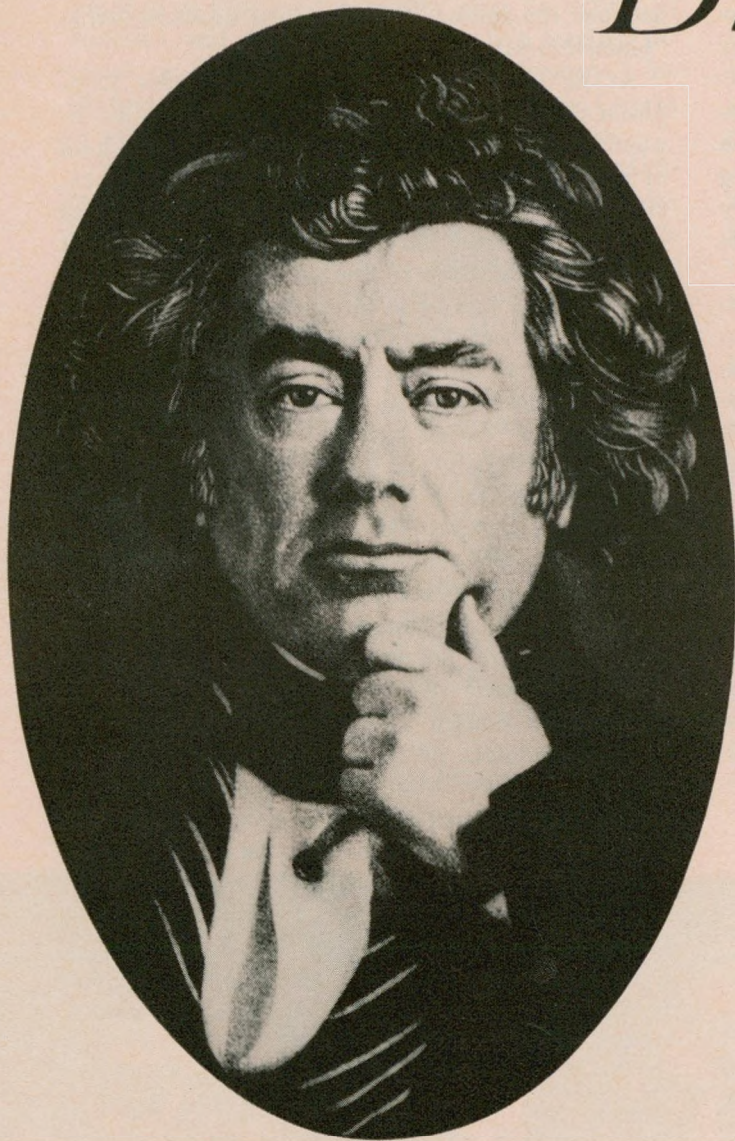


Dr. Robley Dunglison



Robley Dunglison

■ In the May, 1824, issue of the *Medical Repository* in London a Dr. Dunglison, describing himself as physician-accoucheur to the Eastern Dispensary, announced that he would commence a course of lectures on the Principles and Practice of Midwifery in the following October.

He never gave the lectures. Two days before they were to begin, Robley Dunglison signed an agreement "that he will proceed with as little delay as possible to the University of Virginia and will there teach to the best of his ability, and with due diligence, Anatomy, Surgery, the History of the Progress and Theories of Medicine, Physiology, Materia Medica and Pharmacy."

BEGINNING. Robley Dunglison was born at Keswick, in the lovely Lake District, on January 4, 1798, the son of a woolen manufacturer.

His father died at the early age of 35, leaving his wife to carry on the business. She was helped by her uncle Joseph Robley, who had become a rich planter in the West Indies and who left her a large sum of money at his death.

After private tutoring in Latin, Greek and English composition, young Dunglison was apprenticed at the age of 17 to John Edmondson, a noted surgeon in Keswick. When his time was completed he went to London as assistant to a Mr. Haden, an obstetrician.

He obtained the necessary qualifications from the Royal College of Surgeons and the Society of Apothecaries and began his medical practice at 21. Owing to certain regulations, he was unable to obtain his M.D. from Edinburgh. He studied for a time in Paris, finally obtained his degree from the University of Erlangen in 1824,

making neuralgia the subject of his doctoral thesis. During this period he anonymously edited the *Medical Intelligencer* during the editor's illness, was joint editor of the *Medical Repository*. He also published a monograph on "Stomach and Bowel Complaints of Children."

Thomas Jefferson had at that time sent a representative abroad to seek out young men of promise like Dunglison, since he was in no position to draw men of established reputation away from the older American institutions of learning. As Dunglison noted in his memoirs, he had excellent prospects in London, but he accepted the post at Virginia because the annual salary of \$1500 (plus tuition fees ranging from \$25 to \$50 per student) enabled him to marry his fiancée, Harriette Leadam, without further delay.

AMERICA. Almost half a year elapsed before Dunglison arrived with his bride in Charlottesville, Virginia, to take up his post as the first full-time professor of medicine in an American university. Impatiently awaiting their arrival was 82-year-old Jefferson, who had created the University of Virginia as the brainchild of his later years. For two months Jefferson had delayed the formal opening of the new institution while the ship bearing the Dunglisons and other English appointees to the faculty floundered in a harrowing winter voyage across the Atlantic.

When the University of Virginia opened, some criticism arose because the entire faculty consisted of foreigners. *The Philadelphia Journal of the Medi-*

cal and Physical Sciences, edited by Dr. N. Chapman, called upon American medical societies to protest against Dunglison's appointment as an act of injustice to American physicians. But the appeal went unheeded, and a few months later Yale College awarded the newcomer the honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine. Dunglison first learned of the distinction conferred on him through a newspaper account; the diploma finally arrived, misaddressed to "Hampden Sidney College."

At the first meeting of the Virginia faculty, Dunglison proposed elimination of the rule that no diploma should be awarded to a student in any school of the university who had not shown through examination a high proficiency in Latin. Well-versed in Latin and Greek himself, Dunglison objected that it was not practicable to impose on medical students a requirement lacking in other medical schools. The faculty approved Dunglison's recommendation and submitted it to the university's governing Board of Visitors, which adopted it with a single dissenting voice, that of Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson had planned the medical curriculum as a primarily theoretic discipline to interest medical and nonmedical students alike, expecting that medical students would go elsewhere for clinical experience. Dunglison urged that the medical school be given a more professional orientation by erecting a separate anatomy theatre. Jefferson assented and gave Dunglison full control over the interior arrangement, but reserved for himself the exterior design. Jefferson was the architect of the entire university, and as faculty wives discovered to their dismay, had omitted closets from the pavilions occupied by the faculty because they interfered with the balance of his beloved classic orders.

At Dunglison's initiative the university also established an outpatient teaching clinic, usually held in the anatomy theatre, where the professor remained for half an hour after his lectures three days a week to treat applicants.

The Board of Visitors established the following clinic rules: "All poor, free persons, disordered in body, topically or generally, applying for advice, shall receive it gratis; all others, bond or free, shall receive it on payment of half a dollar at each attendance, for the use of the institution, and all persons shall be vaccinated gratis, and the students particularly shall be encouraged to do so, as a protection to the institution against the malady of the small pox.

"The students of the medical school shall be permitted to attend with the Professor, to examine the patients by the pulse, and other indications of disease, to ask of them such questions as the Professor shall think pertinent, and shall permit, and to acquire practical knowledge of the processes of Pharmacy by taking a part in the preparation of medicines."

While preoccupied with the development of the medical curriculum, Dunglison found time to indulge his far-ranging intellectual interests, of which he had first given evidence in an article on the "Floating Island of Derwentwater," published by the *London Monthly Magazine* in 1817. He became a contributor to the *American Quarterly Review*, founded in Philadelphia shortly after his arrival in America, and sent as his first article a lengthy account on "The Gastronomy of the Romans," including notes on the customs of the ancient Greeks as well as his own forerunners in the British Isles.

The University of Virginia faculty decided to publish a weekly periodical embracing all the important branches of learning or science, and chose Dunglison as a coeditor. So few contributions were received for the new weekly, known as the *Virginia Literary Museum and Journal of Belles-Lettres, Arts, and Sciences*, that at the end of the first year the two editors, exhausted by the necessity of writing most of the contents themselves, were unable to continue, and the publication was suspended. During that year Dunglison alone had filled several hundred pages with a large variety of articles, many of them exhaustive in treatment, including the following: Fashions in Dress in England at the Commencement of the Seventeenth Century; Onomatopoeia; Modern Improved System of Road-making; Certain Ceremonies connected with the Dead; Blondel and Richard Lion-Heart; Superstition; Americanisms; Sanscrit Language; Jeffersoniana.

To encourage the disciplined pursuit of intellectu-

al interests, Dunglison submitted a proposal for awarding a higher degree for advanced studies in ancient languages, mathematics, physical science and moral philosophy. After adding a requirement for proficiency in modern languages, the university adopted the plan for studies leading to the degree of Master of Arts.

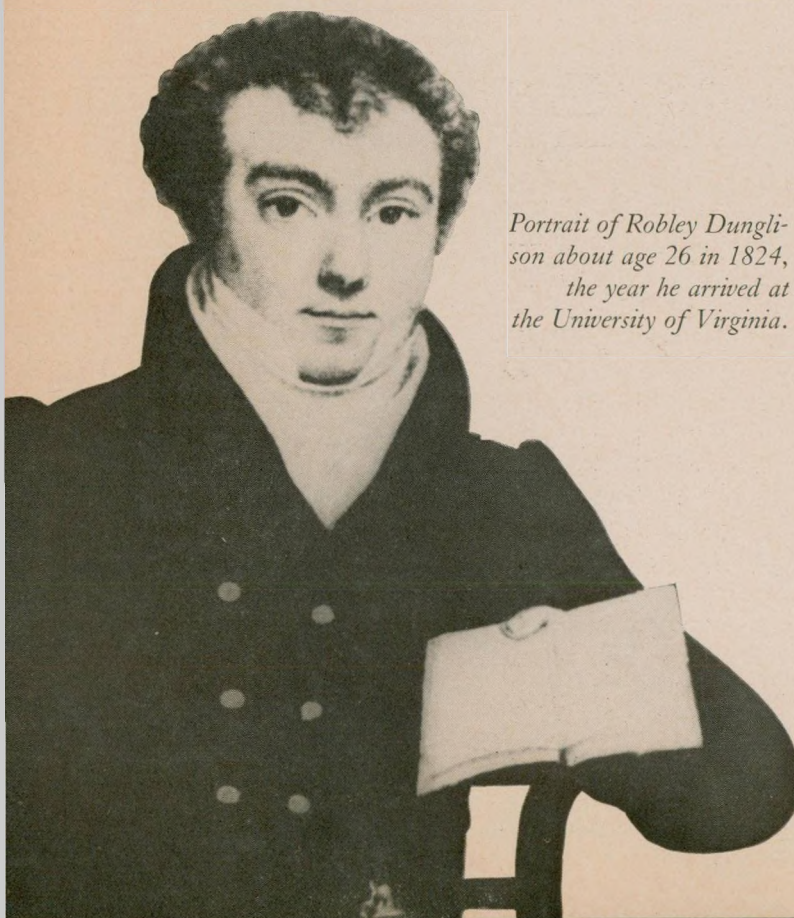
Considered one of the great advantages of the University of Virginia medical school was that during the first year the student was not overburdened with lectures, had plenty of time to study various subjects.*

A novel feature of Dunglison's contract with the university, unheard of at the time in America, was the restriction of his practice outside the university to consultation, a means of assuring maximum attention to the needs of the medical students.

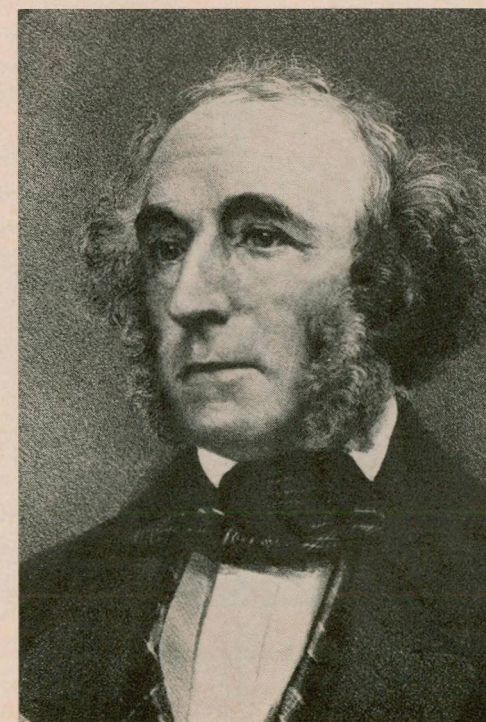
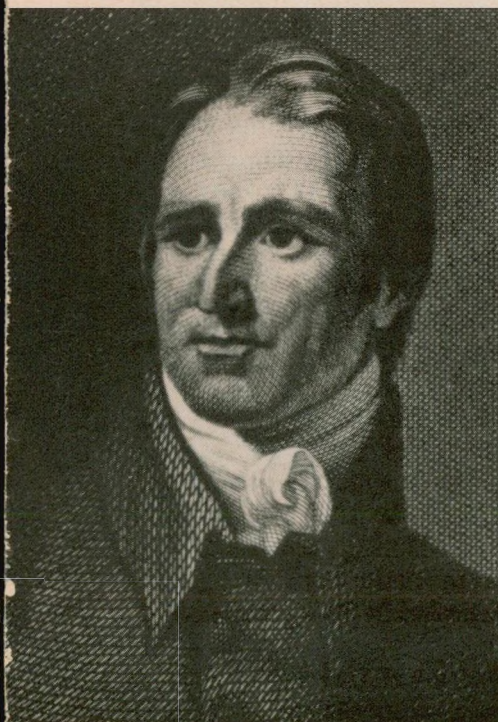
Soon after his arrival Jefferson consulted him on a severe inflammation of the prostate gland, and in the course of two weeks Dunglison paid eight professional visits to the ailing ex-president. When Jefferson's intimate friend and former private secretary, William Short, wrote to him urging consultation with Dr. Physick† in Philadelphia, Jefferson replied that he had his Dr. Physick near him in whom he fully trusted. Jefferson found fault with Dunglison only because of his failure to submit a bill, which he

*In October, 1966, a special faculty committee on revision of the Harvard Medical School curriculum proposed that students be given more time to read, discuss, think "in the atmosphere of a graduate school, rather than a trade school."

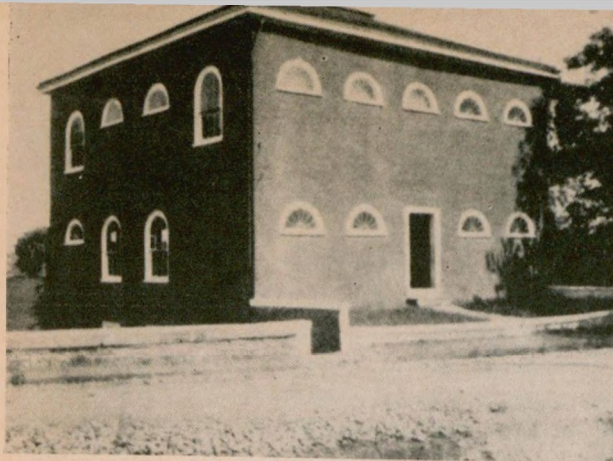
†Philip Syng Physick (1768-1837), sometimes called the father of American surgery.



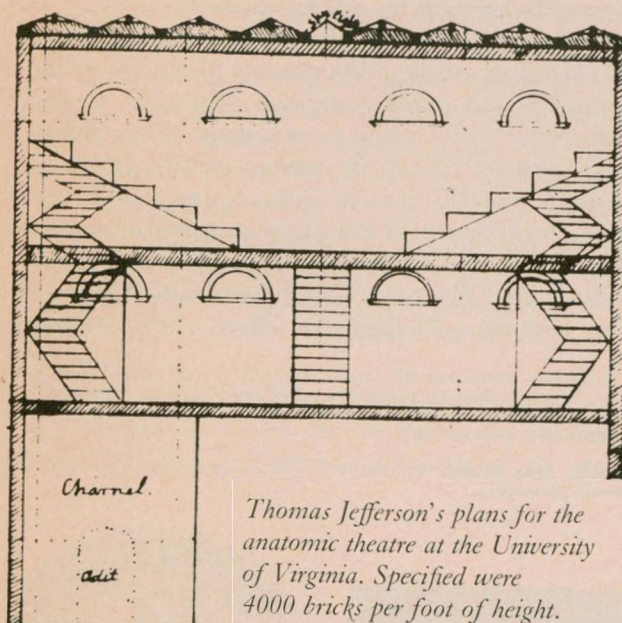
Portrait of Robley Dunglison about age 26 in 1824, the year he arrived at the University of Virginia.



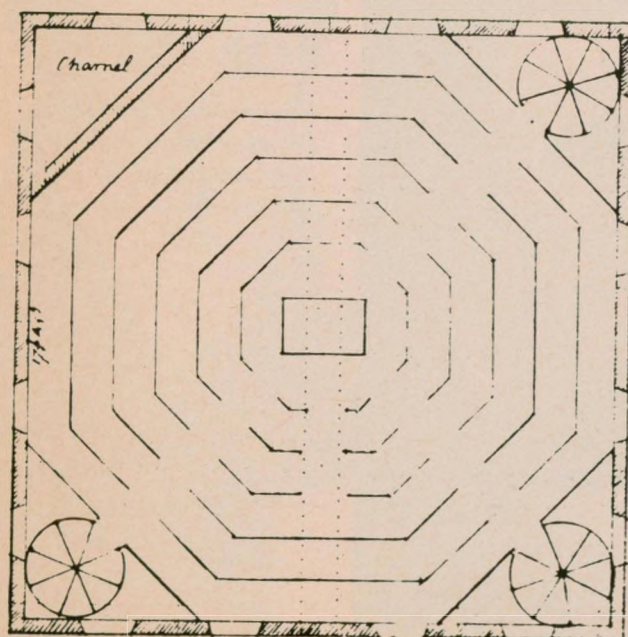
Rival medical educators in Philadelphia were Nathaniel Chapman, far left, and Granville Sharp Pattison.



Old Medical Building at the University of Virginia where
Dunglison taught. When the university opened, it
was criticized because the entire faculty was foreign-born.



Thomas Jefferson's plans for the
anatomic theatre at the University
of Virginia. Specified were
4000 bricks per foot of height.



declined to do because he was aware of Jefferson's straitened circumstances.

On a visit to Monticello just before returning to France in the summer of 1825, Lafayette became much concerned about Jefferson's deteriorating condition, consulted Dunglison several times, and undertook to send certain medical preparations from Paris. A package containing 100 elastic gum catheters arrived about a year later, but Jefferson was already dead.

During the last week of Jefferson's life Dunglison remained continuously in attendance at Monticello, heard one of his last remarks, on the evening of July 3, 1826. He asked the doctor: "Is it the 4th?" Dunglison replied that it would soon be. During the following day, with Dunglison at his bedside, Jefferson died on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Besides attending Jefferson, Dunglison also treated former ex-president James Madison (he suffered from rheumatism in his late years), and on a trip to Washington he was asked to visit President Andrew Jackson in consultation with his attending physician, Dr. Thomas. Dunglison found the battle-scarred warrior suffering greatly from pleurodynia, which he attributed to numerous wounds; he counseled against the general's usual remedy, the letting of quart of blood, on the ground that it was injudicious for a man of 70, and with the concurrence of Dr. Thomas he applied a warm plaster containing cantharides, which Jackson credited with affording him considerable relief.

Through Jackson's private secretary, Nicholas P. Trist, Dunglison was invited to participate in experiments in the physiology of digestion conducted on Alexis San Martin, a Canadian with a fistulous opening in the stomach, by the United States Army physician, William Beaumont. Dunglison withheld for two years any reference in print to his participation in order to assure priority to Beaumont's publication, but Beaumont failed to acknowledge Dunglison's contribution in this famous case.

Toward the end of the nine years he spent at the University of Virginia, Dunglison completed the first of the medical treatises which, with his lecture courses, constituted the core of his lifework. In 1832 appeared the first edition of his two-volume *Human Physiology*, dedicated to Madison, who had succeeded Jefferson as rector of the university. The work quickly won wide acceptance as a textbook and earned for Dunglison the title of "Father of American Physiology." During the succeeding quarter century he was to see the work through seven more editions, each revised in the light of advancing medical science.

In 1833 he published his second major work, a medical dictionary designed by the author to be so

complete in its inclusion of French equivalents for medical terms in English that students reading a French medical author would have no need to consult a dictionary; German medical terms were also included. Friends and students soon began to refer to Dunglison as "the walking dictionary." To the author's astonishment, some objections were heard that the work was "too learned," and at the suggestion of his publisher he omitted the German medical terms in preparing a compact version for later editions.

In 1833 Dunglison left the University of Virginia for a chair at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, where he remained for three years. During his stay there he completed another major work, *General Therapeutics*, but was disappointed in his efforts to build up Baltimore as a rival to the greatest center of medical education in the United States at that time, Philadelphia.

He pointedly summed up his dissatisfaction with his situation in Baltimore in his memoirs: "My residence in Baltimore, so far as regards social intercourse, was very pleasant to me. I found, however, that few of my medical brethren went much into society, and that the medical profession did not take the same elevated position as in Philadelphia. Few of them were men of letters, and almost all were occupied with their dignified calling more as a means of sustenance than as a noble calling. They pre-

ferred, in other words, the trade to the science, on which Sir Benjamin Brodie* has made the pointed remark that medicine is a noble science, but a low trade, a remark that coincides closely with the views I have always taken of the subject."

In 1836 he accepted a post specially created for him, the Chair of Institutes of Medicine and Medical Jurisprudence in Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia. At that time a fierce rivalry existed between the college and other medical schools, especially the medical department of the older University of Pennsylvania, whose faculty regarded the newer school as an upstart institution to be treated with contempt. The conflict had even led to open hostilities, resulting in a duel between the chairman of the Jefferson faculty, G. Sharp Pattison, and General Cadwallader, brother-in-law of Pattison's chief rival at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. N. Chapman.

By dint of energetic promotion Dr. Pattison had raised the enrollment at Jefferson to 364 in the class of 1835-36. In the official announcement of the school for that year he trumpeted its merits, asserting that it was not only unsurpassed but not to be surpassed. Both in a Baltimore newspaper and in the *North American Archives of Medicine* Dunglison had criticized the boastful assertion as unprofessional and improper.

*Early 19th-century London surgeon who made as much as \$50,000 yearly in \$5 fees.



The University of Virginia, engraving by Benjamin Tanner, 1826. Wholly planned by Thomas Jefferson, who oversaw every detail of its construction, the university is said to have been the most liberal institution of learning in the world at the time; curriculum was elective, faculty were all equal, students were bound by honor in tests and discipline.

When Dunglison took up his new duties in Philadelphia he found himself, as the seventh member of the Jefferson faculty, in the middle of an internal conflict generated by Dr. Pattison's policy of waging open warfare with the University of Pennsylvania. For several trying years, during which the enrollment at Jefferson fell by more than one-half as a result of the internal disruption, Dunglison steadfastly stood forth as the leading advocate of restraint and conciliation among colleagues; the crisis was resolved in 1841 by the withdrawal of Pattison and his supporters, after which the enrollment of the entering class rose steadily each year until it passed 500, largely because of the popularity of Dunglison as a teacher.

While engaged in the struggle to stabilize the situation in the medical school, he again became active in medical journalism as editor of *The American Medical Intelligencer*, the first number of which appeared in April, 1837.*

During the first year he provided readers for the sum of \$10 more than three thousand pages of closely printed matter, consisting of new articles and reprints, including a 150-page treatise translated from the French entirely by the editor, *Medical Clinics of the Hospital Necker, or Researches and Observations on the Nature, Treatment and Physical Causes of Diseases*, by I. Bricheteau.†

At the same time the editor waged a relentless and vitriolic battle against quackery: "Since we commenced exposing the homicidal tricks of these impu-

*Its direct descendant was the *International Record of Medicine*, published until 1961 by MD Publications, Inc., and edited by Dr. Félix Martí-Ibáñez.

†Isidore Bricheteau (1789-1862), associate of Philippe Pinel.

dent and ignorant scamps, who had the audacity to pretend to cure all diseases with one kind of pills, which pills were composed of nothing more or less than gamboge and aloes, several of the rotgut rascals have been convicted of manslaughter and fined or imprisoned for killing people with enormous doses of their Universal Vegetable Boluses.*

At a citizen's meeting held in Philadelphia in 1838 Dunglison agreed to participate in drafting *An Appeal to the People of Pennsylvania on the subject of an Asylum for the Insane Poor of the Commonwealth*. He contributed a statistical survey on the incidence of mental illness, data on the comparative curability of new and chronic cases, a description of public asylums in the United States and an account of improvement in the treatment of the insane in modern times. The state legislature approved the proposal for a mental hospital, but delayed provision of funds; the state asylum at Harrisburg finally opened in 1851.

As an attending physician at the Philadelphia Hospital, Dunglison warned against the harmful consequences of failure to separate acute from mild cases in the ward for the insane. In a letter to the Board of Guardians he further observed: "According to existing practice of the establishment, persons of sound mind, who may have been guilty of offences in the Almshouse are actually sent to the insane wards for punishment; and, in order to give vent to their rage and mortification, and to excite still farther annoyance, they at times, occasion so much noise and disturbance throughout the night as

*At the trial a cheesemonger testified that in two years he had taken 18,000 pills sold by a quack named Morison.

to endanger or undo what the physicians of the asylum have accomplished by days and weeks of anxious and philanthropic exertion." His appeal resulted in the first classification of mental patients in the hospital.

Another of his innovations at the hospital was to substitute an eclectic treatment for the prevailing practice of administering only alcohol in the treatment of delirium tremens; his disclosure of the amount of alcohol consumed in the hospital in treating patients astounded the Board of Guardians, and the hospital records show that under his direction not a drop of alcohol was used in cases of delirium tremens for six months.

In response to numerous appeals for his opinions on the best way to prepare for a career in medicine, Dunglison published in 1837 *The Medical Student*, the first book of its kind to appear in the United States. The work contained a glossary of medical prefixes, suffixes and terms, guidance on prescription writing, a discussion of methods of clinical training, a critical bibliography of available textbooks and an account of the 23 existing medical schools in the United States, with notes on their histories, current curriculums staffs, as well as a critical evaluation of each school.

A companion to *The Medical Student* was *The Practice of Medicine*, a guide for the general practitioner which won favorable notice in Great Britain as well as in the United States. A colleague, the brilliant surgeon, Professor Samuel David Gross, pronounced it the best and most finished of Dunglison's works after *Human Physiology*.

Wrote Gross: "From the immense amount of la-

bor, both intellectual and physical, which he has accomplished, one would suppose that the Professor was a thin, emaciated Smikelike* personage, or, still worse, prematurely old, and grey-headed, with a body bent like that of poor Scarron in the form of a Z.† Not so, however. He is really a fine-looking man, whose whole exterior is indicative of the most vigorous health, whose embonpoint would do honor to an alderman, or even 'my lord mayor'; who has none of that irritability which so much worries and frets the poet, especially those in high places—the garret and the attic, and whose social qualities are as rare as they are delightful. Notwithstanding his immense labor as an author, he possesses a sort of ubiquity truly remarkable. Go where you will in Philadelphia, you find the Professor. Does a stranger of distinction visit the city, he is the first to call upon him. In the morning he is at the Blockley Hospital or in attendance on his private patients; in the afternoon he saunters forth in pursuit of health or recreation; in the evening he is at a party, or perhaps at the rooms of the American Philosophical Society of which he is the corresponding Secretary, and one of the most useful and active members. But when, asks the reader, does the Professor find time to compose his works? Not certainly in the morning, nor in the afternoon, nor yet early in the evening; no, these hours are all occupied in other pursuits; it is late at night, at midnight if you please, when other men are wrapt in sleep, and dreaming, not of what they have done, but what they intend to do, that he produces those works,

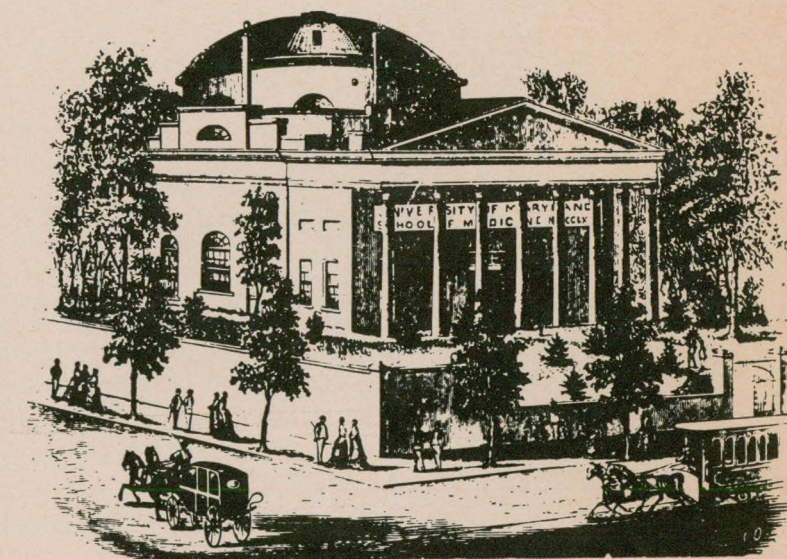
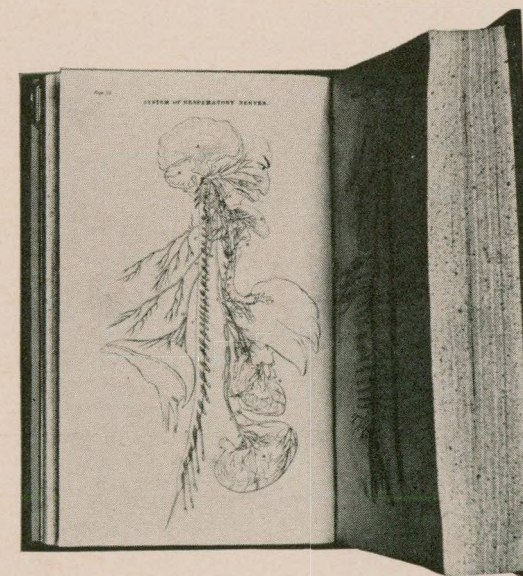
*Smike was a broken-spirited character in Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*.

†The French writer Paul Scarron (1610-60), contorted by rheumatism.

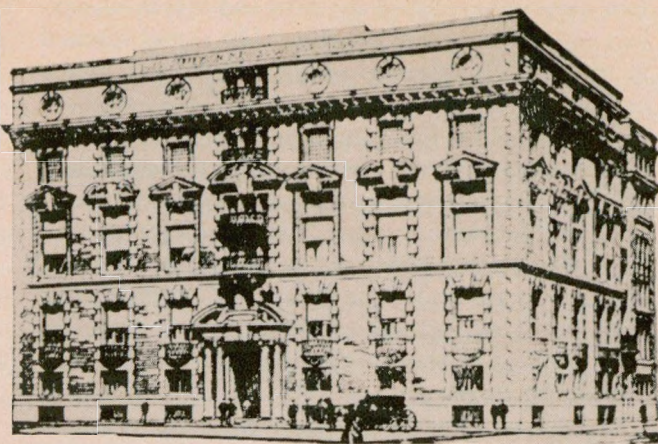
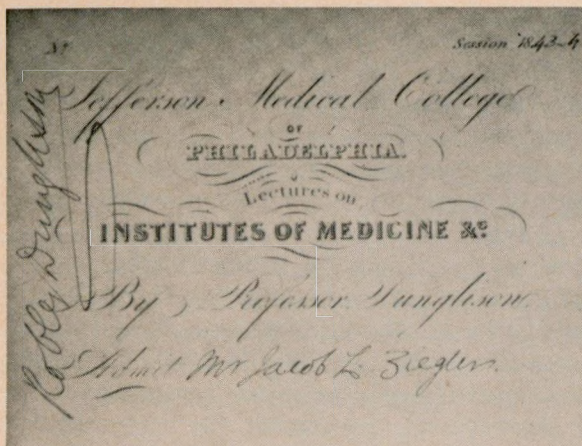
Dear Doctor
Monticello July 2. 25
I find myself now as well as I have been for several months, or so I probably shall be for months to come. The remains of my complaint will wear off slowly. all this is from your kind attentions, to which you have skill to add that of informing me what compensation I shall make you, in which I pray you to do justice to yourself, which thing may ease with my self and will be the greatest favor to
Yours with affection & respect
Th. J.

Above, a letter from Thomas Jefferson to Dr. Dunglison asking for a bill for medical services rendered to him; right, the physician's reply declining payment. "... The only compensation which I shall accept of, is that which has already afforded me the greatest satisfaction—the being able in any respect to add to the comforts of one whose existence is so valuable..." Both letters are dated July 2, 1825, the year before Jefferson's death.

Dear Sir,
I know not how to express the gratification which I feel, at the recollection of your benevolent offer, in the form with which I hope the favorable proposition is which you have made me so kind. With regard to the subject of compensation for any further attention which I may have been able to pay you—I beg that I may be allowed to fix my own terms, as to declare how freely I respectfully, that the only compensation which I shall accept of, is that which has already afforded me the greatest satisfaction—the being able in any respect to add to the comforts of one whose existence is so valuable to all. It perhaps is much as to the pleasure of this institution as to say, — and may be permitted in future whenever I may consider it necessary to afford the same attention.
Believe me, Dear Sir,
with the greatest respect, sincerely yours,
Robt. Dunglison.



"System of Respiratory Nerves," left, a diagram from Dunglison's *Human Physiology* which first appeared in 1832, dedicated to James Madison who succeeded Jefferson as president of the United States and as rector of the University of Virginia. At right, the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore where Dunglison held a chair from 1833-36.



Student admittance card, left, signed by Dunglison to his lectures at Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, right.

which have made his name so honorably known in America and Europe, and so closely identified it with history of medical science and literature in the nineteenth century."

In an engaging reply to the notice by Dr. Gross, Dunglison denied that he burned the midnight oil, attributed his capacity for voluminous writing to "the systematic employment of those fragments of time, which are usually thrown away." He was said to have been able to dash off ten to fifteen pages of printed matter in a morning; from his own meticulously kept records it has been estimated that during his lifetime about 150,000 volumes of his medical works were issued, for which he received about \$135,000.

As deeply satisfying to Dunglison as his career was his family life with his wife, two daughters and five sons, all of whom survived except one son who died in infancy. His home at the University of Virginia had been distinguished for its gracious cultured atmosphere, and he had been a welcome guest at the homes of Jefferson and Madison. In the later years at Philadelphia Dunglison formed the Club of Five with four other colleagues, who took turns in acting as host for an evening of intellectual discourse refreshed with oysters, hock and champagne.

Dunglison had long cherished a plan to revisit his aged mother in Keswick with his wife, but before it could be realized his wife died in 1853 of a heart attack, a heavy blow to him which he dwelt on at great length in the detailed account of her illness in his memoirs. During the summer of 1854 he made the trip to his birthplace alone and also revisited Edinburgh where he had been a medical student nearly 40 years earlier. He planned to return to America early in September for the beginning of the academic year, but the death of his 76-year-old mother during his visit providentially forced him to

cancel his passage on the *Arctic*, which was rammed by a steamer and sank with heavy loss of life.

A source of particular satisfaction to him after his return to Philadelphia was the enrollment in Jefferson Medical College of two sons, Richard and Thomas, both of whom graduated and became practicing physicians. While a student at Jefferson, Richard assisted his father in his administrative duties as dean of the faculty.

In his 70th year Dunglison offered his resignation but his colleagues persuaded him to stay on. He suffered increasingly from gout as well as from a cardiac ailment, but he struggled manfully to complete his course during the winter of 1867-68, delivering his last lecture on the subject of death. He then tendered his resignation once more, and it was regretfully accepted. After months of suffering he died on April 1, 1869.

He left a library of more than 4000 volumes which passed into the hands of his son Richard. Posthumously published was a two-volume history of medicine, edited by Richard, consisting of the lectures on the subject given at the University of Virginia. Instead of publishing a separate history of medicine, Robley Dunglison had enriched many of his medical treatises with a wealth of history.

During his lifetime he had received numerous awards and distinctions including the LL. D. degree from Jefferson Medical College, but in his memoirs he confessed to one disappointment: the empiric approach to medicine in America meant that the more he was esteemed for scholarship and zeal in scientific medicine, the less he was regarded as a "practical" man of medicine. He considered this unjust, for his ideal was the integration of culture, historical background, scientific theory and medical practice.

SUMMING UP. In the words of his colleague Dr. Gross: "The harmony and symmetry of his mind were perfect."

