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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The honor of having been President of this Society is one of which I am deeply appreciative now and I shall continue to be grateful for it through all the years to come. Until that honor has been yours, however, you never will realize how much this Society is dependent upon all of its members nor how much the accomplishments of each meeting rest upon the generous and enthusiastic efforts of the members of the various committees. I wish especially to express my indebtedness to the members of the Program Committee, the Editorial Board whose membership must remain nameless, the Committee on Local Arrangements and the Committee on Scientific and Commercial Exhibits. Theirs has been a long and often burdensome task. At this meeting we cannot fail to realize how well they have discharged their duties. My thanks go out, also, to those members of the other committees whose work is of undeniable importance but the results of which frequently are less conspicuous. This Society is indebted to all of its workers for their willing efforts—it never can repay them for the time, energy or thought that they have generously expended unless its members diligently try to emulate their example.

This year, at the suggestion of Dr. Ault and several others, a special program has been provided for the day preceding our regular scientific program. The primary purpose of the special program is to furnish opportunity for presentation of subjects in the basic sciences which are related to proctology. The Committee on Local Arrangements and the Program Committee did the necessary planning and the members of this Society enthusiastically accepted the plan. It is my sincere hope that this innovation will be continued, for several years at least, so that our Society may then be able to evaluate the benefits which can be derived from such a preliminary session, especially by our younger members.

In the past several years during which I have been a member of the Council, I have been disturbed on numerous occasions to witness the disappointment demonstrated by some of our younger members when they fail to realize their ambition to be elevated from one class of membership to a higher one. Their ambition is laudable. With all the desire of which I am capable, to express only the truth, I can affirm that never have I heard personal bias expressed by any member of the Council. It is usual for a member of the Council to become conspicuously silent when a friend or colleague of that member is being considered. The Council is invariably persuaded only by the evidence at hand: the application, the recommendations, the annual activities report, the testimony concerning the teaching status of the candidate and, not least, the indications as to whether the candidate has met all of the requirements which are stipulated plainly in the constitution and by-laws of this Society. I earnestly recommend to members who are anxious for elevation in membership classification that they become familiar with the requirements which bind the Council as

well as all other members. May I have the temerity, also, to suggest to older members who often recommend younger men for membership that all such recommendations be honest, forthright and specific. If this suggestion is taken seriously, much will have been done to avoid confusion and the necessity on the part of the Council to evaluate implication instead of fact. Likewise, much unnecessary disappointment, and the resentment which frequently attends it, will be obviated.

Now it is my duty, I believe, to direct your attention to an imminent change which may have such a bearing on our specialty as to deserve our serious consideration. It is doubtless known to all who are here that soon the American Board of Proctology will cease to certify anorectal surgeons. Truly, I may be biased by the limited type of practice which, for years, I have conducted. Equally truly, no single group of men has been more interested in the soundness of the specialty of proctology than have the members of the Board. No group of men has accepted its responsibility more seriously; none ever has realized more keenly its moral obligation or held to it more resolutely. Certification by the Board requires unequivocal qualification under its general and specific requirements. These requirements are broadly based on the quality and duration of the candidate's education and training, on his demonstration of adequate knowledge of proctology, on his ability to practice proctology satisfactorily and on his evident disposition to practice it ethically.

No temperate man would disparage the achievements of the Board or question its motives. I cannot but be concerned, however, about our moral obligation to patients when anorectal surgeons are no longer certified. I am not alone in this concern. Will anorectal surgery again become a profitable field for physicians who are insufficiently trained? Will those who are prone to be, or are, grossly unethical seek the advertised prominence which once served the squalid purposes of their kind? Not many years ago men who had tired of the burdens of general practice would spend a few weeks, or at most a few months, studying with, or visiting, a proctologist, or they could take a so-called course in proctology and then impose themselves on patients as qualified "rectal specialists." This Society collectively, and its members individually, have contributed much to the task of elevating our specialty to its present level and I for one am reluctant to have these contributions nullified. It appears certain that physicians are disposed to accede to what they believe is a public demand that some of them practice anorectal surgery as a specialty. It seems equally certain that it is our moral duty to provide patients with physicians whom we know are qualified to practice such surgery. If we fail in this, not only is it probable that patients will suffer but also it is possible that this Society, having shirked an apparent responsibility, may lose its present influence.

I do not know how to solve the problem, immediately, for we have no power in another's house. Yet where aims are identical and laudable, means often are found not to diverge in the event. In this matter we can hope for a happy solution but we cannot expect it to arrive spontaneously. The problem deserves prompt assessment by us, and appropriate action.

This Society has progressed steadily because we have had many members of broad vision and deep understanding. Among our younger members

are those of ability equal to that of their predecessors. It seems undeniable that, in the future as in the past, adherence to the same ideals, expenditure of equivalent effort, display of comparable enthusiasm, and adherence to the moral and ethical principles which from ancient times have governed the relationship of the physician to his patient, will assure continuation of that healthy growth of which we all are justly proud.

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