication, by growing rich upon the credulity of those they too often persuade to be sick, and whose lives they almost surely sacrifice, to that mercenary spirit, which would as soon furnish a coffin as a cure. I once attended a dance in a man-house. One of the females embraced the opportunity afforded by a short interval to accost me with the salutation, "do you work miracles sir?" I replied, in my simplicity, that I did not. "She left me with evident reluctance, only to repeat the question, to every gentleman with whom she came in contact, from all of whom she received the same answer, except one, who informed her that it was his happy lot to work miracles. He was immediately rewarded by becoming the adored one, and was overwhelmed with caresses and adulation. The gentleman, thought I, is scarcely to blame, the lady is crazy, and nothing but the consciousness of my integrity consoled me. The world is crazy for miraculous cures, and demands them at our hands. The man who promises them has very often a fortune within his grasp. Let us stand firm, in our integrity, and pray to be delivered from the glittering temptation of desiring the price of blood. But there is certainty in rational medicine. When a man gets a colic and takes an opiate and his colic leaves him, and when this happens not once or twice, but in multitudes of instances, and when recorded experience tells us that this has been the case in all ages, since the introduction of opium into practice, that man must be incredulous indeed, who denies that opium relieves pain and cures disease. It is unnecessary to multiply illustrations. *Ex pede Herculem.*

Having thus, Gentlemen, vindicated the claims of the Profession to the confidence and support of the public and to the devotion of its members, it only remains for me to urge upon you and through you upon the public, a few thoughts of a practical nature which will, I imagine, be entitled to more than usual consideration, from the peculiarities of the times in which we live.

Eminence and success in any pursuit, but more especially in the practice of Medicine, to be useful and enduring, must be secured by merit; and this must be reached through channels of diligent reading, critical observation and philosophical study. It is true that the most worthy Physicians often fail to attain popularity and lucrative practice, while the daring ignoramus, blustering quack or stupid dolt, (esteemed wise only because he keeps a still tongue) like,

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," but the general rule is as stated, that patient and enduring merit will eventually win its way, as certainly as attrition wears away the stone. The fact is unwelcome, but it is not less true that there are unworthy practitioners of the Healing Art, and this fact, explains, in part at least, why so little consideration is often bestowed upon those whose province it is, through self-denial, toil and expense, to contribute to the relief of suffering humanity. Such men bring reproach upon the profession, retard its advancement, cripple its usefulness and demoralize the public mind, just in the proportion in which they succeed in securing patronage. We must be devoted to our profession and true to its time-honored ethics. The ample scope of its studies is more than sufficient to tax all the time and talents, even of the most gifted sons of genius. Its portals must be guarded against the stupid and illiterate, as well as against the mercenary, the avaricious and the impure. The true Physician must be a gentleman—true to himself, in avoiding sensuality and excess; in attention to cleanliness and propriety of person and dress, as well as in cultivating those graces of intellect and manners, which are at once, the ornaments and supports of his calling. He must be just, courteous and charitable with his brethren, always acting