

Annual Meeting of the American Proctologic Society, 1908.

The Tenth Annual Meeting of the American Proctologic Society was held at Chicago, Ill., July 1st and 2d, 1908.

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 P.M. by the President, Dr. A. Bennett Cooke, of Nashville, Tenn. It was moved, seconded, and carried that all business be postponed until evening.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS—THE FIRST DECADE.

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It is becoming that my first word on this occasion should be one of appreciation and gratitude. From the very beginning I have considered it one of the rarest privileges of my professional life to be a member of the American Proctologic Society, the most independent, select and exclusive of all national medical organizations. And when I recall the high character and conspicuous prominence of those who have preceded me as president, I cannot but feel that I have been honored far beyond my just deserts. But the chief source of gratification in such preferment lies in the personal tribute it conveys. Aside from the approval of his own conscience, there is no keener satisfaction in life to the man whose heart is right than to feel that he has the confidence and esteem of those who know him best.

Formal words are always inadequate to express the deepest feeling. Let the sincerity of this simple acknowledgement atone for all it lacks in grace and fervor, and believe me when I say that this body will never have a president more deeply sensible of the high honor of the office nor more genuinely appreciative of all that his elevation to it implied.

Not the least difficult thing about a presidential address is the choosing of a theme. Mindful of the harrowing experiences of cer-

tain of my immediate predecessors, I have determined to inaugurate a reform in at least one respect which I am sure will win approval. Before beginning the actual work of reducing my seething thoughts to orderly expression I resolved that, at whatever cost, this address should not exceed *two hours* in length. I recognize that this self-imposed restriction will deprive you of much of surpassing value, but within that short time I shall hope to present briefly several items which may well engage our attention. This is our tenth annual meeting. Time is conveniently marked by decades, and on the highway of the course we are traveling together, the first mile-stone is now being passed. The occasion is auspicious for a balancing of accounts; for a restatement of the purposes for which our organization was founded, for a glance at the progress made, and for a renewed consecration of our loyalty and endeavor.

The American Proctologic Society exists in response to a well-defined and long-felt need. When in June, 1899, the first tentative meeting was held in the Hotel Chittenden at Columbus, O., a degree of enthusiasm was manifested by the few earnest men in attendance, which augured well for the new enterprise about to be launched. After a full and free informal discussion it was apparent that each one felt the necessity for an organization which would permit the widely scattered workers in a much neglected, not to say despised, specialty to unite their forces and labor toward a common end. Organization was effected with Dr. J. M. Matthews, the "father of proctology", as president, and Dr. W. M. Beach, the indefatigable and irrepressible, as secretary. After the completion of the program, which it should be noted in passing was the first devoted exclusively to this branch of practice ever presented by a body of specialists in this country, the meeting adjourned to convene in Washington, D. C., in May, 1900. With the subsequent history of the society we are all familiar. Without indulging in cajolery or self-gratulation it may be truly said that the earnestness and fidelity of its individual members was in the beginning and has remained the society's distinctive characteristic. There has probably never been a medical organization composed of a membership drawn from such widely separated localities and so restricted as to number which can show a similar steady and unbroken record of growth, enthusiasm, and interest, increasing with each succeeding meeting.

The policy of the society has from the first been one of rare conservatism. Recognizing that the conditions which surround the

specialty had for many years been such as to bring it into disrepute, it was wisely determined to safeguard its membership both by limiting it as to number and by the strictest requirements as to personal and professional character. Thus, while the membership list has only increased from 10 to about 30, what was sacrificed in quantity has been more than made up in quality; and the distinct advantage has been gained of promoting a more intimate affiliation and favoring the formation of enduring friendships among its individual members. I am sure I voice the sentiments of each one of our members when I say that this latter feature is the pre-eminent charm of our organization. Speaking for myself, I am free to confess that I count the strong personal attachments which have grown and matured with each annual meeting as the most valuable of all the many benefits which the society has brought to me.

Of the results accomplished along scientific lines it may be truly said that they have been great and far-reaching. The character of the essays presented from year to year has been uniformly high, many of them embodying original research work of conspicuous merit and being eagerly sought for publication by the leading journals of the country. Thus, not only have the essays themselves attracted wide attention, but the organization before which they were read has gained an enviable reputation for the quality of its scientific proceedings. The effects which have followed would be difficult to trace, but in the aggregate may be readily discerned. Chief among them is the assured position as a legitimate and dignified specialty which is now universally accorded to proctology. Ten years ago special instruction in this branch, with a few exceptions, was only to be had in the post-graduate institutions of the larger centers. To-day the curriculum of any medical college which does not include a course on proctology is rightly considered defective and behind the times. The benefits of this new order of things to the public cannot be estimated. At the present time the average patient requires something more of the man who is to be entrusted with his case than the title of "M.D."; and as a consequence, judging from my own experience, instances of incorrect diagnosis and examples of misdirected treatment have become notably fewer.

Another fact upon which we may becomingly felicitate ourselves is the unchallenged standing which the society has come to occupy in the estimation of the general profession. Formerly looked upon askance and even openly derided in certain quarters, it is now ac-

cepted and listed as one of the high-class national organizations. To be a member of the American Proctologic Society in this good year 1908 is a distinction which carries with it no little prestige.

All this, and much more, may be properly credited to the account of our organization as the fruits of its comparatively brief existence; but my self-imposed time limit forbids a more extended discussion of this phase of the subject.

Directing our attention now to the future, it should both interest and profit us to inquire if the objects ahead are the worthiest, if the methods pursued are the most effective, if the policy established is in every sense the wisest and best possible. Realizing that my auditors are without recourse, I shall avail myself of a prerogative incident to the occasion to freely discuss these several items, not so much for the sake of criticising or offering recommendations as in order that we may have the various questions which they involve clearly before us and give them the earnest consideration which they demand. Objects, methods, and policy, in their practical aspects, are one; methods and policy are merely the means by which objects are accomplished. To what objects, then, does our society stand committed? In the terse, and somewhat unrhetoical language of Article II of the Constitution, "the object shall be the investigation and dissemination of knowledge relating to the rectum, anus, and colon." We may justly assume, I am sure, that that portion of the definition which relates to investigation is being faithfully complied with. But what of the equally important portion relating to the dissemination of knowledge? Are we living up to the full measure of our opportunities in this regard? So far as I am able to see, the only efforts being made in this direction consist in the journal notices of the annual meetings and the widely scattered publication of the essays presented. No attempt is made to preserve the discussions, which almost without exception constitute the most valuable features of our scientific sessions. As a result much of the influence of the organization is lost and much that might prove of the greatest worth to the profession at large is literally wasted. The adoption or establishment of an official organ would seem to offer a ready solution of this difficulty. Of course the utmost circumspection should be exercised as to the character and policy of such a publication. To a certain extent at least its general supervision should be vested in the society and the Executive Council charged with the duty of guarding and protecting the society's interests. A high class well conducted journal, clean as to its commercial

as well as its literary pages, devoted to this cause, would almost without question, prove a success from the beginning; and our society as a body and ultimately its individual members could not fail to profit from such an arrangement. Anticipating an objection which might be urged to the plan by those who for purely selfish reasons would prefer to have their writings appear in more pretentious journals or those distributed in certain fields, it may be answered that obligation as to publication would only apply to articles read at the annual meetings and that concert of purpose and action on the part of all the members would soon result in creating a circulation in all localities of the kind most to be desired. The interest of one in this matter is the interest of all. The society needs an official organ and action to that end should not longer be deferred.

Again referring to the dissemination of knowledge as an explicit object of the society, I wish to urge upon your consideration the question as to whether or not organic union with the American Medical Association might reasonably be expected to operate to that end. Though personally entertaining a decided opinion upon the subject, I wish to discuss it from a strictly impartial standpoint, expressing no preference and advancing no suggestions.

Some of the advantages which would grow out of such an alliance may be enumerated as follows:

1. Larger audiences. Out of the eight or ten thousand physicians who are probably in attendance at the present session of the American Medical Association, it is reasonable to suppose that a goodly number are especially interested in proctology and would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to register in a regular section devoted to that branch, and participate in its work. Thus, instead of an attendance limited to a possible score of our own members with an occasional visitor or two, we would have an audience of a hundred or more and the influence of the meeting be proportionately extended.

2. Growing out of such alliance at once would be the distinct advantage of having the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, with its splendid circulation of more than fifty thousand copies a week, for our official organ. Reaching such a host of readers with our essays and discussions and having the further advantage of official announcement of our meetings and programs from year to year, the cause for which our society stands would receive an impetus which would operate not only to its own advancement, but also to the great benefit of the profession as a whole.

3. By becoming a section of the American Medical Association this society would at once gain official recognition as a national organization, and as such be brought into intimate relation with the great body of physicians of our country. In addition it would be entitled to representation in the House of Delegates and thus have the privilege of co-operating in the solution of the many great problems now engaging the attention of the profession.

As opposed to these several advantages I can think of but one argument deserving of serious consideration, namely, that all restrictions as to qualifications and desirability would be done away with and the door of our society would be thrown open to the entire membership of the American Medical Association. This is undoubtedly a grave objection. But after all in its last analysis is it not one in which selfishness predominates? I confess to entertaining this objection myself most decidedly; but at the same time I recognize that what our society would lose in independence and individuality would be more than gained in the wider sphere of influence and usefulness opened up by this more liberal policy.

The real question is, not what we as individuals prefer, but what course would most certainly conduce to the advancement of the highest purposes of our organization? For after all we must remember that we are physicians before we are specialists, and our most imperative duty as members of this society has reference to the interests of our profession as a whole and to the welfare of humanity which constitutes the only worthy reason for its existence. As before promised, I shall offer no specific advice or recommendation upon the subject. But I feel that the time has come when our future policy should be carefully considered and definitely determined. Shall we continue as we have begun? What will be the harvest of the second decade?

And now, as I close, a vision of the future rises before me. Many eventful years with their innumerable changes have swiftly glided into the Eternity of the past, and another gathering, vastly larger than this, has assembled upon the occasion of an annual meeting. Numerous loved and well-known faces which time has touched but to purify and render venerable are present, while vacant places here and there call up the memory of others who have played their parts and long since have passed into the Great Beyond to be with the ever-increasing majority. Business has been disposed of, the newly elected officers installed, and the three days' session have drawn to a close with an hour of social communion. Many are the yarns that are

being spun and many are the reminiscences indulged in. And as the early history of our beloved society is reviewed and its struggles and vicissitudes recounted, satisfaction full and deep becomes the dominant note of the occasion. For in the splendid work accomplished as well as in the characters of those who have accomplished it, the poet's noble sentiment has found a fitting portrayal:

"Oh, the rare sweet sense of living when one's heart is in his labor,
And the very joy of doing is life's richest, noblest dower;
Let the poor, yea poor in spirit, crave the purple of his neighbor,
Give me first the strength for serving and the golden present hour."

As a final word permit me to wish for our organization and for you, its individual members, the fullest measure of success. A recent writer, whose name I regret to say I do not know, defines success in these beautiful words: "He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the affection of little children; who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who has left the world better than he found it whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul; who has never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty or failed to express it; who has always looked for the best in others and given the best he had; whose life was an inspiration, whose memory is a benediction." This is true success. May each one of us attain it.

REPORT ON PROCTOLOGIC LITERATURE FROM JUNE,
1906, TO JUNE, 1907.

DR. SAMUEL T. EARLE, Baltimore, Md., read his report on Proctologic Literature, covering a period from June, 1906, to June, 1907. In which he said: "That while there has been nothing startling in Proctologic Literature in the past twelve months, your committee is gratified with the steady progress in this branch of medicine and surgery, as has been reflected in the literature on this subject. Especially gratifying have been the recommendations for the radical treatment of carcinoma of the upper rectum and sigmoid, as set forth in the papers of Samuel G. Gant, W. J. and C. B. Mayo, and Jas. P. Tuttle, in which they all recount the combined advantages of the abdominal and perineal routes, which we think will greatly lessen the likelihood of recurrences and increase the number of permanent cures. We note with pleasure the systematic efforts that are being made in