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IN MEMORIAM

WILLIAM GOODELL, M.D., LL.D.

BY

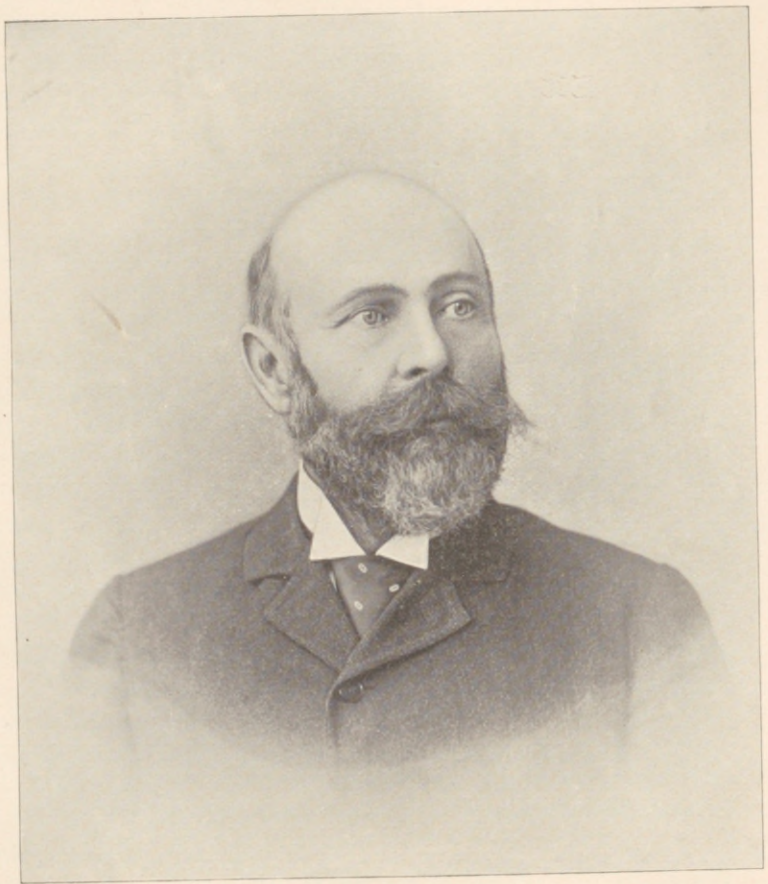
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Wm. Goodell, M.D.

WILLIAM GOODELL, M.D., LL.D.

A STRONG man has fallen. A light that has been shining for nearly thirty years with increasing brilliancy, has gone out. A name than which few others of the American profession in this second half of the nineteenth century have been more widely known, is now written in the ever-growing list of the dead. A voice sounding so often with clearness and power, and to which doctors listened to learn, is now forever silent.

Upon brief notice,¹ and amid the pressure of other urgent duties, I attempt this tribute to the character and work of William Goodell.

He was born on the island of Malta on the 17th of October, 1829. His father was a missionary of the American Board in Beyrout, and the name of that father is honored among those who toiled in foreign lands under the auspices of this Board. The battle of Navarino caused the temporary removal of the family to Malta.

The son was supposed to have derived from his father love of humor, while the graver elements of his character came from his mother. Goethe, in well-known lines, said that he had from his father stature, earnestness, and stability of purpose, and his wit and fondness for story-writing from his mother—in some respects the very reverse of what has been stated as to Dr. Goodell. Kant said he could never forget that his mother caused goodness to grow in his soul; and this is the testimony of the majority of eminent men as to maternal influence in childhood and youth.

William Goodell entered Williams College in 1847 and graduated in 1851. Soon after completing his academic studies he became a student of Jefferson Medical College, receiving his

¹ A few days ago I received a letter from the editor of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS with the following request: "May I beg of you, in behalf of the medical profession, as well as the family of Dr. Goodell, who have been consulted in the matter, to write a memorial sketch for publication in this journal."

degree in 1854. He returned to Constantinople, that was the field of the Rev. Dr. Goodell's labor after about a year spent in Malta, and three years later was married at Smyrna, Asia Minor—whither he had gone to meet his bride upon her arrival from the United States—to the daughter of the late Judge Thomas S. Bell, of West Chester, Pa. His father was still engaged in missionary work, but the son was not satisfied with the field of practice afforded in Turkey and was ambitious to have better opportunity for his life work. Carlyle said: "Find out your task; stand to it: the night cometh when no man can work." But it is of the first importance to find out where the work is, and Constantinople did not seem to the subject of this sketch a suitable place. In 1861 he returned to the United States, bringing his wife and their child, and settled at West Chester. Discouraged by the slowly coming and little remunerative practice, he had decided to try his fortune in one of the newer Western States. But the Hon. William Butler, the present United States District Judge, having learned from one of the managers of the Preston Retreat that a suitable physician to be put in charge of this institution was needed, strongly recommended Dr. Goodell and made earnest efforts to secure his appointment. That appointment followed, and thus the opportunity was given for working in his chosen field of medicine; the salary was ample, so that pecuniary embarrassment was at an end; and at the same time there was sufficient leisure from his official duties to let him spend many an hour among the treasures of the library of the College of Physicians: he used those hours in diligent study, and the fruit of that study was often shown in his contributions to medical literature and in his teaching.

In 1870 he was appointed lecturer on diseases of women in the University, and four years later became clinical professor of gynecology. His lectures excited much interest and attracted not only many medical men, but also lawyers and other educated persons not belonging to the medical profession. The University buildings were then on Ninth street, above Chestnut.

In 1887 he resigned his position at Preston Retreat, and in 1893 his professorship.

For two years before his death Dr. Goodell suffered from insomnia, unrelieved by hypnotics. He also had frequent attacks of gouty arthritis, the left knee and ankle being chiefly affected.

Want of health prevented his attendance at the Congress of American Physicians and Surgeons in Washington last May, and the paper which he had been appointed to present to the Congress, "The Conservative Treatment of the Female Pelvic Organs," his last contribution to medical literature, was read by another. He was at this time suffering from slight paralysis of the left ankle, which prevented walking, and was first thought only a return of gout. As the disorder became worse he started on his summer vacation quite early, going to Williamstown, Mass., where he had rented a house for the season. The paralysis gradually extended up the limb, and his attending physician, Dr. Frank W. Olds, requested that Dr. Allan McLane Hamilton should be called in consultation. Dr. Hamilton came, made the diagnosis of a central lesion, and predicted a fatal result. A pleuro-pneumonia occurred, and, following this, paralysis of the left arm. He was brought home the last of September, and for a time seemed better and was more cheerful, but strength steadily declined. In the latter part of October two or three times an attack of unconsciousness, lasting some hours, happened. At 2 o'clock on the morning of the 27th of October the end seemed at hand, and at 9:30 o'clock he breathed his last. Mrs. Goodell and four children, two sons and two daughters, remain.

In religious belief and profession Dr. Goodell was an Episcopalian, and at the time of his death a member of St. Luke's.

The funeral, which was private, was on the 30th of October, his body being taken to its last resting place in Woodlands Cemetery, the representatives of the Medical Department of the University accompanying the remains, lectures having been suspended, and the flag on the University at half-mast.

Dr. Goodell's contributions to medical literature were numerous, and some of them of more than temporary value. The list which is appended to this tribute has been copied from his own record. The only book he wrote was "Lessons in Gynecology," which has passed through three editions, the first being issued in 1879. By his request I reviewed this work in the *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, and of course found ample ground for warm commendation, especially in this, that Philadelphia had been so long silent in contributions either to obstetrics or diseases of women, and now the protracted silence was so bravely broken! The book sold rapidly; indeed, the supply was soon

exhausted, and a new edition appeared the next year. It was Dr. Goodell's hope to issue the fourth edition, and to this end he had done some work in revising the third.

As a teacher in the University he was associated for a greater or less time with many able and eminent men. There was Penrose, one of the best teachers of obstetrics Philadelphia has ever had; and there were Leidy, Agnew, Ashhurst, and other great instructors; and Goodell was as able in his own department as any one of these in his. Herein was the test of his power, for if a professor falls materially below his associates in teaching ability it would be well were he to seek some inferior work. If professorships become venal, or rewards for cunning and unscrupulous schemers, or tributes to family influence and social power, there can be only evil results in the end. No such taint attached to Dr. Goodell's appointment, no such suspicion could be whispered, and by his able teaching he vindicated the wisdom of those who appointed him. Few men combine the necessary knowledge and the power of imparting it in such a way that students will listen, understand, and remember, but to Dr. Goodell belonged both the knowledge and the power.

He was especially well qualified to teach diseases of women by knowledge, both theoretical and practical, of obstetrics, and his great success as a specialist was in a large measure due to his obstetric study and experience. I believe it is an error in medical teaching and practice to separate obstetrics and diseases of women, for the two are essentially united. One day this arbitrary and unjust divorce, so commonly prevailing in American medical schools, must cease, and, wiser counsels prevailing, their teaching will conform with that invariably observed in the German schools.

A teacher's greatest glory is, not so much in what he says and does, as in what he enables others to say and do. Able and successful pupils are the brightest jewels in the crown of his fame. Tried by this test, Dr. Goodell's honor and renown are assured.

He was a pioneer, and even if others have, or will, push their progress beyond where his ceased, they could not have gone so far if he, or some one like him, had not led at first the advance. Herbert said: "A dwarf on a giant's shoulders sees further of the two"; and still more, if giant climbs on giant he will see further. Wordsworth, the great poet of Nature, believed that he had to create the taste by which his writings were to be

enjoyed. Dr. Goodell contributed materially, particularly in Philadelphia, to create the department in which he labored so successfully, and in which specialists now swarm—for where the carcass is, there will be the gathering of the eagles.

Dr. Goodell's papers are good examples of clear and strong English. Nevertheless he did not write with facility, and his sentences frequently cost much labor, so severe was his critical faculty, though ever art concealed the art. There was a constant progress in the vigor, clearness, and simplicity of his language from year to year, as there must be in the utterances of every scholarly man. Like the athlete who rids himself of each ounce of superfluous tissue, so the writer eliminates from his sentences any unnecessary word in order that the idea may be clear and distinct, the thought standing out in perfect strength and not hidden in pleonasm.

He understood the motives of men, had a rare facility in reading the book of human nature. Herein he was as wise as a serpent, but, if controversy arose, hardly as harmless as a dove. He had great force of character and firmness of purpose. He could not be easily found off his guard or thrown from his balance. He was a well-poised, watchful, strong man. Dr. Johnson, in discussing Pope's "Epitaphs," remarked that "the greater part of mankind have no character at all, have little that distinguishes them from others equally good or bad, and therefore nothing can be said of them which may not be applied with equal propriety to thousands more." But Dr. Goodell had an individuality distinguishing him from the mass of men, even of eminent men.

So far as pecuniary success is concerned, Dr. Goodell's work had abundant reward. One year his professional fees amounted to fifty thousand dollars, and during the last few years his annual income was but little less than that sum.

The entire number of his abdominal sections was six hundred. From his son, Dr. W. Constantine Goodell, I have the following statements: "He has had but few operations for the removal of the ovaries when the disease was not decided, for he was thoroughly conservative, and believed that where there is any doubt all other means should be first tried. This was his reason for assuming the expense of a private hospital, for he had so many cases sent him from all over the country, girls and young married women, who were doomed to castration for no other reason

than ovarian congestion or neuralgia, fancied or real, that he absolutely refused operating and would advise rest treatment instead. Therefore the number of his major operations was small considering the number of women he treated."

The number of his operations for tears of the perineum and of the cervix was also about six hundred.

Dr. Goodell received many honors and was a member of several professional organizations. He was an honorary fellow of the Edinburgh Obstetrical Society, corresponding fellow of the London Obstetrical Society, honorary fellow of the Imperial Medical Society of Constantinople, one of the founders of the American Gynecological Society and its acting president in 1878; he was a member of various local organizations—the College of Physicians, Philadelphia Obstetrical Society, Philadelphia County Medical Society, etc.; member of the State Medical Society, of the American Medical Association, and of the American Congress of Physicians and Surgeons. Last spring he received the degree of LL.D. from Jefferson Medical College.

His successful career is a testimony to his signal ability, his tireless energy and perseverance. Plato said: "To honor with hymns and panegyrics those who are still alive is not safe; a man should run his course and make a fair ending, and then we will praise him." The name of William Goodell is worthy and will receive the praise of the profession, both at home and abroad. He was no mushroom springing up in a night and perishing in a few days, but an oak of many years' growth, sturdy to battle with the storms, and strong to send out its sheltering boughs over a wide extent. Men will come and men will go in the profession, but not many of them in a generation will be his peers.

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