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NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE.

1875.

ADDRESSES.

DR. AUSTIN FLINT'S VALEDICTORY.

DR. SAMUEL S. PURPLE'S INAUGURAL.

Box



NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE.

1875.

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ADDRESSES.

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NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE.

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OBJECTS AND WORK;

*A VALEDICTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE
NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, JANUARY
21, 1875, AT THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
AND SURGEONS.*

BY
AUSTIN FLINT, M. D.,
RETIRING PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY.



NEW YORK:
PRINTED FOR THE ACADEMY,
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, 549 & 551 BROADWAY.
1875.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

FELLOWS OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE:

Two years ago I received at your hands the great honor of an election to the office of President of the Academy. The term of office is ended, and there remains only to be performed the final act of formally retiring and giving place to my successor. This act I perform with great pleasure. In saying this, let me hasten to add that I do not say it because I have found the duties of the office either onerous or in any sense disagreeable. On the contrary, in endeavoring to discharge my official duties to the best of my ability, nothing has occurred to embarrass me, and I have met with nothing but kindness and coöperation. I retire with pleasure because, in the first place, I believe rotation in office to be appropriate and conducive to the interest of the Academy; and, in the second place, I give place to one who will bring zeal, experience, and wisdom to the performance of the duties which will devolve upon him.

On the biennial recurrence of a change of administration, the retiring officer naturally looks backward, and the incoming President looks forward. The occasion is a fitting one for both retrospections and anticipations. The study of the past is always instructive with reference to the future. Let me therefore briefly recount the circumstances and events which have characterized the history of the Academy during the last two years:

1. There has been entire harmony during this period. The proceedings at the stated meetings of the Academy, of

the Council, of the Board of Trustees, and the committees, have been not only harmonious, but characterized by unanimity in action and sentiment. The demon of discord has never gained entrance within the Academy; may this be as true in the future, as it is with reference to the past!

2. There has been a fair attendance at the meetings of the Academy. That there is room for progress in this direction must be admitted, and I trust that, two years hence, there will be ground for congratulation in this regard.

3. The reading of papers at the stated meetings has not been delayed by business which is irrelevant or of minor importance, and there has been no confusion in the arrangement of papers for the successive meetings. For this the Academy is in a great measure indebted to the parting counsels of my distinguished and esteemed predecessor in office.

4. It may be claimed in behalf of the papers which have been read during the last two years, that they have been able, instructive, and of that varied character which is desirable. For this the Academy is under obligations to those who have been willing in this way to work for its interests. I desire to state, in this connection, that applications to Fellows of the Academy for papers or discourses, have been in almost every instance made with success; and I avail myself of this occasion to tender thanks, both personally and as representing the Academy, to those to whom we are indebted for the interest and profit pertaining to our stated meetings during the last two years. To secure for these meetings the services of those to whom the Fellows of the Academy will be glad to listen, is the most important of the presidential duties. I have found it an easy duty, in consequence of the ready assent of all whose services were obtained.

5. A volume of the Transactions of the Academy, comprising nearly 400 pages, was issued during the last summer. For about three years prior to the issuing of this volume, the publication of papers by the Academy had been suspended. This volume contains a complete list of the names of all who have been connected with the Academy, as resident, non-resi-

dent, corresponding, and honorary Fellows, giving the dates of their election, together with a list of the officers from the institution of the Academy. Considerable matter is also now in print, in preparation for a second volume of the new series, which may be expected during the next summer. The Constitution and By-Laws have also been printed for the use of the Fellows. These publications, with the imprint of D. Appleton & Co., leave nothing to be desired in the way of typographical execution; and, as regards the contents of the Transactions, this volume will compare favorably with works of the same character, either here or abroad. The task of arranging the matter for publication, and seeing it through the press, has devolved upon a committee, of which your newly-elected President is the chairman. The services which in this capacity he has rendered during the last two years, have required much time and labor. I should do injustice alike to him, and to the occasion, if I failed to refer to this fact; the more so, because these services are performed, not publicly, but in private, and are not likely, therefore, to be fully appreciated by all. Moreover, the services call for experience, learning, judgment, and taste—requirements which the chairman of the committee has in an eminent degree. I feel that I discharge a duty to the Academy, when I tender in its behalf thanks for the devotion to its interests which he has in this way manifested.

6. Delay in the printing of papers heretofore has impaired, in no small measure, the value of the published Transactions of the Academy. Authors of papers, which had been prepared with care and labor, naturally desired that, within a reasonable period, they should appear in print; and the delay, sometimes for a long period, has led often to their having been furnished, by preference, to medical journals. Valuable contributions have for this reason never appeared in the Transactions of the Academy. The Council, recognizing this fact, have adopted a plan which, it is believed, will secure for the Transactions the publication of papers. This plan, which has now been in operation for several

months, is to place the papers, provided they are in readiness, in the hands of the printer as soon as they have been acted upon by the Council, and to furnish to the authors at once the extra copies to which they are entitled, and any additional copies which they may desire. In this way the printed papers are speedily in circulation, and may appear in medical journals, with due credit to the Transactions of the Academy. This plan, it is to be hoped, will be continued; and it cannot but serve as an additional inducement for care and elaborateness in the preparation of papers which are to be contained in the yearly volume of Transactions. The contents of this volume, it is needless to say, should be of a character to do credit to the Academy; and, with reference to this subject, it is important that the Council exercise discretion and a certain amount of reserve in ordering the publication of papers. A due regard to this object makes it a delicate duty on the part of the President to apply for the preparation of papers; and it is certainly not an agreeable duty on the part of the Council to decide against their publication. The interests of the Academy and of medical literature, however, should be paramount to all other considerations; and an impartial, judicious discrimination in the selection of papers for publication is certainly desirable. Let it be regarded as an honor to be invited to read a paper at a stated meeting of the Academy, and a still greater honor, to have a paper accepted by the Council for publication.

7. Lastly, the crowning event of the period over which our retrospections extend is the purchase of a building for the uses of the Academy, and, as it is hoped also, for the advantage of the other medical associations of this city. The project of obtaining a building was coeval with the institution of the Academy. The accumulation of money for a building-fund was provided for in the By-Laws, which assign this duty to the Board of Trustees, acting under the sanction of the Council. Slowly accumulating, a building-fund had reached a considerable amount, and a Committee on Ways and Means, selected long ago, was authorized to take appropriate action

whenever it appeared practicable and judicious to do so. This committee, together with the Council, recently concluded that the time for action in the matter had arrived. There was no difference of opinion on this point. Their conclusion was sustained by the action of the Academy at a stated meeting, at which the matter was made the subject for special consideration, and to which all members of the profession were invited. The Committee on Ways and Means promptly acted in accordance with the views adopted, and a building has been purchased. Its situation, size, and construction, are regarded as well adapted to the wants of the Academy and of other associations. The medical profession of the city of New York has at length a local habitation, an abiding-place, a home! I shall not expatiate on this event; its importance will be sufficiently appreciated.

It will be a grand epoch in the history, not only of the Academy, but of the profession of the city and State. Congratulating you, Fellows of the Academy, and brethren of sister societies, on this event, let me, in their behalf, express to the Committee on Ways and Means approbation and gratitude. The labors of this committee, as well as the wisdom of their action, claim our hearty acknowledgment. The task of obtaining and collecting subscriptions for a public object is one which, however commendable, is not generally coveted; hence the greater merit in those who are willing to spend time, strength, and influence, in disinterested efforts for a common good. Of the members of this committee there are two whom, as I know, it will not be deemed by their associates an invidious distinction, if I designate as especially deserving of mention in connection with the building-fund. The names to which I refer are Samuel T. Hubbard and James Anderson, distinguished for successful efforts, the former in obtaining and the latter in collecting subscriptions. Let not the claims of other members of the committee on our gratitude be disparaged by the mention of these names. Let the names of all who have been active in this great and good work be suitably engrossed, so as not to be lost sight of by

those who are to come after us. To many, doubtless, it will seem that our present *home* is humble in comparison with an edifice more appropriate to our wishes and deserts; but, to my mind, it is a pleasant reflection that, such as it is, we have procured it; its possession involves no obligation to those who are not of our profession. Let the comfort and advantages which we hope to derive from it stimulate those who are to come after us to exchange it for a larger and grander home.

The anticipations which this occasion might suggest, belong more appropriately to my successor in office than to myself. I shall detain you with only a few remarks on a single suggestion. It is the desirableness of a meeting of the Academy on an evening of every week. I suggest this especially with a view to providing for a fuller discussion of topics presented in papers read at the stated meetings. As it now is, there can be but little discussion after a paper has been read. Assuming that the reading of a paper begins at half-past eight, and occupies from three-fourths of an hour to an hour, the time for discussion is limited to a very short period. Moreover, often the Fellows present at a meeting are not prepared to discuss the paper to which they have just listened. They need time for reflection, study, and investigation. The experience of the last two years has shown that the discussions which follow the reading of papers are, in general, unsatisfactory. It would be otherwise if there were, in the first place, more time to be devoted to discussions, and, in the second place, more time for preparation therefor. The plan which I would propose is for a meeting to be devoted to a paper, or to papers, and the discussion of the topics presented to be made the subject of a meeting to be held on the week following. I suggest this plan, not for any immediate action, but for the consideration of the Fellows of the Academy, with reference to the propriety of its adoption at a future time, after we are settled in our new quarters. The advantages of the plan may be enlarged upon should it be entertained by the Academy, at a future meeting.

In conclusion, I beg to return my sincere thanks for the uniform courtesy and kindness extended to me by all the Fellows of the Academy during my term of office. I relinquish the office to one more competent than I am for the duties of a presiding officer, who has been elected with great unanimity, and under whose administration the history of the Academy will, I doubt not, show progress.

And now, Mr. President-elect, in accordance with usage, placing in your hands a copy of the Constitution and By-Laws, I vacate the chair of office, in order that you may enter at once on your official duties.

DR. PURPLE'S REPLY.

DR. FLINT: I thank you for the kind expressions which you have just uttered; coming as they do from one with whom in years past I have pleasantly labored for the promotion of the literature of our time-honored profession, and one also whose reputation as a clinical observer, teacher, and author, will be as enduring as the science of medicine itself. I receive, from your hand, this Constitution and these By-Laws, with a profound sense of the responsibility that now rests upon me. It must, sir, demand no ordinary effort to advance the interests of an institution which has been so successfully presided over, by such distinguished worthies in medicine as Stearns, Francis, Mott, Wood, Stevens, Cock, Smith, Parker, Batchelder, Watson, Anderson, Post, Buckley, Peaslee, and by yourself, citizens of no mean city. Permit me to hope that the mantle of the departed Elijah may descend upon and be not unworthily borne by me.

OBJECTS AND PURPOSES;

*AN INAUGURAL ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE
NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, JANUARY
21, 1875, AT THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
AND SURGEONS.*

BY

SAMUEL S. PURPLE, M. D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY.



NEW YORK:

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1875.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

FELLOWS OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE—

GENTLEMEN: Called unexpectedly by your suffrage to preside over your deliberations, and with you to advance the best interests of the medical profession and this institution—permit me for a brief period, before proceeding to the regular paper of the evening, to occupy your attention with a consideration of some of the circumstances which originally led to the formation of this Academy; and to indicate some of the means by which its objects may be more completely fulfilled.

A little more than a quarter a of century has passed, since at a social gathering of medical men of this city, on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the "Society for the Relief of the Widows and Orphans of Medical Men," the good and true men there assembled, organized on the suggestion and under the preliminary leadership of the ever to be lamented Dr. Alexander H. Stevens (whose biography has been so truthfully sketched by a distinguished Fellow of this Academy), for the purpose of a more thorough purification of the profession, and the construction of a common senate.

This organization eventuated a few weeks after in the establishment of the New York Academy of Medicine, whose declared objects were:

1. The cultivation of the science of medicine.
2. The advancement of the character and honor of the profession.

3. The elevation of the standard of medical education; and—

4. The promotion of the public health.

The necessity of the establishment of this organization, was found in the chaotic state of the profession; the rampant and defiant air of quackery, and its contaminating and demoralizing influence by association (which had for some time previously existed), upon professional morals, and which was most keenly felt. This association of the profession with quackery was by no means voluntary. It was a legal necessity under the peculiar circumstances of the case, hence the determination of the founders of this Academy "to separate," in the language of the late Dr. Manley, "the sheep from the goats" by banding together in establishing an institution which should be absolutely free from such influences. It was no easy task under such circumstances to elevate the standard of professional ethics. But a unanimity of action and purpose, seldom if ever before observed in the leading minds of the profession, prevailed; Stearns, Francis, Mott, Wood, Stevens, Cock, Manley, Smith, Batchelder, Watson, Bulkley, who have all now passed to their final reward, and with others, some of whom I see here this evening and are yet spared to us for counsel—labored earnestly to found "the first great barrier between quackery and medical integrity." Of the moral strength of this barrier, we have of late had most striking exhibitions; let us have faith in its firmness and solidity. That those who deviate from strict professional probity, as well as doers of evil in medicine, have felt and always will feel the reproofing influence of this Academy is morally certain. He whose pretensions are groundless, alike with him who falsifies the pledge which he gave on entering the sanctuary of medicine, or on completing his fellowship with us, will surely not find favor nor obtain countenance either in social or professional relations.

To advance the best interests of the profession, and to increase its usefulness by furnishing facilities for social intercourse, and thereby promote harmony among medical men;

to procure a building to be devoted to the Academy of Medicine—one in which all the regular members of the profession might assemble and meet on common ground—these were foremost among the reasons assigned in the proposal to establish this institution. Do results warrant the conclusion that this organization has, either in the past or present, lost sight of the objects contemplated in its formation?

As cultivators of the science of medicine, the Fellows of this Academy have labored successfully in the field of medical literature, and their writings have shed lustre on the several departments of medicine. Our Transactions, and other publications, contain many practical and experimental papers abounding in practical deductions—ready expedients—and new and important advances in the medical sciences. As upholders and promoters of the character and honor of the profession and of medical education, it is but needful to refer to the record of the past, and to the teachings and successful efforts of a goodly number of the Fellows of the Academy, whose distinguished labors have reflected honor upon the profession, both at home and abroad. For the promotion of public health by legal enactments, legislators and others have sought and obtained from this body facts and opinions to guide them, and, not least of all, the original movement for establishing the health organization of this city, was inaugurated by its influence and instrumentality.

Having thus briefly directed your attention to the objects contemplated in the organization of this Academy, and to the fulfillment of some of these objects, permit me further to call your attention to one or more of the means which the present position of the Academy renders available, for the more complete fulfillment of the intentions of its founders. And here let me premise that no efforts of this Academy are in progress, and none are contemplated, which were not originally designed and laid out when its founders, after protracted counsel, banded together and pledged their honor to conform to the Constitution and By-Laws of this Association. If, to any, such should seem not to be the case, they have only to

institute a careful inquiry into the original acts of this body, and evidence will be adduced which will remove all doubts.

You have heard, gentlemen, the cheering words of your late presiding officer, on the progress made by your Committee on Ways and Means, in the acquisition of a building for the uses of the Academy—a hall where the whole profession may meet on common ground—one which shall be the recognized medical centre—within which the various medical organizations of the city may have ample accommodations for holding their meetings; where museums and libraries may be gathered, and where every department of medical study and investigation may find accommodation. Such a building, which will prove adequate to the wants and purposes of the Academy and of the profession for some time to come, you are already informed, has been purchased, and will, it is now believed, be permanently occupied by the Academy before the close of the coming summer.

The far-sighted wisdom of the founders of this Academy, in their early efforts to establish a building-fund, is now clearly seen. Slowly, and almost imperceptibly, that fund has been augmented, and with the additional collections for the same purpose by the committee just now referred to, is sufficient to warrant the movement that has been so ably advocated by my distinguished predecessor. It is in this movement, and the possession of a home, that many of the better and brighter hopes of the profession are centred. In it we see facilities for a greater centralization of the power and influence of medical men in all matters which appertain to medical science, and also to the health-interests of the public at large: may it not lead to a union of the scattered resources and medical organizations of the city? Let it not, however, be expected or understood that the acquisition of this home will lead to the suspension of further efforts for more enlarged and ample quarters to meet the unceasingly growing wants of the profession in this great metropolis: for in the language of the first circular issued by your Committee on Ways and Means, this Academy must eventually have

a building, not less imposing in its appearance than similar structures in the metropolis, and adequate in all its appointments to the growing wants and future exigencies of the profession. Permit me to suggest, gentlemen, in reference to this matter, that a sinking-fund be at once created, to meet eventually the debt already incurred, and that the committee before alluded to, be continued as a permanent one, with the distinct understanding that such a building must be ultimately possessed by this Academy.

That this body would lead the advance in all matters connected with the wants of the profession, in this city, was early contemplated. It has in the main done so. There is, however, one undertaking it has allowed to fall into the background, and which has been nearly lost sight of, evidently to the great detriment of the body itself, but partly from causes it could not readily control. I allude now to the early efforts put forth for the formation and increase of a Medical Library; such a one as would meet the necessities and requirements of medical writers, seeking for facts or information, either in the ancient or modern literature of the profession.

It needs no argument here to show the necessity or value of a great reference Medical Library, located in this city, for such purposes. The time has arrived in which it is imperatively demanded. The restlessness and longings of the profession, in this particular direction, have been observed for years past. They existed, though in a lesser degree than now, at the time this Academy was instituted, as will be seen by the fact that, immediately after its organization, a committee consisting of Drs. Gilman, Barker, Beales, Phelps, and Buel, was raised by resolution and designated the Library Committee, whose duty it was to have in charge and promote the formation of a Medical Library. It was organized by appointing the late Prof. Chandler R. Gilman, chairman, and I hold in my hand one of the circulars which it issued in January, 1847, to the Fellows of the Academy and the profession, requesting the donation of such books as they might feel willing to bestow on the institution. Many donations were received, and the flat-

tering hope indulged that a useful library would early be formed; the lack of room accommodations, however, soon became apparent, and ultimately obstructed the movement, and the committee after a time ceased its operations.

The nucleus thus gathered yet exists, and, with considerable additions made from time to time, is now available. Permit me, gentlemen, to suggest that the formation of a similar committee, with full power to establish a library-fund, be referred to the Council, and that the dormant effort be resuscitated and endowed with new life and vigor. I know the harvest is ripe for the sickle, and that such an effort, put forth under the movement that is now culminating, will be crowned with a speedy and abundant success.

Finally, Fellows of the New York Academy of Medicine, are we not warranted in believing that, in this movement of securing a building, the morning star of hope for the profession in this city has arisen; that the effulgent light of morning is now appearing; that a steady, earnest, and united labor will certainly bring the noontide of success, and then the influence of our profession will be more markedly felt, and more clearly recognized by the community at large? Gentlemen, committed to no policy, and with no interest to serve other than that which appertains to the good of this Academy and the profession, let me ask your indulgence while I attempt to discharge impartially the duty which your favor has devolved upon me.

