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AN  
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

*The Education of  
a Physician,*

SUBMITTED TO THE

PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND MEDICAL FACULTY

OF THE

University of Nashville,

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

BY

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OF

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*Inscribed to*

**J. Berrien Lindsley.**

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I have selected, as you perceive, Gentlemen, for the topic of my discourse, a subject necessarily to be much thought on by all, who are in any manner connected with the science of medicine, whether as students or practitioners.

Especially then should it be familiar with you, Gentlemen, who combine with the student and practitioner, the teacher — that is as far as is in the power of man the maker of physicians



All, so engaged, must  
it would be thought, best  
to some thought on what  
their profession dem-  
ands of them — that they  
be qualified to prac-  
tise it.

Though there are many,  
I admit, especially since  
the facilities for obtain-  
ing a medical educa-  
tion have become so much  
increased, who in an  
idle moment, rush blind-  
ly into it, seemingly with-  
out giving a single serious  
thought upon, or without  
having a rational <sup>(con)</sup>ception  
of, that which is to become

their business for life.  
And who, judging from the  
manner they pursue their  
studies, or rather the man-  
ner they spend the time,  
which should be devoted  
to those studies, look upon  
the science, which has been  
dignified by the lifetime  
devotions of such minds,  
as Hippocrates, Harvey, Hun-  
ter, Physick and a host  
of others, both ancient and  
modern, and which claims  
now as sincere and ar-  
dent devotees, some of the  
greatest intellects of  
the nineteenth centu-  
ry: who look upon the science

which has required many  
and long years of labori-  
ous toil, for these great  
minds, to master to a  
degree, still unsatisfac-  
tory to themselves, —  
as a business so small, so  
insignificant and puer-  
ile in its nature. — Such  
a plaything in fact to their  
gigantic intellects, as  
scarcely to merit their  
cursorial attention, for a  
few years even.

But enough, for 'tis not my  
intention at present to  
consider the views of these  
men who attach themselves  
to Medicine with such



conceit, and by whose conduct our noble profession is brought down, in the eyes of many, to a vulgar par with the narrow and contemptible intellects of these men; but to consider the Physician, that is one who deserves that name, and the qualifications which entitle him to it.

But first I will speak of his peculiar vocation. Medicine is the art of applying sanative measures to diseased conditions of the system, and of removing causes which may produce those conditions, and the

science, which embraces a  
knowledge of all that is  
requisite in the practice of  
that art, i.e. an anatomical  
and physiological compre-  
hension of the human bo-  
dy, a knowledge of all the di-  
seases to which it is subject  
their nature, treatment &c.  
Its objects, to restore the dis-  
eased system to that  
state wherein every part  
and organ shall perform  
its individual office or  
function in a manner  
natural to itself and in  
due harmony and con-  
currence with the others

To assist nature to bear



up under, and recover  
from diseased action;  
To guard the lamp of life  
from the chilling and noc-  
ious breath of disease;  
to protect the citadel of  
life from the bold attacks  
and devastating invasions  
of ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> fearful ally through  
which inevitable death  
gathers millions to an  
untimely grave; to frus-  
trate the still greater to be  
dreaded secret wiles, which  
the insidious and treach-  
erous foe is ever ready to  
practice; and watch lest  
imprudence within may in-  
vite those attacks. This is

the province of medicine;  
How vastly important then  
to mankind is this great  
science; how universal  
and close its applications  
to all men? For what man  
is there so fortunate as to escape  
all the diseases to which flesh  
is heir to? Who does ~~not~~ not at  
some time of life require  
medicinal aid and com-  
forts? What an extensive  
field does it comprehend:  
the most extensive indeed  
of all sciences, for in its  
broad scope it takes in  
as collaterals some of the  
greatest of sciences,  
How noble its objects; how



essentially philanthropic  
its very nature: to allevi-  
ate the sufferings of man  
to restore the afflicted,  
to give strength to the  
weak. Surely this is noble,  
truly noble, for it is prompt-  
ed by the highest attri-  
butes of our nature, and  
the practice of that great  
commandment. "Love thy  
neighbor as thyself."

Thus then that ancient the  
profession and call its fol-  
lowers impostors, are as dis-  
titude of heart as they are  
of sense. They say we have  
never done good, I will but  
refer them to that discovery



which has immortalized  
 Dinner, by which we are en-  
 abled to divest, of all its hor-  
 rors, one of the most awful  
 maladies that ever pla-  
 gued humanity, and ask  
 if the world is not indebted  
 to us for some good, at least!

But mark these same men  
 when they become prostrate  
 with some burning fever,  
 Oh where, then is their consis-  
 tency, that they call so loudly  
 for these same impostors  
 If we are an evil then, we are  
 a necessary one, for the world  
 surely cannot do without us  
 such being the nature of the  
 profession, I will next speak

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of some of the qualifications,  
which he who is to practice  
it should possess.

In commencing the study  
of a science ~~as~~ extensive  
and abstruse as that  
of medicine, to obtain a  
thorough knowledge of  
which is probably the  
most difficult and  
arduous task the  
human mind ever un-  
dertook, the student  
should ponder well the  
magnitude of his under-  
taking and remember  
that he is beginning  
no school-boy task but one  
that will require for its

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comprehension, the ear-  
nest and devoted exercise  
of all the faculties of a ma-  
ture and cultivated  
mind. He should be well  
prepared "er he begins  
else he will be like a man  
going into deep water  
without having learnt  
to swim.

He should have, if not a  
thorough knowledge of  
at least a tolerable ac-  
quaintance with those  
languages, from which  
the peculiar phraseology  
and nomenclature of the  
science is mostly derived  
that he may the more



philosophically comprehend  
and more surely retain  
the complicated techni-  
calties, with which  
the books abound.

And if Logic is the sci-  
ence of investigating  
truth and detecting error  
Surely then he will need it  
in his studies, and where  
is discriminate judge-  
ment and foresight more  
necessary, than in the  
practice of medicine  
A knowledge of the math-  
ematics is frequently  
required; - And how is  
he to understand clearly  
and rationally the intri-

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eate and ingenious meck-  
anism of the human frame,  
with its wondrous working,  
without knowing some-  
thing of the laws of meck-  
anicks, Hydrostaticks,  
Pneumaticks, Opticks  
Electricity &c &c.

On short for the posi-  
tion which he is to occupy  
in society, as well as to  
properly understand his  
occupation, he should  
have a classical and  
scientific education

But to deal with dis-  
ease is his peculiar  
province and the object  
and end of his professional

learning, and though such preliminary acquirements will vastly facilitate him in his professional studies, and relieve him from many perplexities, yet they are not of so much importance as to preclude a man from eminence in the profession without such systematick knowledge—

But that he should be familiar with, thoroughly, minutely so, with every organ and tissue of the human body, their situation, connections, size, form, configuration, structure, growth



and office; that he should know, what changes, they undergo through disease, both as to their structure and function; that he should have a clear understanding of all the diseases to which each, and all the tissues are liable, their nature, &c. the peculiar signs, by which each is known; — and, what is still more important, how to prevent, alleviate and cure; — And that he should ~~be~~ have an accurate knowledge of all the therapeutical agents; is directly his duty; — the sine qua non of his occu-

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pation, And surely is there  
not enough in the strict pale  
of the profession even, to en-  
gage the attention of the might-  
iest intellect? enough to task  
the loftiest powers of thought?  
Must it not to the greatest Genius  
constitute a magnum opus

And is it possible for any man  
to become learned in medicine  
and skillful in its practice  
without devoting to it many  
years of earnest labor?

And can such knowledge be ac-  
quired in the short time, that is  
usually spent in a medical insti-  
tution? most certainly not.

For there is no medical institution, that  
sends forth her graduates, full fledged

Physicians, Now indeed can a young man, fresh from the walls of a college, expect to conversant with disease, when he has only read of it, or heard it lectured on.

Let not, therefore, the student, (for such I shall still call him) as he goes forth into the world, arrogantly suppose that disease will yield to him as darkness doth to light; or that the diploma, which he bears will impart to him a talismanic influence over disease; but rather let him consider himself, but fully prepared for his great work.

To be properly fitted to practice medicine he must have also physical qualifications, that is the organs of his senses



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Must not only be naturally  
perfect, but trained and edu-  
cated to his purposes,  
particularly a firm, skillful  
yet delicately sensitive  
hand, a quick and searching  
eye, and an attentive ear are  
most essential points in a  
physician, and their im-  
portance cannot be too ful-  
ly impressed, for in the ex-  
amination of a patient,  
his treatment will, in a  
great measure, depend on  
the evidence of his senses.  
But it is not alone sufficient  
that he possess professional  
knowledge and professional  
skill; but his heart also

must be educated and  
endued with the highest  
morality, else he cannot  
be fully fitted for his  
high and responsible calling