Lives and Exploits of the Physicians and Surgeons of the Earlier History of Virginia and of the Recent Past.

AN ADDRESS

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Lives and Exploits of the Physicians and Surgeons of the Earlier History of Virginia, and of the Recent Past.

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Follows the Medical Society of Virginia:

In fulfilling the duty pertaining to the office of President of this Society, to which by your very complimentary vote one year ago I was elected, and for which I render my sincere thanks to its members, I thought it would not only be interesting but instructive to turn our minds backward and recall the history of some of those who have preceded us in the medical profession in our State; to point out some of their achievements, and to rescue from oblivion a few fragmentary relics, not only to serve as honorable memorials of those who have gone before us, but as examples to us who still survive.

As Virginians, we are justly proud of our State; for there is no other in this great union of States whose history is so rich with the noble deeds of her people, both civil and military.

While this is true of the heroes, statesmen and lawyers of the Commonwealth, it is a subject of pride to us, that there have been many, whose names are almost forgotten, and of whom the younger members in our Society have probably never heard, among the physicians and surgeons of our Commonwealth,
whose records and discoveries in medicine and brilliant operations in surgery, if known, would place them upon the roll of fame with our illustrious statesmen and soldiers.

At this point, I desire to say I have no intention of trespassing upon the subject of the prize essay, for the best of which a premium has been offered by two gentlemen of this Society.

What I will have to say will be a mere glance into the Lives and Exploits of the Physicians and Surgeons of our Earlier History and of the Recent Past.

In recalling the physicians of those very early days, we must remember that their professional standing, as viewed by the general public, was not as high as it is now. Many of those practitioners were self-taught, or only served a few years of apprenticeship in the office or shop of the neighborhood doctor. The opportunities for academical and collegiate education were much more restricted than now. Medical schools were few. Quacks were abundant. One writer says, "The quacks abounded as the locusts of Egypt." This, however, was not true of those of a later period. Many, after a few years study at home, went abroad and attended lectures either at Edinburgh or Glasgow.

The list of Virginia-born physicians graduated from Edinburgh and Glasgow is a lengthy one.

In the earlier-preserved records were Theodoric Bland, 1 in 1768, Arthur Lee 1764, and Corbin Griffin 1765. Among the subsequent names were those of McClurg, Campbell, Walker, Ball, Bosh, Lyons, Gilliam, Smith, Field, Lewis, Brockenborough, Adam, Greenhow, Minor, McCaw, Berkeley, Corbin, Archer, Dabney, Banister and others.

It is noteworthy, that many of these medical men played a distinguished part in the political and military history of the Revolutionary Era.

Later on in 1765 the Medical College in Philadelphia was fully organized, and in 1767 the Medical College of New York was founded. These opened new and nearer places of study, and to them many Virginians repaired.

In 1768, we must also remember that at those medical schools the teaching was almost entirely theoretical. Clinics were rarely given. Anesthetics and antisepsis, of course, had never been heard of. Specialists were unknown. The various mechanical appliances used by us in modern surgery and medicine had not been discovered.

Owing to the long distance and the difficulties of transportation and communication (before the age of steam and telegraph), consultations were restricted; and yet, with all these drawbacks, some of their methods and treatments were in advance of ours to-day. Their very necessities made them inventive and self-reliant, and led to many valuable investigations and discoveries.

There is scarcely a doubt that many of the appliances of modern surgeons, which have been heralded as great discoveries, were long before used by our backwoods brethren. Their personal comfort and conveniences were far inferior to ours of the present day. Their offices generally were single rooms, not very clean, and generally looked after only by a student; often unplastered and uncarpeted, and surrounded by shelves, holding bottles of medicine, a few books, and the like. In every way, the doctor's place of reception was uninviting for patients.

By way of digression, I will here state that the earliest fee bill established by law in America was by the Colony of Virginia, August, 1730, entitled "An act for regulating the fees and accounts for practitioners of physic." This law made a difference of nearly one-half in favor of those who had taken some degree in a university over those who had "served an apprenticeship" only. This law allowed to a surgeon and apothecary who had "served an apprenticeship to those trades": For each visit and prescription in town or within five miles, five shillings; for each mile above five and under ten, one shilling; additional visits of ten miles, ten shillings; and for every mile above ten, six pence per mile. To surgeons, for a simple fracture and care thereof, two pounds; compound fracture and cure thereof, four pounds. But to those who "had studied physic in any university and taken a degree therein," there was allowed for each visit and prescription, in town or within five miles, ten
shillings; above five miles and for each mile under ten, one shilling additional; and for each mile above ten, one shilling. Each had an allowance for forage.

This law also required that in rendering the bill for professional services, "every particular thing made up therein, together with their quantities and prices, shall be expressed." Considering the comparatively low prices pertaining to other things in those days, the fees allowed were not small. To any one who wishes to see this peculiar old law, it will be found in the fourth volume of Heming’s Statutes, 509–510. This law, by the premium it allowed for those who had university degrees, tended greatly to promote the higher education of medical men.

Among the earlier settlers who came to Virginia and founded Jamestown, in 1607, was Dr. James Wootton, who was Surgeon-General of the Colony. In 1608, Dr. Walter Russell is mentioned as being with Captain Smith and rendering him professional services during the survey of the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac river. Anthony Bagnall, in 1608, was surgeon for the fort and settlers at Jamestown and vicinity.

Stith, in his History of Virginia, states that, during one of his visits to a patient, he was shot at by an Indian, the arrow passing through his hat.

It is presumed that these physicians, whose practice was thus attended with more danger to themselves than benefit perhaps to their patients, returned to England, for it is stated that, in 1609, Smith returned to England for surgical treatment, and that his practice was neither chirurgeon or chirurgery at the Fort.

Dr. Lawrence Roberts
took his way to Virginia as early as 1610, and in 1611 is mentioned as Physician-General of the Colony. Returning with Lord Delaware, who was ill, to the West Indies, he was killed in a naval engagement with a Spanish man-of-war. He was succeeded by Dr. John Put
t in 1624, as Physician-General to the Colony, of which he was made temporary Governor in 1625.

In 1640, Chirurgeon John Brock, with others, and a little later we find Drs. Daniel Park, Robert Ellison, Francis Haddon, and Patrick Napier in York county.

Dr. Green practised in Gloucester county, where he died in 1676, in the same house where General Bacon, of Bacon’s Rebellion, died.

Dr. William Cabell, a native of Great Britain, was educated to the profession of medicine. He came to America between 1720 and 1724 and settled on the James river, in what is now Nelson county, at a place called Liberty Hall. He was a man of great enterprise and wealth, and was the founder of the distinguished family which bears his name. He died April, 1774, aged 87 years.

John Mitchell came from England to Virginia about the year 1700, and settled at Urbanna, on the Rappahannock river. He was equally distinguished as a botanist and physician. Besides numerous communications to the Royal Society, he published a work on botany and a treatise on yellow fever. A copy of the latter having fallen into the hands of Dr. Franklin, he sent it to the famous Dr. Benjamin Rush. At that time, yellow fever was prevailing in Philadelphia, and from the suggestions it contained, Dr. Rush was led into a new train of thought which resulted in his successfully combating that disease. This was in 1798, though Dr. Mitchell had died in 1772.

A history of the profession in Virginia would not be complete without the mention of the name of Dr. James Craik, Washington’s warm personal friend and physician. A native of Scotland, he came to America with Braddock’s army and served as a surgeon through the French and Indian Wars, and was surgeon in the American army during the Revolutionary War. After the close of that War, he settled near Mount Vernon at the persuasion of General Washington. He remained the physician and friend of Washington until the death of the latter, who referred to him in his will "as my old and intimate friend." Dr. Craik survived until February 6th, 1814.

Dr. John Bayham was a noted practitioner in Caroline county in the early part of the eighteenth century. Dr. Wm. Bayham, his son, born in 1749, acquired great distinction as a surgeon. He lived most of his life in Essex county. After studying medicine with his father, he went to London, and there studied with
the celebrated Hunters. He was particularly skilled as an anatomist, and while in London made some delicate dissections, which are still in the list of preparations at St. Thomas' Hospital. He was, without question, the most celebrated anatomist and surgeon of his day in America. Living, as he did, in a sparsely settled country, he was consulted by many persons from a distance, and frequently made long journeys to perform surgical operations. In 1790, he operated successfully for extrauterine pregnancy on a planter's wife, and again the same year on a negro woman. He died in 1814.

Dr. James McCullough, a native of Virginia, served during the Revolutionary War as surgeon, and part of the time as medical director. He commenced the practice of medicine in Williamsburg in 1773, and soon became widely known as a physician of skill and culture. On the removal of the State government from Williamsburg to Richmond in 1798, he took up his residence in the latter city. For nearly fifty years, by virtue of his professional skill and industry, and of his general learning and culture, he was at the head of the profession in Virginia. He died in 1823. He was a member of the Federal Convention at Philadelphia, which framed and proposed the Constitution of the United States in 1787, but he didn't sign it.

Among the many other surgeons and physicians of our State, who lived about the period of the Revolution, and many of whom became surgeons in the American army, I find the name of James Carter, of Williamsburg, who was in 1765 complimented by a vote of thanks and fifty pounds by the President of William and Mary College, for services to the professors and students during an epidemic of small pox; of Dr. Wm. Carter, who practiced in Richmond, where he died in 1798; of Dr. John Clayton, eminent as a botanist as well as a physician, who settled and practiced in Gloucester county, where he died in 1773; and of Dr. Stephen Cooke, a surgeon in the Army, who was taken prisoner and sent to Bermuda, where he married. After the War, he returned to Virginia and practiced in Loudon county until his death in 1816.

Dr. John M. Galt, of Williamsburg, was a physician of great eminence. He was the first physician of the Lunatic Asylum established by the State in that town. This Asylum was opened in 1776, and was the first special and independent institution in this country for the care of the insane.

Some of the descendants of Dr. Galt have distinguished themselves in medicine, particularly his grandson, Dr. Jas. M. Galt, who succeeded his father, Dr. Alexander Galt, as Superintendent of the Williamsburg or Eastern Asylum.

This Dr. Galt was also an accomplished linguist—quite thorough in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and all the modern languages of Europe, including those of Norway and Sweden. He was also master of a number of Oriental languages—and read the Koran in the original, and every book in the Bible in the tongue in which it was written. He, like his father and grandfather, was a philanthropist and went about doing good. Dr. Galt died in 1862.

Dr. Walter Jones, of Northumberland county, the ancestor of the celebrated lawyer of Washington of the same name, was a physician of brilliant powers. He died in 1815.

I must be content to group a number of other worthy names without time for special comment, such as Dr. Wm. Graham, David Gould, Robert Maury, Shubull Pratt, John Roberts, Thomas Chrystie, Corbin Griffin of Yorktown, Eakiei Ball, Joseph Harding of Portsmouth, Cornelius Baldwin, Daniel Conrad, Joseph Davis, Charles Lusk, George Monroe, Alexander Skinner, Robert Ross, Joseph Savage, Nathan Smith, John Zervant, Claburne Vaughan, James Wallace, George Yates, Hugh Mercer, William Foushee of Richmond, and others, whose names are still familiar to us in their descendants who are in our midst to day.

Coming now to a later period in the history of our profession in this State, we reach a point where many of those who shall speak of are well remembered by the older members of our Society, and in recalling their names and deeds we will bring back dear and revered associations.

Dr. W. B. Selden, of Norfolk, born in 1773, began the practice of medicine in that city in 1799, and labored there for nearly
fifty years. He was a splendid scholar, and retained his love for the classics to the close of his life. He was an earnest reader of the best medical literature, and a close observer of disease.

In 1790, he obtained some vaccine virus from Dr. Jenner, the original discoverer, with which he proceeded to vaccinate, and from which he kept up a continuous supply for fifty years. He declared he could see no variation in the appearance of the vesicle, nor any failure in the power of its protection in all this time.

Dr. Beverly R. Wolford, born in 1797, settled in Fredericksburg when barely twenty-one years of age, and soon, by his skill and kindness, won the confidence and affections of the people. He was a man of liberal studies, and devoted to the advancement of the profession. In 1854, he was elected to the Chair of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the Medical College of Virginia, and removed to Richmond. His professional skill, wide experience and gentle manners soon made him a popular physician in that city. In 1852, he was President of the American Medical Association.

Dr. George Cabell was a prominent practitioner for many years in Lynchburg. He was a man of superior endowments and much culture. His practice extended for many miles along the Valley of the James River.

Dr. John Mettauer, born in 1787, practiced in Prince Edward County. He was, in many respects, one of the boldest and most successful surgeons in the State. He began to practice in this sparsely settled region in 1800, and during a long life maintained the character of a learned and skillful physician and surgeon. No medical man in the South was better known for his success, and for his many valuable contributions to medical literature. In 1847, he operated for vesico-vaginal fistula, using a lead enuret and catheter. His success was so good that he made the following statement: "I am decidedly of the opinion that every case of vesico-vaginal fistula can be cured, and my success justifies this opinion." This was two years prior to the first successful operation of Dr. J. Marion Sims. Dr. Mettauer, after reaching eighty years of age, was still active and energetic.

Dr. Hugh Holmes McGuire, born in 1801, began the practice of medicine in Winchester in 1822. He soon developed a preference for surgery, and did almost exclusively the surgery of the northern section of the State. Among his first operations was that of cataract, which he successfully performed with a needle made under his direction by a mechanic in Winchester. He also performed thirty lithotomies without the loss of a case. With others, he inaugurated, in 1827, the Winchester Medical College, in which he was the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery. This school was not put into successful operation at that time, but in 1847 was revived with a new charter, and remained in successful operation until the beginning of the war. In 1862, its buildings were destroyed by the Federal soldiers.

Dr. McGuire was tendered a professorship of surgery in Louisville and Philadelphia, but declined both. Though at an advanced age, he served through the war in the medical department of the Confederacy. He died in 1875.

Dr. Chas. Bell Gibson was one of the most celebrated surgeons of Virginia. He was elected in 1847 Professor of Surgery in the Medical College of Virginia. He was a brilliant operator and a skilled physician. In 1861, he was appointed by Governor Letcher Surgeon-General of the State, which office he held until the affairs of the State at that time were merged into the Confederacy. Dr. Gibson died in Richmond in 1865, just about the time of the fall of that city into the hands of the Federal army.

Dr. Francis T. Strodeley, of Staunton, practiced medicine for many years in that place. In 1890, he was elected physician to the Western Lunatic Asylum, and in 1849 its Superintendent, which position he held for thirty-four years. His urbanity of manner, his gentleness and patience made him specially fit for this position. He made many improvements in the management of the insane, and under his superintendence this institution made rapid progress towards the better care and treatment of these unfortunate people. After his death, the superintendence of this Asylum passed, by the election of its Board of Directors, into the hands of Dr. Robert F. Baldwin, of Winchester, who,
by his modesty and gentleness and fidelity to duty, endeared himself to all who came in contact with him. He lived only a few years after his incumbency, and was succeeded by Dr. A. M. Fawnleroy, of Staunton, a gifted man, and the second President of this Society after its organization in 1870.

Dr. Fawnleroy was a United States Army Surgeon, and attained a marked reputation as a surgeon in the Confederate Army, and was highly successful in the management of this institution for the insane.

One of the most gifted men who ever graced the medical profession in Virginia was Dr. James L. Cabell, of the University. There are few medical men who have equalled him in his accomplishments as a scholar. It was said of Dr. Cabell that he could, with honor to himself and credit to the University, have filled any Chair in that Institution, except the Chair of Law.

It would be a pleasure, were I able to do so, to sketch the members of the original Faculty of the Medical College of Virginia; their eminence as practical men in the profession, and their capacity as teachers have been themes of unstinted praise. Dr. John P. Cullen, in the Chair of Practice, and Dr. Warner, in Surgery, were very distinguished. Dr. Brown-Soxward won great fame here and greater afterwards. Drs. Bohannon, Chamberlayne, Maupin lived to a later day, and were known to many of our own generation.

Permit me to speak especially of a few, whom I had the pleasure personally of appreciating for their great gifts in their profession, and as teachers of their science.

Dr. David H. Zucker, of Richmond, was born in 1815; was educated and took his medical degree at the University of Virginia and at the University of Pennsylvania, and then went to Paris to complete his preparation by a two years' study. He first settled in Philadelphia in 1840; was professor in the Franklin Medical College in that city for several years, and was then elected to the Chair of Medicine in the Medical College of Virginia in 1850 to succeed Dr. John P. Cullen, of Richmond, who had died.

So many of the living medical men of Virginia remember this gentleman, that I may be excused, because of my relations to his family, from giving him the praise which all will accord to his strong sense, his scintillating and vigorous mind, his clear and attractive style as a lecturer, his almost intuitive diagnosis of disease, and his practical sagacity in dealing with it in all its various forms. Few men have shown higher talents in his profession, and his genial and brilliant social qualities made him the central object of affection to a host of friends, as he was most highly esteemed for his professional skill and ability by the medical profession.

Dr. L. S. Joyner, of Richmond, was for many years Professor of Physiology in the Medical College of Virginia. While never a large practitioner, Dr. Joyner was a highly learned and accomplished physician. He was a very attractive lecturer upon physiology. There are few who have listened to the teachings of this modest man who will not recall his clear and lucid lectures, especially upon the secretion of urine and its many pathological conditions.

In recalling the names of those who have passed over the great river, we must not forget Dr. A. E. Petticoat, the skilful anatomist, who was called to the Chair of Anatomy in the Medical College of Virginia to succeed Dr. Carter F. Johnson, whose wonderful promise of eminence in his profession as a learned and studious thinker, was blighted by the loss of his life, when the Arctic founders in mid-ocean in 1854, on his return from Europe, whether he had been sent to buy new apparatus and appliances for that Institution. Nor should we forget that gifted gentleman, Dr. P. D. Cunningham, who, with the exception of an interval of one year, in 1867 succeeded Dr. Petticoat in the Chair of Anatomy, which he filled with marked success for many years thereafter. Nor that most successful teacher of Anatomy in the University of Virginia, Dr. John Stogur Davis, who for many years filled the Chair of Anatomy and Materia Medica in that institution. Nor of his worthy and faithful successor, Dr. W. H. Toole, who died only recently to the great regret and sorrow of all who knew him; and more recently still, the honored name of Dr. Wm. C. Dalby, Professor of Practice in Medicine in the same University. Neither would this address be complete without recalling the name of Harvey Black, noted as a skillful and con-
servicewoman during the war. After its close, he resumed his quiet, country practice in the village of Blackshear. But not many years had gone by before he was chosen Superintendent of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum, which position he filled to the close of his life.

The name of Dr. Henry Latham, of Lynchburg, chosen President of this Society at its meeting in Alexandria, 1870, and always punctual in his attendance upon the sessions, recalls his kindly sympathy and genial wit and humor, especially to the young men, who held him in affectionate veneration and esteem.

I cannot fail to notice Dr. Wm. Owens, Lynchburg's skillful and noted surgeon, or Dr. M. M. Lewis, of Alexandria, who was probably but little known to even most of the older members of this Society; yet his skill as a surgeon and physician during a long practice was equalled by few. Nor should we fail to recall Drs. James Bolon, R. W. Haxall, D. J. Claiborne, R. B. Buit, John Field, James Henderson, T. R. Atkinson of the old regime; nor the forty-five martyrs who sacrificed their lives to duty, and died of yellow fever at Norfolk in 1855. Nor Dr. S. G. Cilaves, Dr. Robert T. Coleman, Dr. J. S. Dorsey Colson and others, who have died in our own times; and so the list might be almost indefinitely extended, for there are many others who have left brilliant records after them, and whose names are endeared to us by many delightful memories; but to attempt to name them all, and point out their achievements, would consume more time than is allotted to this address.

I have also refrained from speaking of those Virginians belonging to us by birth, but who attained their reputations in other States. The list, however, is a long one, and I will simply mention Dudley and McDowell, of Kentucky; Hartshorne, Chapman, Horner, Mitchell, Mutter, all of Philadelphia.

There is one other Virginia physician whose name should be perpetuated—Dr. David Minton Wright, of Norfolk, who was brutally hung in obedience to the orders of a military Commission of the Federal Army, for defending his own life upon the streets of Norfolk in 1862. The General Assembly of Virginia, after his death, passed this resolution:

"Resolved, That, in the death of Dr. Wright, this Common-wealth recognizes another addition to the long and illustrious catalogue of martyrs whose stern and inflexible devotion to liberty have rendered historic the history of the people of the present struggle."

This Society was organized in 1870, with ninety-two members. Of that number fifty have died. In twenty-four years, more than one-half of those who first assembled in this city to form this body have passed to the Great Beyond. Their virtues should never be forgotten and their memories should always be honored.

In view of the honorable list of men, who have preceded us in the philanthropic duties of our great profession in this Commonwealth, and of their distinguished and useful services to their fellowmen in their day, and of their valuable contributions to medical science for the good of mankind, and of the host of living successors to the eminent surgeons and physicians of the past generation, whose attainments and genius promise a harvest of honor for our profession in this State and in the world, let us betake ourselves with earnest and solemn devotion to the duties which our daily practice imposes upon us, and, by close observation and unceasing study, to the promotion of medical science, until its beneficent results shall be commensurate with our highest aspirations, and realize our best hopes for the well-being, happiness and elevation of the human race, according to the benevolent purposes of our Creator.