

or death is in his hands. He may be out of the reach of all additional assistance, or the danger may be so urgent that the time in his hands may be counted by seconds. A decision as to his line of practice must be come to on the spot. There is no time for consulting others, no opportunity for referring to books; and now if he be found wanting, how terrible is the result? Losses of almost every other kind may be made good, mistakes as to any other subject may be rectified; but the vital spark once fled,—no sacrifice, no effort, can restore it.

You will often hear it remarked of a timid or of an indolent physician or surgeon that, if he can do no good, he will at least do no harm; but a moment's reflection will show the utter fallacy of such a conclusion; for a doctor's sins of omission are quite as fatal as his sins of commission; and he who stands impotently by, or runs affrighted away, when a fellow-creature's life is in mortal peril and might be saved by prompt and skilful interference, is no more free from blood-guiltiness, than he who slays his victim by ignorant presumption or reckless officiousness.

To fit yourselves for the proper discharge of your responsible duties you must continue to be diligent students. Medicine is essentially a progressive science. The improvements of one year are constantly being superseded by discoveries in the next, and your duty to your patients requires you to furnish yourselves with every available means of resisting disease and death.

Gentlemen, the life which you have chosen is no mere pastime. You need not expect to dream away your time on beds of roses. Your life must be one of labour, for in every part of your career you will meet with difficulties to be surmounted, trials to be endured, and arduous duties to be performed.

In the earlier years of your practice, however qualified you may be, most of you will have to contend against neglect, distrust and prejudice ere you can convince the public that you deserve their confidence; and it will require all your fortitude to reconcile you to the slow process by which you are to win professional success, while your youthful ardour prompts you to carry the citadel of public confidence by storm.

You will also have to contend against what seem to be the prevailing weaknesses, if not the vices, of this age. I allude to scepticism and credulity. You will be jostled in your work by quacks and charlatans. You will find men writing books and delivering lectures to prove that all the science of medicine,—that is of regular medicine,—is mere guess-work or worse, and that all the labours of all the physicians since the earliest times have taught us absolutely nothing. These writers and