DR. BENJAMIN RUSH. THE ANNUAL ORATION DELIVERED BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF THE ALUMNI OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, MARCH 9, 1876

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649233069

Dr. Benjamin Rush. The Annual Oration Delivered Before the Society of the Alumni of the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, March 9, 1876 by Meredith Clymer

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

www.triestepublishing.com

MEREDITH CLYMER

DR. BENJAMIN RUSH. THE ANNUAL ORATION DELIVERED BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF THE ALUMNI OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, MARCH 9, 1876

Trieste

DR. BENJAMIN RUSH.

"Gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche."

THE

ANNUAL ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SOCIETY OF THE ALUMNI OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

MARCH 9, 1876.

BY

MEREDITH CLYMER, M.D. (UNIV. PENN.),

FELLOW OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA; VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF THE ALUMNI OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA; FORMERLY PHYSICIAN, AND CONSULTING PHYSICIAN, TO THE PHILADELPHIA HOSPITAL; LATE PROFESSOR OF THE INSTITUTES AND PRACTICE OF MEDICINE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK; EX-PRESIDENT NEW YORK SOCIETY OF NEUROLOGY, ETC. ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:
1876.

On the third of November, 1806, in the room appropriated for the lectures on the Institutes of Medicine and the Materia Medica in the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, the Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine welcomed his class with these words:—

"In entering this room and taking my seat in this chair, I have felt unusual emotions. I have been carried back to the year 1762, when the first anatomical lecture was delivered in this country by Dr. Shippen. It was in the State House, and to an audience composed of the most respectable citizens of Philadelphia. I have been led to review the little class of ten pupils who attended his first course of lectures upon anatomy in a small room over his father's office. I have been borne by my memory to the time of a public commencement in the year 1765, when Dr. Morgan delivered a plan for co-operating

with Dr. Shippen in establishing a school in which all the other branches of medicine should be taught in this city. My imagination has carried me to the back parlor of Dr. Morgan's house, in which he delivered to about a half dozen pupils a course of lectures upon the elements of botany, chemistry, and the materia medica. From hence I have traced the progress of our school through successive appointments of professorships and different places of lecturing (the last of which have been in most instances small, inconvenient, and remote from each other), to the present day, when I behold a numerous and respectable class of students [upwards of two hundred] in a room appropriated to the professors of the Institutes and Practice of Medicine and of the Materia Medica, and connected with a new and spacious building provided with all the conveniences necessary for the accommodation of the professors of anatomy, surgery, and chemistry. * * * In contemplating this building I imagine I see a mighty bulwark for opposing disease and death, erected in this country. I behold the votaries of medicine crowding from every part of the United States to seek within these walls the means of conducting this humane and honorable warfare. From the shores of every river in the Union I hear blessings pronounced upon the

physicians who have been instructed in this place in those arts by which they have saved a husband, a wife, a child from a premature grave; or, perhaps, preserved a village, a city, or a State, from the exterminating ravages of a pestilential fever. Elevated with the rapid progress of our medical school from its humble origin to its present flourishing condition, and animated with the prospect of its future and more extensive usefulness, I feel more than I am able to express."

How literally have these hopes and foretellings of the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania by the illustrious Rush, spoken seventy years ago, come to pass. The history of the birth and maturity of this venerable school of medicine is the history of medical teaching in this continent for a good part of the century.

When I look at that newly erected temple of medicine, reared by public liberality and private beneficence; equipped with everything that can illustrate instruction in all its departments; in charge of teachers whose best praise is that they have "borrowed the behavior" of those who have gone before them in the same high offices; and in close connection with an Hospital—in whose creation the Alumni have had so large a part—with its ample means of clinical teaching; I can imagine the feelings, the glow of satisfaction,

and the honest admiration the fathers of this school would experience were they allowed to revisit the scenes of their worldly labors. As Alumni, we have a good right to feel pride in the past, pride in the present, and trust in the future. Our Alma Mater is as vigorous as ever; age has not withered her, or custom staled her words of wisdom. Her way of life is yet full of the spirit of youth; she still holds true to the gathered memories of those who have made, and those who have kept, her fame.

> "Here may these gentle guests delight to dwell,
> And bless the scene they loved in life so well."

In this year, and at this season of centennial recollection, it has seemed to me that no fitter or more acceptable subject could be chosen for the annual oration before this Society, which your partiality has charged me with, than the character and writings of one whose name stands in the forefront of American Medicine, and whose fame as a physician was equalled by his qualities as a man, and his purity as a patriot—Dr. Benjanin Rush.

The story of his life may be shortly told. Dr. Rush was born on the twenty-fourth of December, 1745, on a farm in Byberry Township, twelve miles northeast of Philadelphia. His ancestor, who came from Oxfordshire, England,

to this country, and settled on the old homestead in 1683, one year after the arrival of William Penn and the settlement of the province of Pennsylvania, was John Rush, who had been a captain of horse in the army of the Commonwealth, a staunch republican, and who seems to have been known to, and well thought of by, Cromwell. It is told that seeing Capt. Rush's mare come into the camp riderless, and supposing him dead, Cromwell lamented him, saying, he had not left a better officer behind. One of his daughters, of masculine body and mind, having married a lazy man, worked a farm of one hundred acres with her own hands. She used to plow, harrow, and reap. The first, she said, was a delightful exercise. The father of Dr. Rush was a great-grandson of the round-head captain, and is represented in the family record "as a man of meek and peaceable spirit, and so just in his dealings and intercourse with the world that it was a proverb among the people of the township that more could not be said of a man's integrity than 'he was as honest as John Rush.'" He died in 1751, and was buried in Christ Church graveyard. His mother was a daughter of Joseph Hall, of Tacony. She was a good and energetic woman, of excellent parts and much force of character. A widow when her son Benjamin was six years

of age, she removed to Philadelphia, and devoted herself to his education and that of a younger brother. When eight years old he was sent to the classical school at Nottingham, Maryland, under the charge of the Rev. Dr. Finley, who afterwards was President of Princeton College. Here he was a good scholar, noted for his quickness in learning, orderly and diligent habits, and his moral qualities. Besides the thorough English and classical education which he received at this school, he was taught fidelity to his religious faith, and the constant observance of the moral law, which became the ruling traits of his life. At fourteen he went to Princeton College, graduating as Bachelor of Arts at sixteen.

The ready speech and the talent he had shown as a debater led some of his friends to wish him to study the law as a profession, and it is said his own inclination was in that direction; but yielding to the advice of Dr. Finley, he finally chose medicine and entered the office of Dr. John Redman, in 1791. During his pupilage the books he most read were the works of Hippocrates (whose aphorisms he translated into English when he was seventeen), Boerhaave, and Sydenham. As a student of medicine he showed the same ardor and conscientious industry which had marked him at school and college.