

A

# HISTORY

OF THE

## Jefferson Medical College

OF PHILADELPHIA.

BY

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WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE EARLY PROFESSORS.

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ILLUSTRATED WITH PORTRAITS AND ENGRAVINGS.

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PHILADELPHIA:

JOSEPH M. WILSON,

No. 111 SOUTH TENTH STREET, BELOW CHESTNUT.

1858.

# BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

## JACOB GREEN, M.D.

BY HIS FATHER, ASHBEL GREEN, D.D., LL.D.\*

JACOB GREEN was born in Philadelphia, on the 26th of July, 1790. In the second month of his infancy the natural smallpox broke out upon him, and deprived him, through life, of the full vision of his right eye. He never could make any use of it in reading, although its outward appearance was in all respects like that of the other; yet on a narrow inspection a very fine elastic film was perceived, at the lower part of the pupil, to extend over about two-thirds of the whole. He could discern a gross object when held at some distance above the diseased organ. It may seem strange, yet such was the fact, that the existence of the obstructed vision of this eye was not known, either by himself or by any of his family, until accident revealed it, when he was about eight years of age and had learned to read fluently.

His grammar-school education, and the college course, were both passed in the city of his nativity, and, contrary to what usually happens, his elementary knowledge of the Greek was more accurate than that of the Latin language. He received the second honour of his class in the University of Pennsylvania, and delivered the valedictory oration at the time of his graduation, shortly after he had entered his seventeenth year.

His love of natural science seemed to be instinctive. It first manifested itself in botany, in which his collection of plants and specimens, at a very early age, filled a rather large *hortus siccus*. But his passion—for it was nothing less in him—soon extended to all the objects and subjects of his favourite department of knowledge,—to electricity and galvanism, to chemistry, to mineralogy, conchology, zoology in general, and to the collection of curiosities of every description.

In his sixteenth year he made an electric machine, by which he verified most of the experiments of Dr. Franklin; and, shortly after his graduation, he, in concert with a young friend, published a work on electricity, to which was appended a short account of the discovery of galvanism, with the state of that science at the time of publication. This work was recommended by Dr. John McDowell, Provost and

Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania; by Dr. John Maclean, Professor of Natural Philosophy and Chemistry in the College of New Jersey; and by Dr. Jeremiah Day, then Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy, and afterwards President, of Yale College.

To gratify his youthful enthusiasm for natural science and the collection of curiosities, a room in the upper story of the house occupied by his father was assigned him as the depository of his articles, which he called his *museum*, and in which the young naturalist passed much of his leisure time. He was in it when a thunder-storm of unusual violence visited Philadelphia. The rain fell in torrents, and the thunder and lightning were terrific. The house was struck by lightning; and though he escaped instant death, still, the electric atmosphere caused a suspension of all consciousness in both him and a servant who was with him at the time, and who was exposed to it, which lasted from ten to fifteen minutes. The servant, who had been less exposed, first recovered, and by his cries roused his companion in disaster.

When the stream of electricity in this stroke of lightning had, in its descent, reached the bell-wires of the house, it was divided and scattered in various directions. The memorialist himself, who was in his study, with a quarto volume in his hands, received a shock, which produced suspended consciousness for about a minute, caused a temporary lameness in one of his legs, and threw from him the book he had been perusing. A play-fellow of his youngest son, who happened to be in the house, also received a smart shock in his leg. But all who had been exposed eventually escaped, without sustaining any lasting injury,—a mercy which demanded and received in the family a grateful and devout acknowledgment of the goodness and protecting care of Almighty God.

About the time at which Mr. Green was preparing for the press his publication on electricity and galvanism, he made a secret agreement with a young physician in Philadelphia to study Medicine and Surgery under his direction. After making considerable progress in this new pursuit, his instructor took him, as an attendant and assistant, to the performance of a most disgusting surgical operation; and it at once determined his pupil to abandon forever all thoughts of becoming a physician and surgeon. His

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\* We feel under obligations to our friend Wm. L. Mactier, Esq., who has placed at our disposal the original MS. of this biography, and which is now presented for the first time to the public.

instructor afterwards informed the memorialist that the effect produced on his son was *intended*, from a belief that it would rather gratify than disoblige his parents.

His next youthful project was to become a bookseller, which at that time was, in many instances, a highly-profitable occupation. With the consent of his father, he entered into an agreement and partnership with Wm. P. Farrand, then largely and prosperously engaged in the bookselling business. A bookstore was accordingly opened in Albany, New York, under the immediate and sole direction of the younger partner. This continued for seven years, when the unsuccessful storekeeper and proprietor returned to his father's house.

The ardour of youth, and a reluctance to be idle, urged Mr. Green to the abortive experiment which has just been stated. But, indeed, it would have been difficult to find, among persons of any intelligence, an individual less qualified than he was, either in disposition or habits, for the management of mercantile transactions of whatever kind. He left his business chiefly to his clerk, and was often seen by his friends intently engaged in reading books when he ought to have been employed in selling them. He also studied law, and received a formal license to plead in the courts of the State of New York, during this period.

While at Albany, moreover, he was elected a member of a literary club, which published a weekly paper entitled "The Stranger." To this work he was a principal contributor, as well as one of its editors. At this time also he was elected a member of *The Society for the Promotion of the Useful Arts in the State of New York*, and was afterwards chosen one of its counsellors. To this society he contributed several papers, which appear in the society's transactions, among which is the public address which he delivered on the "Botany of the United States," with an extensive "Catalogue of Plants Indigenous to the State of New York."

But, although he lost money, he did not lose, but gained, reputation, during his residence in Albany. His intimacies and associations were altogether with individuals and families of the best class and character. With James Stephenson, Esq., who afterwards became mayor of the city of Albany, he contracted an endeared friendship, which was as lasting as life. To him he dedicated the beautiful publication in quarto entitled "Astronomical Recreations." Chancellor Kent and Dr. Beck he also numbered among his particular friends; and he was a welcome and frequent visitor in the family of the Hon. Stephen Van Rensselaer, familiarly known by the appellation of *the Patroon*. It was a little before he left Albany that the death of his eldest brother, to whom he was greatly attached, most deeply affected his mind, and, under the guidance and blessing, it is believed, of the Spirit of all grace, gave it that serious and devout cast by which all his

views as to the future course of his life were materially changed.

When he returned to the house of his father, (who at this time resided at Princeton, as President of the College of New Jersey,) after a short period spent in religious inquiries and exercises, he made a public profession of religion, and entered on the study of Theology with the intention of devoting his subsequent life to the gospel ministry. He also, at the request of the Professor of Natural Philosophy in the College, assisted him in the experiments which were exhibited to the class while engaged in the study of that science. Chemistry, as hitherto taught in the College, had been considered as a branch of Natural Philosophy, and instruction in it was regarded as belonging to the duties of the professor in that department. But the increasing importance of Chemistry as a branch of liberal knowledge determined the trustees of the College to give it a greater prominence. They therefore instituted a Professorship of Chemistry, connecting with it Experimental Philosophy and Natural History.

He was accordingly elected in the autumn of 1818, and applied himself with assiduity to the discharge of his duties, which necessarily engrossed his time and his thoughts, and took him off for several years in succession from his theological studies. To these studies he never afterwards returned with a view to become a public religious teacher, although he never abandoned them as the source of personal pleasure and pious edification. To the close of life he cultivated Biblical inquiries and delighted in devotional reading.

He held his connection with the College four years, during which, without any interruption, he faithfully and ably discharged all his professional duties. At the end of this period the trustees of the institution abolished the professorship which he held, and returned to the old plan of connecting the studies which it embraced with the Professorship of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy.\* This and other measures resolved on at the same time were taken in opposition to the earnest remonstrance of the President, and determined him, especially as he found the infirmities of age increasing, to resign his office. This he accordingly did immediately after the Commencement in September, 1822, and in the following month returned with his son, the ex-professor, to Philadelphia. During his residence at

\* On leaving the College, the trustees of the institution furnished Professor Green with the following certificate:—

"The Professorship of Experimental Philosophy, Natural History, and Chemistry, having, by the resolution of the board of last spring, become extinct,—

"Resolved, That the same be communicated to Professor Green; that the thanks of the board be presented to him for his services until this time; and that the clerk furnish him with a copy of this resolution.

"Extract from the minutes of the trustees of the College of New Jersey, dated Sept. 26, 1822. PHILIP LINDSLEY, Clerk."

Princeton, the subject of this memoir was a frequent contributor to *Silliman's Journal*.

Not finding, by an experiment made in the first winter after his return to Philadelphia, that a popular chemical lecture was likely to be profitable, Professor Green formed, in concert with four or five associates, the plan of instituting a second Medical School in the city, to be connected with a college in the interior of the State of Pennsylvania. This, after some time, was accomplished by the projected medical establishment becoming, by an act of the Legislature, a department of Jefferson College, located at Canonsburg. Of this Medical School, through the various changes and modifications which it subsequently underwent, he remained Professor of Chemistry till his death. He possessed a valuable collection of minerals, on which he also communicated instruction. He received from the College of Yale, in Connecticut, the degree of M.D. in the year 1827.

In April, 1828, a desire which he had cherished from early youth was gratified by a voyage to Europe. His previous reading had impressed his mind with high ideas of the literary and scientific attainments of eminent men in that most enlightened and improved part of the world, as well as of the various institutions, cities, and scenes which it presents for the inspection and gratification of every lover of learning and the liberal arts; and to this was now added the hope of advancing his personal improvement in his professional vocation by intercourse with those who had become its most distinguished proficient. A considerable part of the time he spent in Europe was passed in the capitals of Britain and France; yet, as his curiosity had a large scope and was active and ardent, he left no object that was calculated to gratify it unexamined: he visited a considerable part of Britain, France, Switzerland, and Germany. His notes of travel were sent in letters to his father, and were first published in a monthly miscellany entitled "The Christian Advocate." They were afterwards republished in three small volumes, and dedicated to his friend John G. Children, Esq., of London. He was absent from his home seven months and sixteen days.

But, whatever might be the pleasure he enjoyed or the acquisition of knowledge he made in his voyage to Europe, they were more than counterbalanced by the loss he sustained,—the loss of his health, which he never fully recovered,—the breaking down of a very vigorous constitution into a kind of valetudinary state, which not only caused him much suffering, but eventually carried him to a premature grave. His travelling-journal is terminated as follows:—"Oct. 15.—A violent cold has confined me to my stateroom for a day or two past, where I think I get along quite as comfortably as if upon deck. I have read Irving's *Columbus through*,—a fact at sea worth recording. I have enjoyed uniform high health ever since I left home: up to this time, not a day of sick-

ness has interrupted my pleasures or pursuits: a kind Providence has preserved me from every accident throughout my whole journey. With humble confidence I commit myself to thee, O thou who makest the clouds thy chariot and the dark waters thy pavilion! Thou wilt preserve me and carry me in peace and safety to my friends."

He was confined for more than a week in New York, and when he arrived at his home his altered and emaciated appearance greatly alarmed his family. The use of appropriate remedies, however, with careful nursing, were the means of so far restoring him that within a month he was able to deliver, at the usual time, his introductory lecture, and to continue his accustomed course through the whole of the subsequent season. In a word, he never had, as has already been stated, any other than a broken and infirm constitution. Yet there were intervals, especially in the warm and temperate portions of the year, in which he seemed to be flattered with a return of his former vigour; and this, with his habitual fortitude and unbroken spirits, carried him forward in his professional studies and career with nearly as much activity and efficiency as he had manifested before his bodily system was enfeebled. During several summers he went to Canonsburg, Pa., and delivered a course of lectures to the pupils of Jefferson College. On another occasion he delivered a similar course to the students of La Fayette College, at Easton, Pa. He also wrote and published a system of Chemistry; and, indeed, the most of his publications were made in the thirteen years which elapsed between the period of his return from Europe and the time of his death. Nor did he fail to go through the whole annual course of his lectures in the Medical College in which he held his professorship, and with as few omissions as any of his associates, although not unfrequently with a difficulty which nothing but his unshaken resolution would have enabled him to surmount.

On the last day of June, 1836, he was married to Miss Ann Eliza, the only daughter of Dr. Samuel McCulloh, of Baltimore. Of this marriage two orphan-daughters remain. For some time before and some time after his marriage his health was better and more promising than was generally the case. But *hæret in lateri lethalis arundo*: his old enemy, although subdued for a time, was never effectually conquered, and through the whole of the year 1840 was manifestly gaining strength. To avoid, for himself and his family, the intense heat of the city in the summer, he had purchased, at Princeton, N.J., a plot of ground, on which he had erected a neat and commodious dwelling. To this, in July, he, with his family, retired for the first, and, as it unhappily proved, for the last, time. Before he left Philadelphia he was affected with a slight hæmoptysis, which soon disappeared; but during the whole of his sojourn in the country he had nothing that could be called health, and towards

the close of it he was seriously ill, and for some days confined to his bed. This illness, however, was of short duration, and he returned to the city in a state of more comfortable feeling and more capable of active exertion than when he left it. He, nevertheless, was occasionally subject to turns of faintness, which in one instance increased to swooning. Still, he not only visited his friends as usual and with his accustomed cheerfulness, but at the usual time commenced his course of lectures and continued it without interruption to the close of his life.

On the Sabbath of January 31, the day before he died, he attended public worship three times, and went to bed with no sensible complaint beyond a little wheezing, of which he made no account. He slept as usual until about daybreak, when he awoke with a distressing difficulty of respiration. He thought it proceeded from phlegm in the bronchial organs or in the breast, and that it might be relieved by an emetic. Tartar-emetic was at hand, and he requested his wife to mix a portion without delay. He took it, but it was immediately returned. Suffocation was now threatened, and two physicians were hastily sent for: both were soon present; but, as the first that came was entering the door of the house, he could only say to his wife, "Breath! breath! I am gone!" and immediately expired. A vein was speedily opened in his arm, but it bled but little. The vital spark was quenched forever! On a *post-mortem* examination to ascertain the cause of his sudden demise, it appeared that the heart was enlarged one-third beyond its proper size, was covered with a coat of fat, and that the large blood-vessels connected with this vital organ were, at their mouths, becoming cartilaginous, and that in one of them ossification had commenced.

In making a summary estimate of the talents and endowments of Professor Green, his memorialist, without claiming for him the first order of intellectual powers or attainments, may safely state that those which he did possess were of a highly-respectable character. He had a vigorous imagination, an ardent curiosity, a thirst and a capacity for improvement in science, a sound and discriminating judgment, and a remarkably tenacious memory. As a chemist and a naturalist he was entitled to take rank among the eminent cultivators of these departments of liberal knowledge in our country. The numerous papers which he contributed to various journals were chiefly on subjects of Natural Philosophy and Natural History. His acquaintance with other branches of science than those which he professed, and with literature in general, was not inconsiderable. He wrote his own language with great readiness, with general accuracy, and in a pleasing style. In narrative he excelled. His familiarity with the English poets was so intimate that he could repeat extended passages from many of them with promptitude and accuracy. The verses

which he wrote himself are all in stanzas of four lines each, and all of a serious cast or a religious tendency. His elocution was uncommonly good, and often, in his introductory lectures, very impressive. These lectures he always delivered without notes, as indeed he did the most of those that filled up his entire course, although both were carefully and fully precomposed. He excelled as an experimenter; yet in lecturing he was more solicitous to be useful than to be splendid, more anxious to communicate solid instruction than to amuse by showy experiments. He secured the attachment of his pupils, and they gave him many proofs of their esteem and affection. The class under instruction at the time of his death attended his funeral in a body, and a number of them wept over his grave.

In the imperfections and errors from which no individual of our race is wholly free he of course had a share; but in him they were greatly overbalanced by moral qualities of the most estimable kind. Even in childhood his inflexible regard to truth and integrity was proverbial. If a fact, as stated by his school-fellows, was questioned by their teacher, "You may ask Jacob if it was not so" was the decisive appeal; and through the whole of life his utter abhorrence of every species of fraud and falsehood was a marked feature of his character. He often indulged in pleasantry, and occasionally in irony and badinage; but whenever truth was concerned, or justly expected, he spoke it with conscientious simplicity. He was modest and reserved in his pretensions, leaving his actions and his publications to speak for themselves. He never professed friendship unless he felt it, and when he felt it his attachment was firm and warm. The strength, indeed, both of his sympathies and antipathies, was great, and apt to be lasting; but the latter were seldom avowed unless duty appeared to demand a declaration. His manners were polished and dignified, and his cheerfulness rendered his companionship delightful. His circle of friends was large, and his calls and visits were seldom made without a cordial welcome. He was amiable in domestic life, and sustained its relations in an exemplary manner. His patience and fortitude under bodily sufferings were admirable; his moral character was without a stain; his religion was not ostentatious, but enlightened, sincere, and solid, manifested by a deep and habitual reverence for every thing sacred, a zealous adherence to evangelical truth, a punctual and constant observance of all divine ordinances and institutions, and a becoming Christian deportment. In a word, and taking into view his whole character, he was an amiable, an erudite, a useful and a pious man.

As an author, in addition to the works enumerated in the foregoing sketch, Dr. Green was ever ready with his pen; and his lectures and addresses would fill several volumes.