

President's Address

PROPHECIES AND FULFILLMENTS

W. OAKLEY HERMANCÉ, M. D.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

It is my great privilege and pleasure to welcome you to our thirty-third annual meeting of the American Proctologic Society.

As you know, the Society was organized and held its first meeting in 1899. We have, therefore, been in existence for one-third of a century.

Presidential addresses are sometimes tiresome. I bring you glad tidings. Mine will be non-scientific and very short.

Since 1920 we have been fluttering about the country and have at last returned to the nest that has so long awaited us. Our well-beloved Jelks has spent many seasons in bringing carefully selected twigs, vines and leaves with which to build this nest and has repeatedly implored us to come to this haven and rest. Dr. John Jelks, we are here!

In reading over past presidential addresses in the "Transactions," it is indeed a great pleasure and comfort to recall suggestions and admonitions and prophecies of those great men; many who have gone from us and, thank God, many who are with us today. The prophecies have mostly come true.

T. Chittenden Hill in 1916 said: "Members of this Society who live in the West have been more successful than we in the East in getting Departments of Proctology established in existing hospitals, and are to be congratulated; and the present would appear to be a favorable time to advocate having proctology taught in the schools." In this connection he called attention to the address of Murray in 1910, in which he gave us some valuable first-hand information concerning undergraduate instruction in proctology from the point of view of the medical teacher and general practitioner. In this address he showed very conclusively that there was practically no systematic teaching of this subject in the leading medical schools throughout the United States and Canada.

Alfred J. Zobel, in 1917, said: "It is a sad commentary on the boasted progressiveness of the university medical schools that they fail to teach at least the fundamentals of this subject by men qualified by training to impart it."

Collier F. Martin, in 1920, in this very city, said: "For many years there have been few proctologists; during the next few years there will be many. Our Society has been going along quietly and conservatively; now we must face new conditions. As we are enlarging the scope of our work, we must decide whether or not we are to enlarge greatly our membership by taking in these new men, who are soon to become a power in the medical world." "The time may come when this Society will have to enlarge its membership." "Every effort should be made to see that systematic courses in proctology are given in all medical colleges in this country, under the supervision of approved proctologists." And finally, Dr. Martin says: "Members should be urged to keep in constant touch with the Secretary and to cooperate with all his requests, so that the work can go on promptly

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and efficiently. No society can be run by the secretary alone. While the president has some influence, most of the real work falls upon the secretary."

I could continue indefinitely, but I must not forget to quote what is probably the finest piece of writing ever published in our "Transactions." The speaker said: "I feel like apologizing for addressing you like a father who admonishes his child than as a member talking to other members of this Society. But I know that you will forgive me for any breach which was not intended on my part. I am called by some of you the "Father of Proctology." Well, then, has not a father the right to spank his own offspring if he so desires? It may be that I will not have the pleasure of meeting with you in this Society again. This old heart of mine, which has done faithful duty for over seventy-six years, has given me positive warnings several times that it is growing tired of its job. Mayhap it will cease to beat ere I see you again and I will have passed with the shadows without the chance of bidding you adieu. If it be so I want you to know that above all things else I have gloried more in the establishing of your, of my specialty, than of any other honor or achievement that has come to me in my life. I know that long years after I am gone this specialty will bless each one of you for the relief from pain and distress. Let me hope that each of you may have a long and successful career. After you have rounded out your three score years or more, may you then have a few blissful days in which to review a life that has been fulfilled with honors justly earned. And may God hold each one of you in the hollow of His hand."

Many of you will remember and recognize this farewell address of that great physician, leader and friend, the late Joseph M. Mathews, given to us and to this Society out in Los Angeles, California, in 1923.

All of these prophecies have been fulfilled!

We see today, proctology taught in every corner of our country. We see the specialty recognized and respected everywhere. We find our Society greater in numbers and with a crowded waiting list. We are proud of those pioneers who, with meager facilities and limited proctologic literature, have blazed the trail and smoothed the road until we, at the present time, can pass easily to higher scientific heights.

There is no doubt in my mind as to the future. Never in my recollection have we acquired so much new and valuable talent for the associate membership as we have during this past year. This membership soon will be blended into one fellowship well equipped and ready to carry on the scientific work. You, the younger members, must have realized that there is a peculiar quality of undercurrent which is apparent to all who have attended our annual meetings and who have read the various communications from our Secretary. This undertow, this peculiar quality which may not be analyzed in the spoken or written word is fellowship, tolerance and the unique American Proctologic Society system of friendship.

There is only one way that I know to perpetuate this wonderful cohesive spirit and that is the personal route!

Let me again plead that each member this next year and in all future years will try to learn more about the life and work of his fellow-members. Write more letters to your Fellows; form small branch societies in your

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communities and invite the profession to meet with you and spread the gospel of our kind of proctology.

As a move in this direction an organization meeting of the Proctologic Staff of the Graduate Hospital of Philadelphia was held on the evening of January 6, 1932. The name selected was the Proctologic Society of the Graduate School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. It was resolved that: "The object shall be to promote an interest in the investigation and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to anus, rectum, and colon; to inspire young men and graduate students in this field; to elevate still further the status of proctology; to work in closer harmony with Associates; and to offer additional support to the American Proctologic Society."

As a suggestion for our future I hope that our Society will find it possible to resume the publication of an official journal devoted to the progress of proctology. This should deserve considerable thought and consideration in the near future.

And let me entreat you above all to cultivate that warm friendship, particularly for the younger members, so that this Society may never fail in its unusual quality which has made it what it is. I will defy contradiction when I claim that it is the only medical organization in the United States with a membership so limited in number and so far-flung in geographical distribution that has today the intense interest in science, in friendship and in the mutual welfare of all its members.

As I have said, we need not fear for the future scientific growth and standing of our Society, but I am today pleading for the continuance of the splendid and loyal unity which has been so long the cohesive element holding this Society together. Each year stronger! Bigger!! Better!!! This spirit has carried us through all past crises; has carried us so many years without a single evidence of acrimony or jealousy, and while we have debated and disagreed profoundly upon all proctologic issues. We are here today, a band of brothers, agreeing perfectly in that vital principle: ethical, scientific, surgical, dignified proctology.

It is with
Stephen Edwin

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