

**HIGHER MEDICAL EDUCATION,  
THE TRUE INTEREST  
OF THE PUBLIC AND THE  
PROFESSION. TWO ADDRESSES**

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Higher Medical Education, the True Interest of the Public and the Profession. Two Addresses by William Pepper

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**WILLIAM PEPPER**

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# HIGHER MEDICAL EDUCATION,

THE TRUE INTEREST OF THE PUBLIC

AND

OF THE PROFESSION.

TWO ADDRESSES DELIVERED BEFORE THE MEDICAL  
DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENN-  
SYLVANIA ON OCTOBER 1, 1877, AND  
OCTOBER 2, 1898.

BY

WILLIAM PEPPER, M.D., LL.D.

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## PREFACE.

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THE first of these Addresses was delivered at the opening of the one hundred and twelfth course of lectures in the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania. As extensive and radical changes had been made in the plan of medical teaching in that school, it seemed proper that a full statement should be given of the reasons for such reforms. An attempt was made, therefore, to present fairly the then position of medical teaching in America, to point out its chief defects, and to indicate the causes that had led to them, and the evils to which they in turn gave rise.

The second Address was delivered sixteen years later, in October, 1893, at the opening of the Four Years' Course of Medical Study. It is hoped it may serve to indicate the advances effected in the interval, and also the lines along which further progress should be made.

In order to enable the accuracy of the statements in these Addresses to be tested, as well as to afford information which may be of value to those specially interested in this subject, brief synopses of the state of medical education in various countries in 1877 and in 1893 have been prepared. These are given in three Appendices. The first (No. I., pp. 44-59) is that originally compiled for the address of 1877. It was based upon data secured in response to a series of questions forwarded through the Department of State at Washington to the proper officials in the respective countries. The second and third (pp. 77-99) have in like manner been obtained from the highly interesting communications received in response to a recent series of questions forwarded

in like manner. I beg to acknowledge my great indebtedness to the distinguished officials of that Department for their courteous assistance on both occasions. I am also indebted to many kind friends in America, as well as in almost all of the countries referred to, for valuable information furnished in reply to my personal inquiries.

It is impossible to avoid an expression of thankfulness for the good work already accomplished in the elevation of Medical Education in America. In spite of the grave defects that still exist, there is ample ground for confident hope that the future is full of honorable progress.

WILLIAM PEPPER.

Philadelphia, 1894.

## ADDRESS

DELIVERED

OCTOBER 1, 1877.

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THE choice of a subject for an address, such as I have to-day the honor of delivering before you, is usually a matter of no little difficulty. For many years the course of medical education in this country has been smooth and uniform. Few new features have been introduced, still fewer important changes or improvements have even been suggested. The profession and the public have become familiar with the routine pursued, and the orator, on such an occasion as the present, has had neither opportunity nor temptation to quit the pleasant if somewhat o'er-trodden path of eulogizing medical science, and the life and work and rewards of the physician. It is true that to those of you who are now entering for the first time on a course of medical study, there are practical questions of importance and interest concerning the best methods of study and the disposition of your time which might be profitably considered. But many of my predecessors upon whom has devolved the duty I must now discharge, have discussed these questions with such thoroughness and ability as leaves little to be added.

But a few months have passed since the close of the Centennial year of our national existence. A year ago there were gathered in this city, the cradle of our nation's birth, the chosen representatives of almost every country on the globe. The occasion was one of singular interest. In vast halls, whose size and beauty made it seem that they had sprung into existence at the bidding of some magic power, were collected for study and comparison the choicest products of every soil and clime, the most finished works of art, and the most perfect specimens of mechanical skill from every country, in a word, the evidences by which could be determined the



growth and present position of each nation in all that serves to enrich, to embellish, to strengthen, and to advance civilization.

We had sought the test, and it was a searching one. The older members of the great family of nations did not despise the friendly challenge we had proffered; the fame of our enterprise and achievements had gone abroad; and the most ancient, the most powerful, the most highly polished and artistic people sent their finest works to stand side by side with those of the young western Republic. It is not too soon to learn the verdict that has been pronounced by the competent and impartial Judges chosen for this purpose from the most expert of each nation. Has it not stamped, with marks of strongest approbation, the achievements of our country in almost every branch of human industry? Has it not registered the fact that in the brief space of a century we have taken such vast strides in material development, that in many things we approach the older nations, and that in many we equal or even excel them? No true American can reflect upon this verdict without a feeling of honest pride, not only for what has actually been accomplished, but for the evidences given of the existence among us of qualities that will surely lead to far greater and higher achievements.

But I do not allude to this subject to-day merely to indulge in complacent self-laudation, but rather to ask your attention to those points in which the exhibit of our country's progress and present position was not of so gratifying a character. Our vast railway system, our mills, our factories, our machinery—everything that requires skill and business enterprise and mechanical ingenuity, and that contributes directly to material prosperity—elicited world-wide applause. But not these alone came under searching inspection; and it would be well for us if in those things which require other and even higher qualities we had been adjudged to have done as well. It is not that in all of these matters, such as municipal organization and government; the administration of poor laws; the encouragement of art and science; the system of technical and professional education, our defects are equally glaring. But surely candor compels us to acknowledge that in regard to many such subjects, which are essential to a lasting and elevated civilization, we are still far behind-hand. As if in bitter irony, the great exhibition of our enormous progress in material prosperity coincided with a period of unprecedented depression of all business and commercial interests, and with the appearance of evils in our municipal and national affairs that seemed to threaten the very existence of our government. At no time in the history of a great nation was

it ever more clearly shown than it now is among us, that for the advancement of true and enduring prosperity more, much more, is needed than inexhaustible natural resources, prodigious business enterprise, and extraordinary mechanical ingenuity. We are now realizing the supreme importance of sound principles of political economy; of habits of moderate and correct thought on matters public and private; of purity and fidelity in the discharge of official duties; of careful and comprehensive study of all those conditions which affect the physical and moral well-being of our vast and rapidly growing communities. Amid the confusion and distrust which so generally prevail, one common thought must be entertained by most intelligent people, which is that, among the influences that have led to the present state of affairs, one of the most powerful has been the want of thorough special training and preparation on the part of those to whom important duties are entrusted. The total absence of any civil service system, the self-complacent readiness with which the most important and complicated functions of government are assumed by persons utterly without training or preparation for the work, are but the most notable instances of a spirit of reckless disregard of all the sound principles of education that displays itself more or less prominently in every profession and in every trade.

I suppose that few persons who are at all familiar with the subject would be willing to express even the smallest satisfaction with the present state of the medical profession in this country. It is true that for the past four years all branches of industry have been depressed, but the troubles that affect the medical profession have been steadily advancing and increasing for at least fifty years. Its ranks are overstocked to an unparalleled extent; there is, I believe, no other business in which so small a proportion of those engaged earn a living; it finds successful rivals among the practitioners of such exclusive schools as Homœopathy, Eclecticism, and the like; and, worst of all, it has failed to elevate its standing and repute with the public, or to exert that powerful influence upon sanitary legislation, upon public and private hygiene, upon education, and upon similar subjects which is at once its duty and its highest prerogative. I shall have occasion to adduce facts and statistics in support of some of the above statements, but I would not be understood as implying—what seems the intent of many addresses to medical classes—that the privilege of devoting himself to the welfare of humanity, to the service of the public, and to the advancement of medical science, should be the one and all-sufficing reward

of the physician; while the questions of making and laying up money, or even of earning a decent support for his family are regarded as too sordid to be mentioned. It is useless to gloss over the palpable fact that the medical profession, to be on the whole successfully maintained, must be based and conducted on ordinary sound business principles. True, no pursuit calls for a larger display of the best qualities of human nature than does the practice of medicine, and I believe it will be conceded that the profession meets this demand fairly well. But the obvious motive which actuates most men who study and practice medicine is not an overpowering spirit of benevolence, but a desire to earn an honest livelihood. Hence it is but natural that they should regard the requirements, of whatever kind, that may be imposed on the medical student or the physician, not only in relation to a standard of ideal perfection, but also as they affect their own interests. But none the less is it true that, owing to the peculiar and complicated relations they hold to society, one of the most essential elements of success among medical men is the maintenance, on the part of the profession, of a reputation for high personal acquirements and qualifications, and for accurate knowledge of and public-spirited interest in all subjects pertaining to sanitary science. With the rapid decay in superstition, and in veneration for the mysterious, the feeling with which medical science and medical men are regarded has undergone an equal change. Not only has the feeling passed away which invested the physician with almost supernatural powers, and which gave to a dose of physic the character of a fetish, but there has been a weakening of the old blind dependence upon mere title or upon mere personal or school authority. On the other hand, the vast improvements that have taken place in medical science; the great additions to the positive knowledge of disease and of the means for its prevention and cure; the widespread interest among the community concerning all physical science; the prevailing sense of the supreme importance of private and public hygiene; the constantly increasing wear and tear of our complicated social life—all of these foretell the large part which our profession must play in the future, and at the same time attest its power. It seems likely indeed, as has been said by one of the greatest living orators\*—that the influence of the medical profession, great as it now is, is destined to grow in greater proportion than that of other

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\* Gladstone's Address at the London College, July 18, 1876; *Med. Times and Gaz.*, July 22, 1876.