

American Proctologic Society, 1911

The thirteenth annual meeting of the American Proctologic Society was called to order at the Hotel Alexandria, Los Angeles, Cal., June 26, 1911, at 2 p. m., Dr. George J. Cook in the chair. The first order of business being the President's address, the Vice-President took the chair.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

PROCTOLOGIC RECOMMENDATIONS.

BY GEORGE J. COOK, M. D.,
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Mr. President and Fellows:—

The present occasion is the thirteenth anniversary of the organization of the first medical society in the world, whose sole object is the "investigation and dissemination of knowledge relating to the rectum, anus and colon." Other associations had been formed for the purpose of devoting their energies to the investigation of diseases of almost every other organ or group of organs in the body. The American Proctologic Society, however, was the first organized for the special object named.

This is an age of specialism, and the wonderful development and advances in arts and sciences is due to specialism—the concentration of the mental energies along one line of thought. A person must be accurately acquainted with the principles of the entire science before he is capable of elucidating or practicing successfully any one of its parts. In medicine, no physician is qualified to specialize until he has followed the general practice a number of years. This is essential in order to gain an accurate knowledge of the entire science. Our by-laws require that a physician must be a graduate and in general practice for at least five years before he can be admitted to our Society. If this could be changed to read eight years instead of five years, it would undoubtedly mean the admission to our Society of physicians with increased qualifications. The physician who takes up a special line of practice, with only a few years in the general field, is at best a narrow man in medicine. He cannot appreciate the relation of diseases of other organs to those of the part to which he is devoting his attention, and we should discourage the medical student or young practitioner from thinking of taking up any special line of work until he has been in general practice a requisite length of time.

It is only in recent years that proctology has received much attention from the profession. It is now just one hundred years since Thomas Copeland wrote his brief work on diseases of the rectum. In his preface he says: "It is the misfortune of surgery and consequently of society that these diseases, which are the product of slow morbid alteration of parts, have met with less of the attention of surgeons and the treatment of them has been less cultivated and improved than their importance demands, while the operative part of surgery by the industrious efforts of the most eminent of the profession has been carried to a perfection which in the present state of anatomy and pathology seems hardly to be increased." This same condition relative to diseases of the rectum continued until comparatively recent years. The natural delicacy of patients to expose these parts for examination, and the lack of knowledge of the pathology of these diseases and the means for their relief on the part of the physician, resulted in neglect until the disease had made fearful ravages. The physician was content to

depend on subjective symptoms for diagnosis, and on ointments and injections for relief. The electric lighted sigmoidoscope invented by Dr. Wm. V. Laws was a great advance as a means of diagnosis in rectal diseases. We regret that Dr. Laws saw fit to withdraw from our Society, for certainly proctology owes much to him.

It is now past three decades since a young physician, who hung out his shingle in a small town in Illinois, secured for his patient a farmer who was afflicted with piles. It occurred to this physician that the injection of carbolic acid into these tumors might destroy them, as he had seen superficial growths destroyed by this means while a student. The farmer submitted, and the carbolic acid was injected. The result was a cure of the piles. This physician did not hasten to write the case up and have it published in a medical journal for the enlightenment of the profession and the benefit of mankind. He and the farmer formed a partnership, keeping the remedy secret, and advertised to "cure piles without the use of the knife." The afflicted flocked to them for relief. They then sold territory to other physicians and supplied the remedy until the whole country was crowded with a hoard of quacks. Every town had its sign—"Piles cured without the use of the knife"—and yet out of this came good. It aroused the regular profession to a realization of their own shortcoming in this line of work and the prevalence of this class of disease. Proctologic specialization then began, and we can feel justly proud of the advances made by the profession since the time this reign of quackery began. The quacks have been supplanted, though there are plenty yet in proctologic work. However, they are few as compared to former years. The people have been educated and appreciate the fact that the regular profession now devote special attention to these diseases.

Thomas Copeland, one hundred years ago, speaks of three methods of treating hemorrhoids. Excision he mentions only to condemn it on account of the great danger incurred by the operation. He recommends ligation for large hemorrhoids and the use of the rectal bougie for recently formed or small tumors. In the use of the ligature he recommends that only one pile be ligated at a time on account of the danger in ligating a number at once, and he reported deaths resulting

in a number of cases in which the latter method was used. When we compare this report with the present treatment of internal hemorrhoids we can appreciate the advances made in this work, and especially so since it has been recognized as a specialty in medicine.

The influence of this Society through its individual fellows is far-reaching. The text-books on diseases of the rectum, recommended by every medical college in the United States, have been written by fellows of this Society. To be associated with the fellows who constitute the American Proctologic Society is a liberal education.

A number of amendments to our constitution and by-laws have been recommended. It is proposed to extend the limits of our field of observation and investigation and include the entire intestinal canal. I think this is a move in the right direction, as it is impossible to confine practice to any one part of this tract because of their intimate relation with each other in diseased conditions. It is proposed to change the name of this Society so that it will correspond to or indicate this extension of field. The name Procto-Enterologic or Entero-Proctologic has been proposed or suggested. As the intestine extends from the gastric pylorus to the anus, and the rectum is only a short part of it, it seems to me that the word procto is superfluous and that the word Enterologic or Enterological would be sufficient. I would therefore recommend that the name of this Society be changed so as to read—The American Enterologic Society.

It is also proposed that we increase the membership of our Society. This is to be done by creating the position of associate fellow, who shall enjoy all the privileges of active fellows except that of voting and holding office. I believe that this is another step in the right direction. It not only will increase our membership roll, but it will stimulate increased interest in the work of our Society. I have no reason to doubt but that there are many persons in the general practice of medicine and surgery who would be only too glad to be associated with this Society in the relation suggested. Further, I desire to go on record as endorsing the suggestion of our Secretary as regards the method of electing these associate fellows. The amendment, as proposed, gives the council the right to accept or reject applicants for associate fellow-

ship. I agree with our Secretary in his suggestion that the names of applicants for associate fellowship be voted on by the Society as a whole, the same method as is pursued in the election of applicants for active fellowship. This will relieve the members of the council of not a little responsibility, and it will better guard the interests of our Society.

It is further suggested that associate fellows be eligible for appointment on committees. I doubt very much the propriety of this suggestion. An active fellow would naturally take more interest in the affairs of the Society than one holding the position of an associate fellow, and I believe the interests of this Society will be better conserved by having all committees composed of active fellows.

I wish to suggest a change in Article IV, of the Constitution, relating to the nomination and election of officers of the Society. This section reads: "The nomination of all officers shall be made by the executive council in open session at the business meeting, and the election shall be by ballot. If there be more than one nomination for any office the person who shall have the majority of votes cast shall be declared elected. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit nominations from the floor." The executive council is composed of the President, the retiring President, the Secretary-Treasurer, and one other who is chosen by these fellows.* By this arrangement the officers of one year selects the officers for the succeeding year. True, like an afterthought it is added in the Article the right of any fellow on the floor to nominate—but what fellow on the floor will nominate in opposition to the dictates of the council. The present method is not democratic and does not stimulate interest among the fellows relative to affairs of the Society. The nomination of officers should be an affair of the whole Society. I believe that the nominations of all the officers of this society should be made by fellows on the floor at the business meeting, and that the selection of these officers should not be delegated to a committee, especially when that committee is composed of those now holding office. Therefore, I suggest that Article IV (paragraph b)

*[Editor's Note.—This is an error. The member-at-large is elected, by the fellows, as are all other officers.]

be changed to read: The nomination of all officers shall be made from the floor in open session at the business meeting, and the election shall be by ballot. The person receiving the majority of votes cast for any office shall be declared elected.

In accordance with the suggestion made by Dr. Murray at the last meeting of this Society, the committee has arranged a symposium which appears on the program. The subject selected is a most interesting one. We have on the program twenty-one papers. I hope the authors will all be present that we may hear all of the papers read and discussed.

It has been the custom to hold our sessions at the same time and place as the American Medical Association. It seems to me that we occupy the position of a side-show to the A. M. A. Application has been made for admission of our Society to the Congress of American Physicians and Surgeons. I sincerely hope this will be accomplished. In case it be not successful this year, I suggest that our Society hold its meetings at a different place and time from that of the A. M. A. meeting. By so doing, I believe that our Society would attract more attention and the attendance would be quite as large. This same thought was expressed by Dr. James P. Tuttle in a letter received. Dr. Tuttle said: "I have always believed that meeting independent of the American Medical Association would be better for our Society. Going to some city independent of this big body would attract more attention and bring better audiences than being tacked on to a body where we are not the center of attraction by any means."

The suggestions or recommendations offered in this address are merely expressions of my own individual opinion. They may not meet with your approval. I do not ask you to accept them because I have suggested them. I do suggest, however, that you consider them carefully before you accept or reject them. In conclusion, I wish to thank you for the honor you have conferred upon me by selecting me as the President of this Society. I assure you that it is an honor which I greatly appreciate.