

Tadlock (A. B.)

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Knox County Medical Society,

SEPTEMBER 4, 1879.

BY ITS RETIRING PRESIDENT.

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“He whose horizon is bounded by an historical knowledge of the human machine, and who can only distinguish terminologically and locally the coarser wheels of this piece of intellectual clockwork, may be, perhaps, idolized by the mob; but he will never raise the hippocratic art above the narrow sphere of a mere bread-earning craft.”—*Schiller.*

The 15th of September is the anniversary of the formation of our organization, but by the by-laws, the first meeting in the month was made the occasion for the election of officers, and, hence this is with us the eventful period of the year.

At first, our regular meetings were bi-weekly, but manifested interest indicated the possible propriety of convening every week. This was a happy experiment, and the wisdom of the step has been amply exemplified by the increased interest in, and evident high estimation of the professional, scientific and social worth of our institution.

It seems to me that the time is not inopportune for a short review of the workings of the society since its inauguration, eight years ago, and with feelings of gratification and encouragement I venture the effort.

Conversant with some of the difficulties which beset such organizations, and conscious of others, peculiarly local, that might interfere, we made it our study and effort to foster and invite strength by avoiding the known, and preparing to meet the probable, which experience alone must determine. The policy, therefore, of making our object medical and scientific, and as much as possible, to keep out the dangerous and uncertain elements of ethics, fee-bills and unnecessary parliamentary red tape was carefully, and I may say, for several years *strictly* observed. But, in

the language of our friend and worthy member, Dr. McNulty, who is now absent, societies, like children must have their developmental troubles, measles, hooping cough, etc., sooner or later would besiege the citadel. The preventive policy has, so far, so successfully quarantined us against the fee-bill distemper, and as a general thing placebos saved us time and trouble which might have been spent in unnecessary and unprofitable discussions over questions of order and decorum. But with the gems, we have also the scars of ethical experiences, and we may hope that while the tracings of the latter are fading, the brilliancy of the former may continually brighten.

From a membership of four that organized September 15, 1871, our numbers have gradually, though slowly increased until, with one or two exceptions, all the eligible physicians of the city and several from this and neighboring counties have been enrolled on the list. During the first year, our meetings were frequently attended by but three or four. Nevertheless, in the face of all discouragements, we kept up the bi-weekly sessions until July 31, 1874, since which time our weekly attendance has been eight or ten, and frequently our hall has been quite full. From the records and other data, it is closely estimated that during the eight years, we have had 330 regular and several called meetings.

Of our members now enrolled (over 30) fifteen may be counted as active and regular attendants. Since the formation of our society, the insidious fingers of death have culled two from us, who were in the heyday of life, and promised to make useful members of the profession—Drs. Moses and French. Also two well-worked and ripened scholars have crossed the river—Drs. Martin and Bailey. We miss them, *mais ils dorment bien*. Several of our co-workers are now laboring in other fields, and no doubt have profited by useful impressions taken from our halls.

With us, our society is and should be an estate, a worthy charge for us to keep and cherish inviolate, that it may exercise the most healthy influence while we live, and also be an inheritance worthy the respect of those who follow us, its membership

being made the surest standard by which both doctor and patients may venture confidence. To do this successfully, three things are necessary:

1. Guard well the portals that no incompetent or unworthy applicant be admitted.

2. Make every member an active student of medicine in the comprehension of studying its sciences.

3. Strive to popularize medical skill and proficiency by letting the world know, not more of our personal requirements, but more of our professional requirements.

The commercial feature of medicine is quackery's hand-maid, and doubting Thomas pays her the most handsome tributes. Disarm the maid of her trinkets and tinselled embellishments, and rid her of her charms and mysterious "potencies," and behold! medicine stands recognized by a people long scourged by imposters worse than ancient plagues or modern fevers.

Promote the first by vigilance. Let the incompatibility of laziness with industry suggest the remedy for the second. A closer observance of those principles which promote union and harmony between the members of all callings; a strict regard for the precepts of the golden rule; inflexible candor and veracity, with unimpeachable integrity before the world, these will be ever as seed sown in goodly ground.

Medical societies should always embrace the *elite* of the profession, and a people of proper intelligence will not fail, sooner or later, to learn and recognize the fact that such an association subserves the best of public interest. So true is this in some places, as I have been informed, that no physician need attempt to practice in counties or district, much less to hold medical offices, unless he first becomes a member of the county medical society. If the same results do not obtain here, sooner or later, the fault must rest either with members composing this society or with the mental constitution of the people. Which shall it be?

A knowledge of the sciences and arts appertaining to medicine must be acquired by the study of the various forms and phenom-

ena of nature, as connected with animal and vegetable life; with the experiences and investigations of eminent writers, dating even prior to the Christian era and extending up to the present.

Poets are said to be born poets—physicians never, not even those of the seventh gestation, nor is the prize conferred by marriage, nor by political or clerical honors. The truth of this is exemplified in the assiduity of the most learned men of the profession, and of the world, exhibited in their whole lives of ardent and unremitting study—always students, never graduates. We meet here to emulate their example, and I do not think I overestimate the advantages, when I say that each year's punctual attendance at our meetings, with our clinics, lectures, essays, exhibitions of pathological specimens, debates, reports of cases, etc., is equal to a full course of lectures in almost any of our medical colleges. Take for example an average evening's business: we have the full proceedings of the previous meeting read by our efficient stenographer, Mr. Straton, and corrected; the report of a case or cases, by any one, which he may have under treatment, and now desires to have the opinion of the members relative to the character of the disease or its treatment. The clinic frequently furnishes an interesting case of a patient brought before the society for examination and treatment. Necrological reports bring forward the report of deaths occurring in the practice of any member during the previous week, the disease, its course and treatment. Presentation of pathological specimens, introduces to the society whatever has been collected during the week by any of the members, in the way of amputated limbs, tumors, foreign bodies, post mortem specimens, etc. Also new instruments, new medicines, etc., are exhibited. Then the regular essay, which is a paper prepared and read by a member, on some medical subject, or it may be in the form of a report and lecture. Each member is required to do this duty in alphabetical turn. All participate in each of the exercises when called upon by the chairman to do so. Reports of standing and special committees, and some other routine business make up the order of each evening.

Any intelligent person could not fail to recognize the importance and advantage a year of fifty-two such meetings would be to a medical student and practitioner, whether he be young or of advanced years, nor should the worth of such a society fail to be appreciated by any community.

Such free contributions of labor and time in earnest devotion to the study and pursuit of knowledge, are peculiarly characteristic of medical students, and will distinguish them from those who seek professional recognition merely for the sake of speculation and "filthy lucre."

Disappointed adventurers from other professions and callings, recruited by occasional tramps and pseudo graduates of some medical colleges (save the mark!) inventing some scheme or adopting some dogma already invented as the sum of their mental application, and figuring for a time at the bedside of victimized sufferers, too truthfully does this describe the status of the various heterodox systems of medicine ever since its release from classical and clerical thralldom until the blessed year of our Lord, 1879. While nine-tenths of these base their claims boastingly upon their having been educated in regular medical schools, I dare venture to assert, at the risk of contradiction, that an equal proportion never belonged to a regular medical society.

Let unceasing vigilance ever guard the society's sacred honor from sharing in the humiliation, and let anathemas be upon him who would purloin such advantages for personal gain, for as "nature abhors a vacuum," so honest intelligence, in pity and scorn for "conscientious adherence to manifest errors" will always regard charlatanism, in every form, with unspeakable contempt, whether practiced by ignorant pretenders or by crafty propagandists of untenable dogmas and spurious systems of medicines.

True medicine is, and should be, as comprehensive as it is possible for human genius to make it; therefore, "every exclusive mode or system, whether it is rude and unlearned, or is decked with all the display of genius and erudition, deserves to be regarded to a greater or less degree as a delusion."

Finally the philanthropic work of physicians, with their sacrifices, deprivations, hardships, anxieties and responsibilities requires an abundance of Faith, Hope and Charity, woofed with Patience, Truth and Courage.

Physicians, like "cowards," must have consciences, and be brave too that the integrity and "memory of the heart" may be safely preserved.

To the end that we patronize these ennobling virtues, let us keep in full communion with the laws of God, and ever as a family with fraternal feelings. Let the society prove a church in which to study our duty and the higher medical ethics, in the light and influence of all heavenly ordinances; ever heeding the supplicating tones of meek humanity, but never yielding principle for admiration, which is legitimate fruit only when born of approbation and gratitude.

With these thoughts, closes my third term as your presiding officer, during which I have endeavored to "advance the best interest and objects of the society," as enjoined upon the President by our constitution. With a heart full of gratitude for courtesies and forbearance, and with sincere desire for the onward and upward progress of our noble institution, I cheerfully yield the chair, with its honors and arduous responsibilities, to my worthy successor.