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of J. Marion Sims, M. D.

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MEMORIAL SKETCH OF THE LIFE

OF

J. MARION SIMS, M. D.*

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN: I am happy to say that Dr. J. Marion Sims has left an autobiography of several hundred pages, giving a full account of his life and work up to 1863; and that he left in manuscript a revised and more or less completed work on "The Surgical Diseases of Women," both of which are soon to be published. What I have to say to-night, up to the time when I first met Dr. Marion Sims in 1868, has been taken directly from the manuscript of his autobiography.

In his autobiography, after some preliminary remarks, he begins: "It is a trite saying, that 'every life is a poem, be it long or short.' Mine has been a real romance, full of incident, anxiety, hope, and care; some disappointments and many successes, with much sickness and sorrow; but it has also been full of joy, contentment, and real happiness.

"I was born in Lancaster County, S. C., January 25,

* Read before the Medical Society of the County of New York January 28, 1884.

1813, about ten miles south of the village of Lancaster, a mile or more west of the old wagon road from Lancaster to Camden. The ancestors of my father, John Sims, were of the English colonists of Virginia. My mother, Mahala Mackay, was the daughter of Charles and Lydia Mackay, of Scotch-Irish origin. The family came to America about 1740." Lancaster at this time was a small village of about one thousand inhabitants, the county-seat of a farming district about twenty-five miles square. It was an out-of-the-way place, twenty-five miles from the nearest village. Dr. Sims says: "My father, feeling the want of an education himself, was determined to educate his children, and so he began with me at a very early age. He then kept a little store, about a mile north of Hanging-Rock Creek, on the road leading to Lancaster. This was in 1818. Mr. Blackburn, a Scotchman, had just opened a school in a log cabin in the old field very near the ford of this creek." It was here the doctor received his first lessons.

He relates a little incident that took place when he was about eight years old, which to me, knowing him as I did, is very significant. He was asked by an old friend of his father's to give the proper name of a certain weed. His answer caused the old gentleman to say: "I would advise you hereafter, and lay it up in your memory, as long as you live, never to presume to express an opinion on any subject unless you are informed on that subject."

The doctor says: "I was never so mortified in all the days of my life. I was exceedingly mortified, and I am sure that I have thought of Mr. Patterson a thousand times since then. When I have been called upon to give an opinion and didn't feel competent to give it, I have profited by the advice he then gave me." Of this I am certain, for Dr. Sims was very non-committal on all doubtful points, but was very definite, clear, and firm about what he did

know. In 1825, when twelve years old, he went to Lancaster village, where his father had moved the previous year, and this same year the Franklin Academy was inaugurated at Lancaster; he attended school here for five years, and it was here that he met Theresa Jones. He became sincerely attached to her, and, long before they were engaged, she was a great influence in his life, and, together with his mother, who was a sincere, good woman and devoted mother, had much to do in establishing his good habits, noble sentiments, and high moral character. He was not noted at school, but was known as a bright, genial fellow.

In 1830 he entered the South Carolina College at Columbia, S. C. He says: "When I went there I was one of the best boys in the world. I do not know that I had a single bad habit. I didn't swear, I didn't drink, I didn't gamble; indeed, I had no vice that could be called a vice. I was such a good boy that my mother certainly expected me to be a Presbyterian clergyman." Having entered as a Junior, he graduated from South Carolina College in December, 1832. He says of himself: "I never was remarkable for anything while I was in college except good behavior. Nobody ever expected anything of me, and I never expected anything of myself. I felt really sorry that the time was drawing near when I would have to assume the stern duties and responsibilities of real life and of manhood." At this time he was desperately in love, but was too poor to marry, and did not care to take up a profession. His father wished him to study law, but they finally agreed on medicine, and, when twenty years old, he began to read medicine under Dr. Churchill Jones. He remained with Dr. Jones for a year. Dr. Jones was a good surgeon, and it was here that Dr. Sims imbibed a desire to distinguish himself in surgery.

In November, 1833, he left for Charleston, S. C., to

attend medical lectures at the Charleston Medical College. He was by no means precocious; at this time he was a beardless youth of twenty, and he says of himself: "I had failed in my duty as a student in my college course at Columbia; I was now determined to reform my methods. I had to prepare for a period that I had looked forward to not with pleasurable anticipation, but with dread. Most of the young men whom I had associated with all my life had looked forward to manhood with joy and satisfaction, but with me it was exactly the reverse. I was afraid to be a man; I was afraid to assume its responsibilities, and thought that I did not have sense enough to go out into the rough world to make a living as other men had to do. I was small in stature, and I did not feel that I had intelligence enough to grapple with or to pit myself against such opposition as I should encounter in life. So when I went to Charleston I went to work in real earnest." He remained in Charleston till spring.

October 1, 1834, he left home for Philadelphia, to attend lectures at the Jefferson Medical College. Here, as in Charleston, he devoted himself to his work, but did not distinguish himself in any way. In both places he boarded with families in which there were refined young ladies, and did not lead a wild life as a medical student. He graduated at the Jefferson Medical College at Philadelphia on the 1st of March, 1835. He says at this time: "I felt absolutely incompetent to assume the duties of a practitioner. . . . When I graduated, I presume I could have gone into the dissecting-room and cut down upon any artery and put a ligature around it, but I knew nothing at all about the practice of medicine. I had had no clinical advantages, no hospital experience, and had seen nothing of sickness."

He went home in May, 1835, his father rented him an office, and he began the practice of medicine, in Lancaster

village. After waiting about two weeks he had his first patient—a case of cholera infantum. The child died. In two weeks after this he was called a second time, and again to a child with cholera infantum. He made up his mind that if this child died he would quit the town; and when it did die, a few days later, he took down his sign and prepared to go West. He was disgusted with medicine, and, if he had had money, he would never have given another dose. He says: “On the 13th of October, 1835—and the thirteenth, by the way, has always been a lucky day with me; and so has Friday; I was born on Friday . . .—I started for Alabama.”

By chance he met some people that he knew, and he settled down in Mount Meigs, a small cross-roads place about twenty miles from Montgomery, Ala. He bought out one of the two doctors in this place and began practice. His first case of importance was one that had been seen by seven or eight doctors from all sections, but was not helped by any of them. Dr. Sims diagnosticated abdominal abscess, was bold enough to open it and let out the pus, and the man recovered. In a year's time he had a good country practice. In September, 1836, he was dangerously ill with malarial fever. The doctor wished to bleed him, but he would not let him, for he did not believe in it. This was his first serious illness. He never bled, and gave but little medicine.

Dr. Sims was married, on the 21st of December, 1836, to Miss Theresa Jones. In January, 1837, with his wife, he returned to Mount Meigs, and had a fair country practice. In 1838, Dr. Blakey, living about ten miles distant, in Macon County, offered Dr. Sims a partnership in a large practice among rich plantations. He accepted the offer, bought a little land and put up a double log cabin, and soon had a good practice. The first two of his children

were born in this cabin. At this time he says of himself: "I am an example of a man who has never attained the ambition of his early life. My successes have been in a direction that I never dreamed of when I started. I felt no particular interest in my profession at the beginning of it apart from making a living; I worked at it earnestly, and at the end of five years I had become quite a respectable physician, and, I can truly say, quite a successful one. Still, I was really ready at any time and at any moment to take up anything that offered, or that held out any inducement of fortune, because I knew that I could never make a fortune out of the practice of medicine. I, of course, never dreamed of anything more than a living and a local reputation."

About this time he agreed to quit medicine and go into a clothing house, but the scheme fell through, and he kept at his practice. In 1839 he had as much as he could attend to.

In July, 1840, he nearly died of congestive chills, and determined to move to a more wholesome neighborhood.

On the 13th day of December, 1840, he moved to Montgomery.

He says: "The year 1840 was a memorable era in my life, and seemed to be a turning-point in my career. For the first five years of my professional life, 1835 to 1840, I was willing to turn aside to do anything to make money. But when I went to Montgomery I gave away my dog, sold my gun, and I have never loaded or fired a gun since. I devoted myself to my profession, determining to succeed, if industry and application could command success. I had an ambition for surgery—general surgery—and I was performing all sorts of beautiful and brilliant operations. This was before the days of anæsthetics. I had made, in five or six years—1840 to 1845—such a reputation for surgery that people came to me from all parts of the State."

His first article for publication was the report of a case of hare-lip in the "Baltimore Dental Journal" in 1845, and in the same year, shortly after this, he wrote his celebrated essay on "Trismus Nascentium."

In June, 1845, he was called to see a case of instrumental labor which resulted in producing a large vesico-vaginal fistula. Before this time he had had nothing to do with diseases peculiar to women. He looked up the literature, and found that vesico-vaginal fistula was considered incurable; he had never before seen a case. "Strange to say," a month later another case was sent to him, and again, just one month later, a third vesico-vaginal case was sent from the country. He gave the patient a bed in his little hospital in his back yard, which he used for his negro surgical cases, and, of course, continued to read and think about the subject. He had been doing many operations in cases which before in that country were considered incurable, and here were three cases that seemed everywhere to be regarded as incurable. His success in other cases encouraged him to keep his mind on the subject. Just at this time, while one of these three patients was in his hospital, he was called to see a woman who had been thrown from a pony. She fell on her pelvis and retroverted her uterus. He put her in the knee-chest position, and, in replacing the uterus, the vagina was distended by air entering it. Comprehending what had taken place, he at once saw how he might be able to operate in a case of vesico-vaginal fistula. He started directly for home to try his experiment, stopped on his way to get a large spoon, bent it so as to retract the perinæum, and then went at once to his hospital and examined the case of vesico-vaginal fistula. He wrote at once for the other two patients with vesico-vaginal fistulæ, and commenced to devise instruments with which to close the fistula. He succeeded in finding six or seven women with vesico-vaginal fistulæ.

He enlarged his little hospital by adding a second story, and then began the famous experiments.

Notwithstanding repeated failures during four years' time, he kept his six patients and operated until he tired out his doctor assistants, and finally had to rely upon his patients to assist him to operate. After four years he had perfected most of his instruments, and could succeed in partially closing the fistulæ, but never in completely closing them. When his mind was full of the subject he came across a piece of small brass wire, and this suggested silver wire, and at once he went to a jeweler's and had some small wire made of pure silver. In May or June, 1849, he used the silver wire as sutures, and succeeded perfectly in closing the first vesico-vaginal fistula, and in two weeks more he cured two more cases.

About six weeks after his first successful case he was taken sick with diarrhœa. His health utterly failed, and he went from place to place trying to get well. Finally, when he fully expected to die, he says: "While lying in bed, I wrote out the history of my operations for vesico-vaginal fistula for the press, and sent the article to Dr. Isaac Hays, the editor of the 'American Journal of the Medical Sciences.' It was published in January, 1852." He had been North to New York and Philadelphia in 1849, '50, and '52. He would get better, but never entirely well, and finally made up his mind to sell out and come to New York to live. In May, 1853, he came North. In September, 1853, he bought the house, No. 79 Madison Avenue, and, although very much reduced in strength and health, still suffering from diarrhœa, he went to work. He made the acquaintance of Dr. Mott, Dr. Francis, Dr. Buck, Dr. Watson, and others. One of the doctors had a case of lacerated perinæum, and asked Dr. Sims to show him how to repair it. This he did successfully. Subsequently the same doctor asked the loan of Dr.

Sims's instruments to use in the New York Hospital, but did not invite Dr. Sims to assist or to see the operation. Dr. Valentine Mott gave Dr. Sims his first case of vesico-vaginal fistula in New York; this he cured, and soon the leading men were operating upon lacerated perinæums and fistulæ, but Dr. Sims was left out. Dr. Sims saw that he must have a hospital for his work. Dr. Francis was always true to Dr. Sims, and could be relied upon, but the leading clique were against him, and he could do nothing through them or through any one that they could control. Dr. Stevens had been carried away by Dr. Sims's enthusiasm, and had promised to give him a chance to bring his plans before the profession; but afterward he said: "I have been talking with my friends in the medical profession, and I find here such a degree of universal opposition to you and to your enterprise that, I am sorry to say, I can not now give you the privilege or opportunity of addressing the profession under my auspices." Such opposition as this, together with threatened want, would have driven Dr. Sims from New York, but his wife would not consent to leaving, and her cool courage kept him here. By chance a friend brought Mr. Henri L. Stuart to see Dr. Sims, to advise him about establishing the Woman's Hospital. After hearing the doctor's story, Mr. Stuart said: "We will rent Stuyvesant Hall; we will advertise in the newspapers for the doctors to attend a meeting which is to be addressed by Dr. J. Marion Sims, late of Montgomery, Ala., on the necessity of a hospital in the city of New York for the treatment of the diseases of women. We will invite all the leading doctors in town by special cards, and they will come to hear you; and they will be wise enough to indorse what you have to say. If you tell your story to the crowd of doctors that I will get there as you have told it to me, we will carry the day." Mr. Stuart at that time was influential with the daily press of New York.

In May, 1854, the meeting was held, and it was by this means that Dr. Sims obtained the public indorsement of the medical profession which he could not get by direct appeals made to leading doctors. Dr. Sims selected for a committee Dr. Delafield, Dr. Mott, Dr. Stevens, Dr. Green, and Dr. French; and, subsequently, Mr. Peter Cooper and Mr. E. C. Benedict were put on the committee. Nothing else was done till fall; then Mr. Stuart said to Dr. Sims: "Now you have done with the doctors all that you can hope to do. You have their public indorsement, and they can not take it back. You have nothing to hope for from the doctors; your only chance is by appeal to the heads and hearts of intelligent women." The first woman that Dr. Sims succeeded in getting interested in his work was Mrs. Elisha Peck, now Mrs. Abernethy; through her he got at several others, but made little headway until he saw Mrs. Doremus. After hearing his story, she said: "Mrs. David Codwise must be first directress of this institution; Mrs. William B. Astor, second directress; Mrs. Ogden Hoffman, third; Mrs. Webster must be the secretary; and Mrs. Jacob Le Roy, treasurer.*

On the 5th of February, 1855, Dr. Sims saw Mrs. Codwise and succeeded in interesting her. "On February 10, 1855, a meeting of the ladies was called at the house of Mrs. Codwise, and the Board of Lady Managers was organized precisely as Mrs. Doremus had said that it should be, and they at once appointed a committee to rent a building and open a hospital as soon as possible. A few days after this, Mrs. Doremus and Mrs. Codwise were called upon by prominent doctors, who endeavored to convince them that they were making a mistake, that they had been deceived, that no such

* Examination of the first reports shows that Mrs. Fordyce Barker was the first secretary.

hospital was needed," etc. But they failed in their mission. Dr. Sims says: "The Woman's Hospital, from the day that it was opened, had no friends among the leaders of the hospital men. I was called a quack and a humbug, and the hospital was pronounced a fraud. Still it went on with its work." The Woman's Hospital was inaugurated, at 83 Madison Avenue, on the first of May, 1855. Patients came in, and it soon proved a success. Dr. Sims says: "The hospital had been opened about six months when I told the Board of Lady Managers that I must have an assistant. They assented, and I selected Dr. F. U. Johnston, Jr.; but he had other plans. I then offered the place to Dr. George F. Shradly; he did not see fit to accept it." Soon after this Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet was appointed.

The first anniversary of the Woman's Hospital was held at Astor Place, January, 1856. It had proved a great success, the lady managers saw the necessity of a larger hospital, and steps were taken to get a charter from the State. Dr. Sims says: "The charter of the Woman's Hospital of the State of New York was obtained in 1857. The Hon. James Beekman was my chief adviser and coadjutor. I spent a great deal of time at Albany that winter, neglecting my private business very much, and leaving Dr. Emmet in charge of the hospital. . . ." He also says: "The most difficult thing and work I have ever achieved in connection with the founding of this Woman's Hospital was the procuring of the land on which the building stands to-day. . . . This I accomplished after a great deal of hard work and political wire-pulling."

In 1856 he had fully recovered his strength and worked steadily at the hospital, and had a large private practice to attend to. In 1861 he went to Europe for the first time. He says: "It was in June that I went, because I needed a little holiday; I had worked too hard, and was tired out;

but I went more particularly to investigate the hospital treatment in the Old World."

He first went to Dublin, and there operated upon a patient with vesico-vaginal fistula before Dr. Fleetwood Churchill and others. From there he went to Edinburgh to see Sir James Y. Simpson; he was especially interested in seeing Simpson operate for dysmenorrhœa, but did not think it well done, and formed an unfavorable opinion of the man. Of Mr. Syme he writes: "I saw him operate repeatedly. I have seen great surgeons operate all over the world, operating in my own country, in London and Paris, but I have never seen such operating as his, or such an operator as Syme." He went to London and operated before Spencer Wells and others; the patient died in six days, the first that he had ever lost from this operation. The autopsy showed that the sutures had closed the ureters. He went to Paris in September, 1861. There no one had yet successfully closed a vesico-vaginal fistula. Dr. Johnston introduced him, and soon he was invited to operate by Hugier at the Beaujon, and Nélaton and others were present. Then he operated for Vernier at the St. Louis Hospital. Both cases were successful, and it created a sensation. He also operated successfully for Loguier at the Hôtel Dieu. Soon after this he was invited by Velpeau to go to La Charité and operate on a young woman who had been the subject, so it was said, of seventeen previous operations by Jobert de Lamballes. This case succeeded, making four in succession.

Soon after this he was called to Brussels to operate in the hospitals there. Dr. Sims says: "I then returned to Paris, and was on the eve of going to Vienna, there to show the operation. I forgot to mention the fact that about three or four years before I went to Paris an American surgeon had gone there claiming to have been the author of

the operation for vesico-vaginal fistula, and he gave me some credit for having initiated the work, but claimed my speculum and all the instruments as his own. He had set the blade of the speculum at a little more of an acute angle with the handle, and he had put an ivory handle to the tenaculum instead of ebony. He used what was called a button for fastening the silver wire. He had operated only once in Paris. The operation was only a partial success, for very soon after the sutures were removed there was an absorption of the line of union, and the fistula opened and the urine escaped; so his operation was pronounced a failure." A case of vesico-vaginal fistula in a woman about forty years old, who had been subject to this infirmity for more than twenty years, was brought to Dr. Sims. "She had been seen and examined by many of the leading surgeons of Paris, and pronounced incurable. She had also been seen by the American surgeon who preceded me to Paris three years previously, and who had refused to operate upon her." Dr. Sims hired rooms for her and operated on her in the presence of Nélaton, Velpeau, Civiale, Bonn, Leroy, Sir Joseph Olliffe, Campbell, Hugier, and others. Dr. Johnston gave the anæsthetic. The operation lasted one hour. In one week's time the sutures were removed, being about twelve in number, and the patient was perfectly cured.

Just as he was getting ready to go to Vienna, M. Nélaton sent for him to see a case with him. The patient was brought to Paris; she needed preparatory treatment, and detained the doctor so long in Paris that he did not go to Vienna. This was the celebrated case where Nélaton resuscitated the patient from the influence of chloroform by hanging her head down.

He writes: "Soon after M. Nélaton's case was perfectly cured I returned to America, . . . arriving in New

York on the 11th of January, 1862. When I left home, in July previously, there was marshaling of forces North and South for the great civil war. On my arrival in Europe we heard of the battle of Bull Run. On my return I was obliged to provide myself with a passport to come into my own country. When I got home I found that we were in the very midst of a great civil war, and I was made so unhappy by the state of affairs then existing that I made up my mind to take my family abroad, and we sailed from New York in the Great Eastern in July, 1862. My programme was to establish my family in Paris, where I thought I would remain six months in the year, in the summer time, and then return home and practice my profession to make money to support them abroad. I was so sure of coming back again to America in the autumn that I had paid for a return ticket on the Great Eastern; but, as soon as I got to Paris, I found that the work I had done there the summer before in the hospitals and for M. Nélaton had given me so much reputation that I had no trouble at all in getting business enough to support my family without the necessity of returning to New York for that purpose." He was consulted by many of the nobility. "Thus I was detained abroad quite unexpectedly, but, viewing the political condition of the country and the disturbed state of affairs, I easily resigned myself to the force of circumstances and remained abroad, thinking every year that I would return."

When he began writing his book it was in 1863, while he was at Baden-Baden, where he was attending Lady Hamilton. He fully intended to write a complete work, but changed his mind and commenced a pamphlet on "Sterility." He says: "I went on with the subject, and, instead of its ending in a pamphlet form, it was a book on all the diseases of women, leaving out the subjects of ovariectomy and the accidents of parturition, but embracing everything else in

the department of gynæcology. This book was entitled 'Clinical Notes of Uterine Surgery.' It was so radical and revolutionary in all the methods adopted, and so startling in the results claimed in the treatment of many affections, that the profession did not at first readily accept its teachings; but in a few years it has revolutionized completely the subject of gynæcology, and now it is received everywhere as authority. Before that day and time there was not a professorship of gynæcology worthy of the name connected with any of our medical schools, and now we have professorships of this department in every medical school in the country; and, indeed, throughout the civilized world. I have always said this book was a mere accident, that I never intended to write it, and the book that I went to Baden to write has never yet been written." He remained abroad until 1868, spending most of the time in Paris and London. He performed many operations, and his reputation was as great throughout Europe as it was in his own country. Dr. Sims was a true American, and a believer in the republic. In September, 1868, he returned to New York and took an office at 13 East Twenty-eighth Street, and soon had a large practice. On December 7, 1868, he read a paper "On the Microscope as an Aid in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Sterility," which was afterward published in the "New York Medical Journal."

He remained here for the winter, visited his family in the summer of 1869, and returned to New York in the fall.

In 1870 he took part in organizing the "Anglo-American Ambulance Corps for service in the Franco-Prussian War." He was made its chief.

During the winter 1871-'72 the Medical Board of the Woman's Hospital of the State of New York was reorganized. It would have been an easy matter for Dr. Sims to divide the service with Dr. Emmet, but he believed that it

was for the interest of the hospital to add other prominent men to the staff, and it was finally settled by appointing Dr. J. Marion Sims, Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, Dr. T. Gaillard Thomas, and Dr. E. R. Peaslee.

The beds of the hospital were divided between these four, each having sixteen beds, and they went on duty May 1, 1872. The writer first met Dr. Marion Sims in 1868. At that time he was fifty-five years old, but he was as erect, as active, and as young in heart and mind as a man of thirty-five or forty. My father and mother knew Dr. Sims as a boy, and he could tell me about my mother when she was an infant in arms. And I could tell him of the old campus grounds of South Carolina College, from which I had just graduated. His house was always open to me, but our real acquaintance began in May, 1872, when I came before the Medical Board of the New York State Woman's Hospital as a candidate for the position of interne. Before this the place was had by appointment without competitive examination. I was senior assistant in 1872-'73, when the trouble began which a year later ended by Dr. Sims resigning his position. The hospital was crowded with patients, and its increased fame drew many visiting doctors to the clinics, and many patients with desperate cases applied for treatment. Among the latter were a large number with cancer. At that time the use of antiseptics was not so well understood, and some of these patients, when tamponed after being curetted, occasionally caused offensive odors in the wards. The lady managers believed this would injure the hospital, so they urged the Board of Governors to pass a by-law prohibiting the admission of cancer cases to the hospital. This some of the Medical Board thought was rather high-handed, and maintained that the medical men of the hospital were the proper ones to decide what patients should be admitted. On account of the crowds of doctors coming to the clinics, the govern-

ors passed another by-law allowing only fifteen medical visitors to attend each clinic, and the Medical Board protested against this regulation. At the annual meeting these by-laws were under discussion, and Dr. Sims read a protest and said that unless these by-laws were rescinded he would resign his position as a member of the Medical Board, and he afterward sent in his resignation and it was accepted.

About this time Dr. Sims was the subject of very harsh criticism, and much was said about his rash and reckless operating. His operation for division of the cervix uteri for the relief of dysmenorrhœa and sterility and the great danger in using his so-called sharp curettes were especially commented upon and condemned. During my hospital service of eighteen months I saw much of the doctor, and, after leaving the hospital, was frequently at his house, and often assisted him at operations, but he rarely said anything about his relations with the hospital, and, as was his habit, he rarely made any other than complimentary statements about members of the profession. If he did say anything, he was frank and intense, but, until the open rupture of friendly relations took place between him and his former associates in the Medical Board, he never uttered a word against them, nor would he allow others to do so in his presence. Others did talk indiscreetly and unjustly, but not Dr. Sims. He was too much of a man. He was totally incapable of an under-handed trick. No one who knew him could doubt his courage and his frankness. Neither fear nor selfish policy ever seemed to me to influence him. If he made mistakes, they were honestly made. He had the moral courage, that few men possess, to acknowledge a wrong even in the midst of an excited discussion. His convictions were strong, his feelings intense, and he was very impulsive, but behind these was a noble-hearted and chivalrous nature. It was not he that first brought the matter

before the public. It came about in this way. Mr. Henri Stuart, already referred to as having rendered Dr. Sims invaluable aid and advice in starting the Woman's Hospital, wrote a biographical sketch of Dr. Sims and sent it to two medical journals for publication: one the "Virginia Medical Monthly," the other the "New York Eclectic Medical Journal." That published in the "Virginia Medical Monthly," of January, 1877, was revised by Dr. Sims, and all reference to the cause of his resignation from the Woman's Hospital was, at his request, left out. But that published in the "Eclectic Journal" was printed without Dr. Sims's knowledge or consent. It was this article which led to the unfortunate controversy that followed.

Dr. Sims was very decided about anything which he had once taken time to master, but he was as a little child about all matters out of his special work. He was conscious of what he did not know, and for that reason all the more certain and convinced as to what he did know. What he did, he did well. He was always prompt to the minute. He hurried in going to or getting at his work, but he never hurried in the performance of it. He did not hesitate, but he was deliberate, exact, and threw his whole being into whatever he did. It was marvelous to see the quick, impulsive, playful man settle down to deliberate, exact, unerring work with his instruments. Of all the letters that I have ever seen of his, only one admitted "haste," and not one showed evidence of it. They were always plainly and neatly written, and clearly stated.

It was his consciousness of what he did not know, together with a sincere desire to do well all that he did do, that prevented him from writing more than he did.

In 1872 he wrote an article on "Septicæmia in Ovariotomy," published in the "New York Medical Journal," December, 1872, and April, 1873.

On February 6, 1874, he read a paper at Albany before the State Medical Society on "Intra-uterine Fibroids," which was published in the "New York Medical Journal" of April, 1874; and in 1874 he addressed a meeting at Steinway Hall on "The Discovery of Anæsthesia," and later in 1874 he wrote a paper giving Dr. C. W. Long the credit of being the first to give ether and do a surgical operation while the patient was under its influence.

In 1875 he was elected president of the American Medical Association, and delivered an address "On the Prevention and Regulation of Syphilis in America," and in his farewell address at Philadelphia he came out boldly on the code question.

He always lent a willing ear to an enthusiast, and was ready to give any one the credit of meaning right. He knew what it was to be looked upon as an innovator. A plausible story enlisted his sympathy, and many an unworthy person has received both money and encouragement from him. He was too much occupied with his special work to study human nature closely, and he was naturally inclined to credit every one with honest intentions.

In 1877 he decided to go abroad. His reasons were twofold: First, his work here in New York was more disturbing and exacting than his work in Europe, and he got better fees and was not so much overrun with charity cases in Europe. He wanted to complete his book, and it was nearly impossible for him to work steadily while here. He had much more leisure abroad. Second, he wished to start his son alone, in order to make him self-reliant by throwing him entirely on his own resources. He settled Dr. H. Marion-Sims in San Francisco, and subsequently sailed with the rest of his family for Europe.

Before leaving he turned over his business here in New York to me. He returned to New York in 1879, and for a

year's time I was with him constantly. He had an immense practice, operating on something over a hundred cases in private practice in a year.

While abroad he became a convert to complete Listerism, excepting the spray, and this he allowed me to use.

One of the three deaths in his practice during that year was that caused by the use of bromide of ethyl, which he reported in a paper before the Academy of Medicine.

He wrote a paper on the "Treatment of Stenosis of the Cervix Uteri," and it was published in the "Am. Gyn. Trans.," vol. iii, 1878; and in the "American Journal of Obstetrics" for July, 1879, he published his views on "The Treatment of Epithelioma of the Cervix Uteri."

In 1880 his son, Dr. Harry Marion-Sims, returned from California and entered into practice with his father.

Dr. Sims was elected president of the American Gynecological Society in 1880. In December, 1880, Dr. Sims, when tired out from constant work late in the afternoon, gave his seat in his brougham to two ladies, and mounted the box with the driver and rode thus some distance. This little act of gallantry was like Dr. Sims, but very unusual and, in such weather, very imprudent for a man of sixty-nine years. It undoubtedly was the exciting cause that lighted up an attack of pneumonia which nearly cost him his life. Up to this time his physical elasticity and activity were extraordinary for one of his age. And his mind was so receptive and progressive—in other words, so fresh and active—that his last teachings seem to be only fully appreciated by the younger men of the profession. Many that took up his early teachings and made good use of them had passed the age of receptivity before Dr. Sims had finished furnishing new ideas and new instruments, which was up to within a few days of his death.

During the first six weeks of his severe illness I was in

constant attendance. For ten days he was in a typhoid and semi-delirious state. For him it was a fearful struggle. He never could bear pain well, but he had no fear of death. He said repeatedly: "If I had my book finished and a few notes of my life written out, I would be ready to die." His mind was so active that it helped to exhaust him. It was wonderful to see how completely the special work of his life, his ambition, absorbed his whole nature. In his delirium he was constantly contriving instruments and going through with operations. He was very willful and difficult to manage. He had often said to me: "Wylie, I have an iron will," and I saw that he was right. If ever a man did have completely the courage of his convictions it was J. Marion Sims. He did not have much faith in drugs, and often we could not make him take them. Even in his delirium he fought against them, and imagined that certain persons were trying to poison him. He willingly took nourishment. For weeks his left lung was completely solidified; but his heart stood the strain, and surprised both Dr. Metcalfe and Dr. Loomis; the latter visited him daily. About the 1st of February, 1881, his temperature, which had never remained any length of time near normal, began to rise steadily higher and higher every evening, and it was plain that in this climate he would not live much longer. We waited for a change for the better in the weather, but it did not come. With his temperature at 102° F., and the weather thermometer at 20°, we took him South. After leaving Washington, every mile that we traveled seemed to improve him, and when he reached Charleston, in his native State we felt sure that he would get well. His recovery was slow, and, although he never was the same man physically, yet in a year's time he looked well, and was again at work.

He returned North still quite feeble, and went abroad in June.

While abroad he did some work in practice, but spent the winter in the south of France. He did some writing, but was too feeble to work as usual.

In September, 1882, he came home, much improved in health. His digestion was poor, and he complained of severe pain about his heart. While in San Francisco, in 1877, he had what may have been one or two mild attacks of angina, but they were not repeated. He was examined both abroad and at home by the best experts, but none could find positive indications of organic disease of the heart. We all thought the trouble was functional, or perhaps, in a measure, due to old adhesion about the pericardium, for it had been affected when he had pneumonia.

He was positive that he had serious disease of the heart, and it often caused deep mental depression.

Notwithstanding his poor health, he delivered his paper on "Treatment of Gunshot Wounds of the Abdomen" at the New York Academy of Medicine, and for three quarters of an hour held a crowded house spell-bound by his eloquence and masterly treatment of the subject.

As the weather grew cold in November he went abroad, and spent most of the winter in Rome, where he had a most successful practice among the nobility of Italy. He returned home July 13, 1883. He had regained his flesh and color, but still complained very much of his heart. During the summer he was busy writing his autobiography. In September he came to town, and, with his son, Dr. H. Marion-Sims, was busy at work seeing patients and operating, but he could not do much work without great fatigue, and to us who knew him he was greatly changed.

He intended to sail for Europe early in November, but was persuaded to remain over a week longer to do a very serious operation. On November 13th, at 9 p. m., he went with his son, Dr. H. Marion-Sims, to see this patient. On

his return home he coughed considerably, and, after taking some morphine to check it, went to bed. He had a habit of writing down ideas at night, by means of a pamphlet, the edge being placed on paper so as to guide his pencil without a light. At 3 A. M. he was writing in this way, sat up to take some water, and fell back and expired without uttering a word. An autopsy showed that he died of atheromatous degeneration of the coronary arteries.

He was truly master of himself. Vices he had none, not even of the smallest kind. The animal in him was completely under control. His habits and his appetites were always guided by his reason. I have known him, day after day and month after month, rise at seven, take a simple breakfast, consisting of a glass of milk and Southern hominy, bread and butter, and sometimes an egg. At eight enter his carriage, and make a few morning calls on severe cases. At nine return to his office and see patients till one or one thirty; and take a simple lunch of steak, potatoes, etc. At two enter his carriage, visit patients, operate, etc., returning home usually about five or six, write letters, and at seven take a plain dinner of one kind of meat and vegetables. He never took wine nor coffee nor tea, nor condiments of any kind. At the table he was usually talkative and playful, talking about the topics of the day, the theatre, of which he was very fond, etc. After dinner he usually wrote letters and did light work, reading journals, etc., or passed his time with his family or friends in the drawing-room. About nine thirty he would usually go to his bedroom, where he read or wrote, sometimes lying in bed, until midnight, when he would retire for the night. It was always marvelous to see him so continuously and persistently intent upon his work. When one was familiar with his capacity for endurance, his power of concentration, his unbounded enthusiasm, his deliberate, persistent, painstaking work, backed up by his

unselfishness and undaunted moral courage, it was not surprising to witness his success: His motto as a boy was: "Duty before pleasure." Later in life he needed no motto; it had become a habit for him to do what he thought was right. Difficulties, obstacles, and trouble were as nothing to him when once he had made up his mind to act. He went directly at a thing, and he kept at it until it was mastered. It was this great painstaking and persistent work that made things so clear and so definite to him, and enabled him to express his ideas so lucidly. It was also this power that developed his self-reliance and his moral courage, and made his instruments and his methods of operating so near perfect that those who claim to improve or modify them are merely working backward over the same ground that Marion Sims traveled over in perfecting them. His was the inductive method, or working and perfecting method—a developing method. He cleared away complications, and gradually simplified ideas and instruments till they approximated the truth and the best.

He was no idle dreamer; he never wandered into intangible mysticism; there was neither confusion about his work, nor indefiniteness about his aims.

His mind was always aggressive, progressive, receptive, and ingenious. He was a leader—a *practical genius*.

