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by BENJAMIN RUSH, M.D.

PHILADELPHIA

INTRODUCTION

JOHN MORGAN, professor of the theory and practice of medicine in the College of Philadelphia since 1765, died suddenly in Philadelphia on October 15, 1789. A week later Benjamin Rush was elected to succeed him; and on November 2, opening his course of lectures, Rush read a eulogy of his former teacher, colleague, and friend before the trustees and medical students of the College.

This account has long served as one of the principal sources of information about Morgan's early career. It has, however, obvious errors and limitations. Rush misremembered things: some dates are wrong and the words he said Morgagni wrote in presentation copies of books to Morgan were very probably imagined to confirm and conform to the story of the latter's visit to the Italian pathologist whose details had rearranged themselves in Rush's mind. Far more significant than errors of fact were the speaker's careful omissions. None of the reflections on the inconstancy of fame and power which Rush confided to his private diary appeared in his public discourse. He offered no explanation for a career which seemed to have realized so little of its promise; in fact, he did not even hint at the tragedy he sensed in Morgan's end. Nor did Rush mention the frustrations and bitterness of Morgan's term as director-general of the Hospital in the Continental Army which so deeply scarred both the army medical service and the profession generally. Instead he presented his audience with the picture of the ardent and hopeful young man in whose academic triumphs and in whose dreams for medical education

in America all Philadelphia had taken pride a quarter of a century before.

But if Rush related only a part of the story of Morgan's career, he presented the whole of its significance. On that Rush's judgment was informed and his verdict complete and unequivocal: it was that the name of John Morgan is indissolubly associated with the inauguration of formal medical instruction in North America and with the founding of the School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania.

Rush's account was first printed in the AMERICAN MUSEUM, VI (1789), 353-55, and it was reprinted without note or comment in the PHILADELPHIA JOURNAL OF THE MEDICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES, I (1820), 439-42. The present edition follows the AMERICAN MUSEUM, except that the titles of a few institutions have been capitalized and Rush's errors in dating and in the spelling of proper names have been silently corrected.

WHITFIELD J. BELL, JR.

Philadelphia, 1965

An Account of the late Dr. John Morgan, delivered before the trustees and students of medicine in the College of Philadelphia, on the 2nd of November, 1789, by Benjamin Rush, M.D.

GENTLEMEN,

IT WOULD be unpardonable to enter upon the duties of the chair of the late professor of the theory and practice of medicine, without paying a tribute of respect to his memory.

Dr. John Morgan, whose place I have been called upon to fill, was born in the city of Philadelphia. He discovered in early life a strong propensity for learning, and an uncommon application to books. He acquired the rudiments of his classical learning at the Rev. Dr. Finley's academy, in Nottingham, and finished his studies in this college under the present provost, and the late Rev. Dr. Alison. In both of these seminaries, he acquired the esteem and affection of his preceptors, by his singular diligence and proficiency in his studies. In the year 1757, he was admitted to the first literary honours that were conferred by the College of Philadelphia.

During the last years of his attendance upon the college, he began the study of physic under the direction of Dr. John Redman, of this city. His conduct, as an apprentice, was such as gained him the esteem and confidence of his master, and the affections of all his patients. After he had finished his studies under Dr. Redman, he entered into the service of his country, as a surgeon and lieutenant in the provincial troops of Pennsylvania, in the last war which Britain and America carried on against the French nation. As

a surgeon, in which capacity only, he acted in the army, he acquired both knowledge and reputation. He was respected by the officers, and beloved by the soldiers of the army; and so great were his diligence and humanity in attending the sick and wounded, who were the subjects of his care, that I well remember to have heard it said, "that if it were possible for any man to merit heaven by his good works, Dr. Morgan would deserve it for his faithful attendance upon his patients."

In the year 1760, he left the army, and sailed for Europe, with a view of prosecuting his studies in medicine.

He attended the lectures and dissections of the late celebrated Dr. William Hunter, and afterwards spent two years in attending the lectures of the professors in Edinburgh. Here, both the Monros, Cullen, Rutherford, Whytt, and Hope, were his masters, with each of whom he lived in the most familiar intercourse, and all of whom spoke of him with affection and respect. At the end of two years, he published an elaborate thesis upon the formation of pus, and after publicly defending it, was admitted to the honour of doctor of medicine in the university.

From Edinburgh, he went to Paris, where he spent a winter in attending the anatomical lectures and dissections of Mr. Sue. In this city, he injected a kidney in so curious and elegant a manner, that it procured his admission into the academy of surgery in Paris. While on the continent of Europe, he visited Holland and Italy. In both these countries he was introduced to the first medical and literary characters. He spent several hours in company with Voltaire at Ge-

neva, and he had the honour of a long conference with the celebrated Morgagni at Padua, when he was in the 80th year of his age. This venerable physician, who was the light and ornament of two or three successive generations of physicians, was so pleased with the doctor, that he claimed kindred with him, from the resemblance of their names, and on the blank leaf of a copy of his works, which he presented to him, he inscribed with his own hand the following words, "*Affini suo, medico praeclarissimo, Johanni Morgan, donat auctor.*" Upon the doctor's return to London, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was likewise admitted as a Licentiate of the College of Physicians in London, and a member of the College of Physicians in Edinburgh.

It was during his absence from home, that he concerted with Dr. Shippen, the plan of establishing a medical school in this city. He returned to Philadelphia, in the year 1765, loaded with literary honours, and was received with open arms by his fellow citizens. They felt an interest in him, for having advanced in every part of Europe the honour of the American name. Immediately after his arrival, he was elected professor of the theory and practice of medicine, and delivered, soon afterwards, at a public commencement, his plan for connecting a medical school with the college of this city. This discourse was composed with taste and judgment, and contained many of the true principles of liberal medical science.

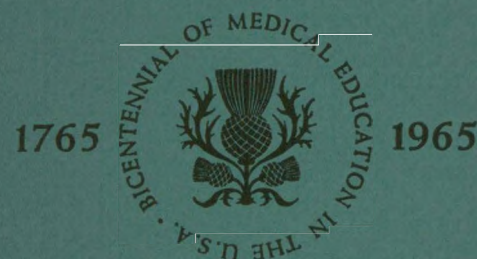
In the year 1768, he had the pleasure of seeing the first fruits of his labours for the advancement of medicine. Ten young gentlemen received in that year from the hands of the present provost,

the first honours in medicine that ever were conferred in America.

The historian, who shall hereafter relate the progress of medical science in America, will be deficient in candor and justice, if he does not connect the name of Dr. Morgan with that auspicious era in which medicine was first taught and studied as a science in this country. But the zeal of Dr. Morgan was not confined to the advancement of medical science alone. He had an active hand in the establishment of the American Philosophical Society, and he undertook, in the year 1772, a voyage to Jamaica on purpose to solicit benefactions for the advancement of general literature in the college.

He possessed an uncommon capacity for acquiring knowledge. His memory was extensive and accurate; he was intimately acquainted with the Latin and Greek classics. He had read much in medicine. In all his pursuits, he was persevering and indefatigable. He was capable of friendship, and in his intercourse with his patients, discovered the most amiable and exemplary tenderness. I never knew a person who had been attended by him, that did not speak of his sympathy and attention with gratitude and respect. Such was the man who once filled the chair of the theory and practice of medicine in our college. He is now no more.* His remains now sleep in the silent grave—but not so his virtuous actions. Every act of benevolence which he performed, every public-spirited enterprise which he planned, or executed, and every tear of sympathy which he shed, are faithfully recorded, and shall be preserved forever.

*He died October 15, 1789, in the 54th year of his age.



Produced for members of the American Association for the History of Medicine meeting at Philadelphia in the two hundredth anniversary year of the establishment, by John Morgan's election to the professorship of medicine on May 3, 1765, of the School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania.

