

**THE LIFE AND  
LETTERS OF  
NATHAN SMITH**

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The life and letters of Nathan Smith by Emily A. Smith

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**EMILY A. SMITH**

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LETTERS OF  
NATHAN SMITH**





NATHAN SMITH, M. D.

Professor on Yale Medical Faculty, 1815-1829 - From a portrait by S. F. B. Morse  
Presented to the Medical School by the Class of 1826

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THE LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
NATHAN SMITH, M.B., M.D.

By  
EMILY A. SMITH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
WILLIAM H. WELCH, M.D., LL.D.



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With deep gratitude and heart interest I dedicate this book to the members of the medical profession, who, following the leadership of those who have gone before, but with new light and better facilities, are laboring to relieve the pain and suffering of their fellow beings.



## INTRODUCTION

BY WILLIAM H. WELCH, M.D., LL.D.

The medical profession and all interested in the history of medicine in this country owe a large debt to Mrs. Alan P. Smith for the preparation of "The Life and Letters of Nathan Smith," one of the most interesting and important figures in the history of American medicine. It is eminently fitting that this work should issue from the Yale University Press as a contribution to the celebration of the centennial anniversary of the opening of "The Medical Institution of Yale College," of which Dr. Smith was an organizer and chief ornament.

The main sources hitherto available for what is known of the life of Nathan Smith have been the addresses of Dr. Jonathan Knight and of the Rev. Dr. William Allen, delivered and published shortly after his death in 1829, the "Medical and Surgical Memoirs" by his son, Dr. Nathan R. Smith, published in 1831, and especially the "Historical Discourse" by Dr. Oliver P. Hubbard, printed in 1880, to all of which repeated reference is made in this book. The many scattered estimates and accounts, mostly of an incidental nature, of the life and work of this remarkable man in medical writings have been drawn in the main from the foregoing sources.

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## Introduction

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To this rather meagre fund of information a substantial addition has been made by the painstaking and devoted investigations and labors of Mrs. Smith. Especially interesting are Dr. Smith's hitherto unpublished letters, particularly those, covering a period of nearly a quarter of a century, to his friend and pupil, Dr. George Cheyne Shattuck, an eminent physician of Boston and a benefactor of Dartmouth College and other educational institutions, and the extracts from Dr. Smith's ledgers and lecture notes.

Mrs. Smith has drawn a much clearer and fuller picture than had been done before of the setting of Nathan Smith's life, of his struggles and trials, of his indomitable courage and resourcefulness, of his marvelous capacity for work, of his professional and educational ideals and activities, and of his triumphs. We catch intimate glimpses of the active-minded lad upon the frontier, of the student at home and abroad getting, in spite of great difficulties, a good medical training, of the lover "transported with joy and expectation," of the devoted husband and father, solicitous for the education of his sons, of the busy physician and surgeon, "bandied about from one part of the country to the other," treating fevers, couching for cataract, cutting for stone, excising tumors, and embarrassed most of the time, as is the way of doctors, from failure or inability to collect his fees, small as they were, of the founder of medical schools and the professor, filling and filling well all the chairs in the medical curriculum,—from all accounts a really great teacher, and withal deserving President Woolsey's characterization of him as "the