ANATOMY AS A SCIENCE

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On behalf of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which I have the honor of representing to-day, I wish to extend to you, the members of the first year class in medicine, a most hearty welcome.

Since I have the privilege also of representing on this occasion the newly organized department of anatomy in this institution, and since, in the course of a few days, you will be actively engaged in anatomical studies, I thought it might not be inappropriate for me to speak to you about the subject of anatomy, with respect to a few of its past developments and to its present status amongst the biological and medical sciences.

1 Address delivered at the opening exercises of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, New York, September 25, 1929.

In the preparation of this address I have drawn freely from the following sources: R. G. Harrison, “Anatomy: Its Scope, Methods and Relations to Other Biological Sciences,” Anat. Record, vol. 7, 1913; W. A. Locy, “Biology and Its Makers,” Henry Holt and Company, 1910.

An anatomical laboratory is no doubt frequently thought of as a place characterized by the presence of a morgue and large vats filled with formalin-soaked specimens; a place where boxes of rattling bones reside upon shelves to be doled out to beginning students in order to revive their powers of memory which they may have largely lost during the more or less care-free activities of their academic careers.

Based upon the experience of others, it may be regarded as a place where thousands of tedious facts must be learned and later forgotten before the gratifying emoluments attending the practice of medicine may be fully realized.

An anatomical laboratory does possess what I have mentioned—a lot of dead things—but if this were all that characterized the place, anatomy as a science would be as dead as the cadaver which is placed at your disposal in order that you may hack out the necessary morphological slices preparatory to the practice of surgery.