

**A MEMOIR ON THE LIFE
AND
CHARACTER OF PHILIP
SYNG PHYSICK, M.D.**

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A Memoir on the Life and Character of Philip Syng Physick, M.D. by J. Randolph

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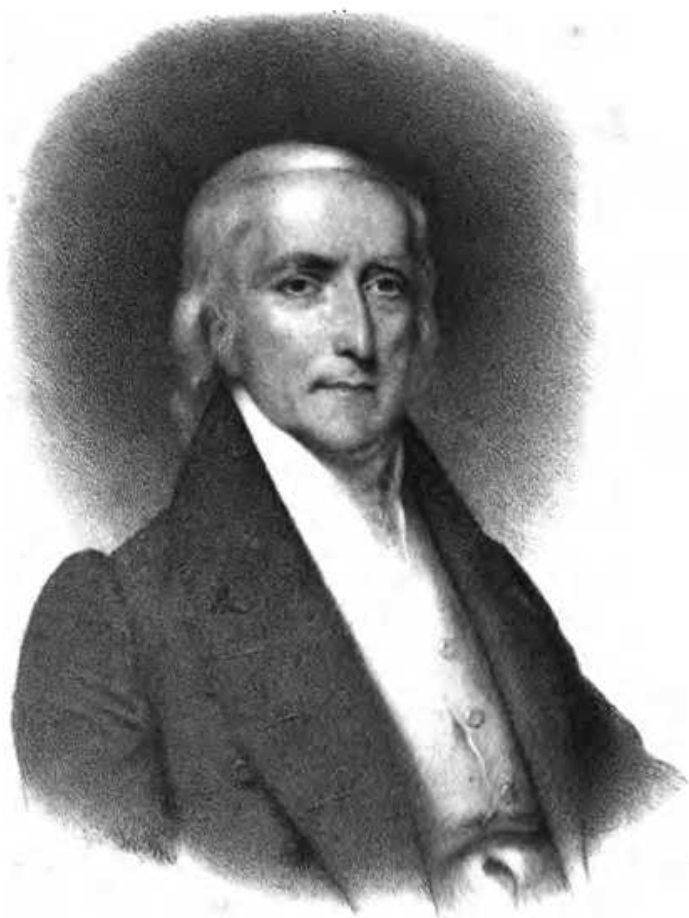
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J. RANDOLPH

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PHILIP SYNG PHYSICK, M.D.

Physick

A MEMOIR

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

PHILIP SYNG PHYSICK, M. D.

BY

J. RANDOLPH, M. D.,

Lecturer on Surgery, Member of the American Philosophical Society, one of the Surgeons to the Pennsylvania Hospital, Member of the Philadelphia College of Physicians, one of the Consulting Surgeons to the Philadelphia Dispensary, Honorary Member of the Philadelphia Medical Society, etc. etc.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY T. K. & P. G. COLLINS,

No. 1 LODGE ALLEY.

1839



PHILADELPHIA, February 21, 1839.

SIR:

In pursuance of a resolution adopted by the Philadelphia Medical Society, at a meeting held on Wednesday, the 20th of February, 1839, it becomes our duty to convey to you the thanks of the Society for the able and highly interesting memoir on the life and labours of its late venerated president, Philip Syng Physick, M. D., and to request of you a copy for publication.

Permit us, sir, in performing this duty, also to tender you our own assurances of the mournful pleasure with which, on that occasion, we listened to the narrative of the life of a truly great and good man, with whom we may no longer enjoy the highly prized happiness of personal and professional intercourse.

With great respect,

We have the honour to be

Your obedient servants,

REYNELL COATES,

ISAAC HAYS,

THOMAS HARRIS,

Committee of Philadelphia Medical Society.

To

J. RANDOLPH, M. D.

PHILADELPHIA, February 25, 1839.

GENTLEMEN:

It is with sincere gratification that I have received your letter, communicating the very honourable notice which the Philadelphia Medical Society has been pleased to take of my efforts to delineate the life and labours of its late lamented president, Philip Syng Physick, M. D. Agreeably to its request I place at your disposal a copy of the memoir for publication. Permit me to return you my grateful thanks for the flattering manner in which you have conveyed to me the resolution adopted by the Society.

I assure you that, if the portrait which I have attempted to draw be recognised as a true and faithful copy of the original, the highest aim which I had in view is attained.

I have the honour to be,

With great regard and respect,

Your obedient servant,

J. RANDOLPH.

To Messrs.

REYNELL COATES,

ISAAC HAYS,

THOMAS HARRIS,

Committee of Philadelphia Medical Society.

TO THE
SHADE OF JOHN HUNTER,
THIS IMPERFECT SKETCH
OF THE
LIFE AND LABOURS
OF A
FAVOURITE AND ATTACHED PUPIL
IS
RESPECTFULLY CONSECRATED

A MEMOIR.

GENTLEMEN :

Permit me to express my sincere acknowledgments for the honour you have conferred, in appointing me to prepare a Memoir of the life and character of the long venerated President of this institution, the late Doctor Physick.

I am quite sensible, that the selection was owing rather to my connection with the illustrious deceased, and the close and intimate relation which necessarily existed between us for a long series of years, than to any peculiar ability I may possess, of recording his many virtues and high qualifications. I am fully aware also, of the weighty responsibility which that man assumes, who undertakes to transmit to posterity a portrait, which, well and properly executed, may serve as a light and example to illumine and instruct succeeding ages. The effort to accomplish this object I consider, however, a duty which I owe alike to you, and to the memory of Dr. Physick; and I

shall endeavor to discharge my obligations in the best possible manner consistent with my means and abilities.

Most deeply do I deplore, in the commencement of my task, the want of proper materials, which, faithfully recorded, would enable Dr. Physick's great and exalted character fully to develop itself. Many of you, Gentlemen, cannot be ignorant, that the subject of our memoir throughout his whole life, entertained a most invincible repugnance to appear before the public in the shape of an Author. Sorry I am to say, that this feeling existed with him to the day of his death, and induced him to make an ardent request, and exact the promise that none of his manuscript lectures or letters should be made public.

The same modesty of feeling which he possessed to an extraordinary degree, and which forms so principal an ingredient in the composition of a truly great and noble mind, caused him also to refuse to comply with the repeated requests which were made to him, to furnish sufficient facts upon which a sketch of his biography might be founded. Upon one occasion only, after urgent solicitations on my part, did he place in my possession some dates and incidents of his life, with the permission that I might make use of them; he excused himself, however, from completing the materials at

that time, upon the plea of his ill health, and a promise to furnish them at a subsequent period. His disinclination to fulfil this promise was so obvious that I did not feel myself justifiable in renewing the application.

Philip Syng Physick was born in Philadelphia on the 7th of July, 1768. His father, Mr. Edmund Physick, was an Englishman, and was characterised for possessing strong mental powers, with which were united strict integrity of principle, and considerable knowledge of the world. Previously to the separation of the United States from Great Britain, he held the office of Keeper of the Great Seal of the Colony of Pennsylvania; and subsequently to the Revolution he took charge of the estates belonging to the Penn family, and served as their confidential agent. Doctor Physick's mother was a most estimable, pious woman, who was blessed with a strong intellect, and evinced throughout her life, great judgment and decision of character. The Doctor never ceased to feel and express, as long as he lived, the greatest filial love and reverence for these honoured parents. We have frequently known him to declare, that he was convinced that whatever was most useful and excellent in his character, was attributable to the early lessons and impressions which he imbibed from them.