

**A MEMOIR OF THE
LATE DAVID
HOSACK, PP. 289-337**

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ALEXANDER EDDY HOSACK

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A MEMOIR

OF THE LATE

DAVID HOSACK, M.D.,

F. R. S. L. AND E., ETC., ETC.,

BY HIS SON,

ALEXANDER EDDY HOSACK.

PREFACE.

THIS brief Memoir of my late Father was prepared for the "American Biography" of distinguished Physicians and Surgeons of the United States, in the nineteenth century. It is published in the first volume, just issued from the press of Philadelphia, edited by Professor Gross, of Jefferson College. The publishers have furnished me with a few copies (in sheets) for distribution among my friends.

Doctor Hosack's valuable manuscripts, and extended correspondence at home and abroad, as well as the great interest taken by him in most of our public institutions and literary societies, with which he was intimately connected, call for a more elaborate history of his life and character; it is, therefore, if possible, my intention at some future period to assume that task, and offer to the public a work, which, I believe, cannot fail to be interesting to the profession generally, and acceptable to his friends.

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DAVID HOSACK.

1769-1835.

WHEN Wilkie was in the Escorial looking at Titian's famous picture of "The Last Supper" in the Refectory, an old Jeronomite said to him, "I have sat daily in sight of that picture for now nearly threescore years. During that time my companions have dropped off one after another; all who were my seniors; all who were my contemporaries, with many or most of those who were younger than myself. More than one generation has passed away, and there the figures in the picture have remained unchanged. I look at them till I sometimes think that they are the realities and we but the shadow."

Biography, in like manner, saves from the wreck of time those whose good deeds live after them. It serves as an example to others, by holding up to view such characters as are worthy of imitation; and thus, like the portrait of the artist, they become the substance, while the shadows of the living multitude are passing in review before them. While history, on the other hand, furnishes a record of circumstances and events, it at the same time creates a desire for a further acquaintance with the individual who has occupied so conspicuous a position in them, and who has, either by his talents or efforts, thus been elevated to a high rank among his fellow-men. Biography may therefore properly be considered as a part of history and as inseparably connected with it; hence, the lives of distinguished men, in whatever profession or situation they may be found, become doubly interesting. Of the three learned professions, divinity, law, and physic, none contribute more to

the amelioration of man than that of Medical Science. The character of a learned and good physician is always deserving of the most profound attention and admiration. Such we conceive to be that of the eminent individual, the subject of the following memoir.

David Hosack was born on the 31st of August, 1769, in the house of his grandfather, No. 44 Frankfort Street, in the city of New York. His parents were Alexander Hosack and Jane Arden. They were married on the 1st April, 1768, in the city of New York. They had seven children, of whom David was the eldest. His father, Alexander Hosack, was a native of the town of Elgin, Murrayshire, Scotland, and was born the 29th of August, 1736. In 1758, at the age of twenty-one, he served as an officer in the artillery under General Sir Jeffrey Amherst, with whom he embarked for this country, and was at the retaking of Louisburgh, and prided himself upon being at the first cross of bayonets in America, on which occasion he was wounded. Jane, his wife, the daughter of Francis Arden, was born on the 2d of March, 1743. Her father's family came from England, that of her mother from France; being compelled to leave their native country by the persecutions which followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The subject of this memoir, after receiving the ordinary education of childhood, about 1783 and 1784 entered as a pupil of the Rev. Dr. Alexander McWhorter, of Newark, New Jersey, at whose academy he remained until 1785, attending to the Latin tongue, geography, arithmetic, and other studies. Under Dr. McWhorter he also commenced the study of Greek; but as Dr. Peter Wilson, of Hackensack, was more distinguished as a teacher of that language, he was enrolled in his academy.

In 1786, he entered as a freshman in Columbia College, New York, where he remained until he advanced half-way through the junior year. He availed himself, in the meantime, of a private teacher, spending an hour of each afternoon in reading the classics under the direction of James Hardie, a graduate of Marischal College, Aberdeen, and well known as an eminent teacher. He also found leisure during the same

period to give a portion of his attention to the French language, in association with a few of his fellow-students, among whom were the late Rev. Dr. John Mason, De Witt Clinton, John Randolph, Chancellor Jones, and others. While a pupil in Columbia College he received three testimonials, one of which was for public speaking.

Finding his time not fully occupied in the commencement of the junior year, he resolved upon the study of medicine, and accordingly, in May, 1788, entered as a private pupil with the late Dr. Richard Bayley, an eminent surgeon in New York. He had scarcely begun his studies before the celebrated "Doctor's Mob" occurred, which threatened serious results to those concerned; it arose in consequence of the imprudence of some of the students carelessly pursuing dissection in the building upon the site since occupied as the New York Hospital. This mob caused many of the professors to absent themselves from the city, and others to seek shelter in the city jail. Mr. Hosack, with the rest of the students interested, learning that the mob had seized upon and demolished the anatomical preparations found in the lecture-room above referred to, repaired immediately to Columbia College, with the view of saving such specimens as were to be found in that institution. Before reaching the college, however, and when on his way in Park Place, he was knocked down by a stone striking him on the head; he would, in all probability, have been killed, had it not been for the protection he received from a neighbor of his father, Mr. Mount, who was passing at the time, and took care of him; he never saw that gentleman afterwards without feeling and expressing his gratitude to him for his kindness.

In the autumn of 1788, being ambitious of completing his collegiate course, preparatory to receiving his degree of medicine, he removed to Princeton, New Jersey. Quoting from memoranda which he has left for the benefit of his children, he says:

"After being examined with the students of the college then entering into their senior year, I was admitted into the senior class, and was graduated Bachelor of Arts in the autumn of

the succeeding year, that is, 1789. My great inducement for removing to Princeton was my desire to complete my course of collegiate studies as soon as possible, in order to devote my exclusive attention to medicine, to which I had now become ardently attached, and that I might also have the benefit of attending the valuable lectures on Moral Philosophy and Elocution delivered by the learned president of that college, the Rev. Dr. Witherspoon; those of Belles-Lettres and Composition, by the vice-president, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith; and the instruction in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, by the celebrated mathematician, Dr. Walter Minto, all of which presented attractions which I could not resist. Having finished my course at Princeton, I returned to New York, and resumed my favorite medical studies, to which I now gave my undivided attention, availing myself of every advantage which the city at that time presented. I attended the lectures on Anatomy and Physiology, delivered by Dr. Wright Post; those on Chemistry and Practice of Physic, by Dr. Nicholas Romayne; and the valuable course on Midwifery and the Diseases of Women and Children, by Dr. Bard. I also attended the practice of physick and surgery at the almshouse, which then offered the only means of clinical instruction in this city; they were, however, very ample, the house being daily visited by Dr. Post, Dr. William Moore, Dr. Romayne, and Dr. Benjamin Kissam. In the autumn of the year 1790, being desirous of obtaining all the advantages of instruction which the United States at that time afforded, I proceeded to Philadelphia, the medical school of which had already acquired great celebrity from the learning of its professors, especially Drs. Shippen, Rush, Kuhn, Wistar, and Barton. At that time a division already existed among the Faculty, which led to the institution of a medical college as a rival school to that connected with the University, and not a little contributed to the benefit of both, and the ultimate advancement of the science of medicine in Philadelphia. I entered as a regular pupil, and attended all the courses of lectures delivered during the winter in the University. I also attended those delivered on the Theory and Practice of Physic