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## A REVIEW OF THE ORGANIZATION AND THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE UPPER CUMBERLAND MEDICAL SOCIETY\*

W. B. YOUNG, M.D., Bon Air

### DREAMING—

*"Waking now, we drew the curtain  
That was hiding from our view  
Faces on the scroll of memory  
Swiftly passing in review."*

FROM the subject assigned to me, "The Early History of the Society," some one might think there was a veiled intimation with reference to my age, as the Society was organized in the early nineties. However, I am sure there are here tonight at least two of the charter members, in whose presence I feel very comfortable. Although it has been twenty-nine years since I practiced medicine and nearly thirty years since I have had the pleasure of attending a meeting, I have in a way kept up with the progress of this Society, that was dear to my heart when I was active in the profession.

I regret that the Minutes of the first few meetings of the Society have been lost and we will have to rely largely on recollections of some of the charter members. Especially are we indebted to the memory of Dr. W. J. Breeding, who attended the first meeting and was the first Secretary, who is present this evening. Our memories may be in error in some instances—if so, I hope some older member will not hesitate to correct this review.

In Volume IV of the "Country Doctor" I find the following editorial in the issue of June, 1895.

"Some few years ago Dr. W. T. McColgan, of Arcot, Tennessee, called the attention of a number of physicians to the great need of a medical association being organized for the benefit of the physicians living in this section. This was the nucleus around which one of the most active and up-to-date medical societies in the South has been successfully organized. A short

time after this Dr. J. L. Jones of New Middleton, wrote a personal letter to every physician in the ten counties included in this association asking them to meet for the purpose of carrying out the suggestion of Dr. McColgan, who should receive the honored title, "Father of the Upper Cumberland Medical Society." At this meeting only five physicians put in their appearance. This little band, as courageous as ever Spartans were, determined to make the Society a certainty, and appointed another day of meeting. At this meeting only six physicians responded to the call. This was just a little discouraging, but with energy and determination they resolved to try it again. So they sent out an urgent call for May, 1895, to every physician in the district. And when the little indefatigable band of six, who knew no defeat or recognized any such word as "Fail," met at the appointed time in the beautiful little mountain city of Cookeville they were filled with joy to know that their labors had been crowned with success. The Upper Cumberland Medical Society was a reality, there being fifty physicians in attendance."

The following is a little stimulant contained in the same editorial of June, 1895:

"Because we are mountain physicians we should not become discouraged. Was not Ephriam McDowell a practitioner in the mountains of Kentucky? Were not many of the greatest men in our profession reared in a mountainous country? Mountaineers are, by nature, 'well built,' and are among the most courageous men on earth. So, gentlemen, let us try to emulate (professionally) the example set before us by the mountaineers of Scotland (the Highlanders) in their famous wars with England. Or still closer, the good judgment, true bravery and the triumphant march of the riflemen of the mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee at the battle of New Orleans—

\*Read before Upper Cumberland Medical Society, Cookeville, June 16, 1932.

under the leadership of that grand old hero, Andrew Jackson."

The first meeting must have been in the spring of 1894. Dr. Breeding, who as he states in a letter to me, was at that time "a fledgling in the professional flock"—a young man upon whose memory we can best rely. His recollection is there were only four in attendance at the first meeting: Drs. W. T. McColgan, L. R. McClain, John S. B. Martin and himself. It is quite likely that another physician of Cookeville made the fifth attending this meeting, as given in the above editorial.

Dr. McColgan, although past middle life, rode horseback forty miles to attend the meeting. It was held at Cookeville in a room in the old courthouse that has long since been torn down. It was a bit discouraging; however, the five courageous souls decided to make another effort. They effected a temporary organization by electing Dr. W. T. McColgan, President; Dr. L. R. McClain, Vice-President; Dr. W. J. Breeding, Secretary; and Dr. John S. B. Martin, Treasurer. The President instructed the Secretary to write to every physician in the ten counties of the Society, asking them to meet on a certain date in the autumn of that year. He did this and paid for the postage himself. As the little band was leaving the old courthouse Dr. Breeding remarked to Dr. McClain that this was a small beginning for such an organization, and Dr. McClain replied—"Yes, but large oaks from little acorns grow and large streams from little fountains flow." From this little acorn there has grown to be a very sturdy Monarch in the forest of medicine.

The second meeting must have been in the autumn of 1894. Only six physicians responded to this call. My recollection, being one of the six, and the memory of other charter members is, that the following physicians attended: Drs. W. T. McColgan, J. L. Jones, John S. B. Martin, Samuel Denton, W. J. Breeding, and W. B. Young.

Undaunted and with a determination that always brings victory they proceeded to elect officers. Dr. W. T. McColgan was re-elected President; Dr. John S. B. Martin,

Vice-President; Dr. W. J. Breeding was re-elected Secretary and we think Dr. Jones was elected Treasurer.

The re-elected Secretary again wrote to every practitioner in the district and to several prominent physicians of Nashville, urging them to attend the next meeting to be held at Cookeville, May 4-5, 1895. The response was most encouraging as fifty physicians were in attendance, among whom were some prominent physicians and surgeons from Nashville. The sessions were held in the Methodist Church of that city with several laymen as visitors. I remember Major Rutledge Smith, who at that time lived in Cookeville and some lawyers and business men attended the sessions. The paper of Cookeville and other county papers published most of the proceedings and gave the Society a boost. A district medical society in that section was something out of the ordinary.

At the second meeting in the fall of 1894, the President appointed a committee to draft the Constitution and By-Laws, and to report at the May, 1895, meeting. The members of the Committee, whose names I have taken from the first printed Constitution were: John L. Jones, Chairman; Samuel Denton, W. B. Young, W. T. McColgan, S. B. Fowler.

The report of the Committee was approved and the Constitution and By-Laws adopted at the May, 1895, meeting.

In the early days of the Society it convened twice each year—in the spring and in the autumn. It was thought necessary to keep up interest and encourage new additions. We always "catered" to the eminent physicians from the large cities to boost the Society, and grace the meetings. Whether they deserved it or not they were always a drawing card, and I notice from the attendance at this meeting that the practice has been continued. However, I think the tables have turned. It now appears that the renowned medical visitors attend to be boosted by the country doctors, who I have always observed had more practical "horse sense" than their charming city brothers.

At most of the meetings during the time

the Society met semi-annually, all members and visiting physicians were entertained in the private homes of the citizens of the town in which the meeting was held. This always gave a close personal touch with the laity and I regretted to learn that this method of entertaining was changed to the private rooms of the town hotels, that afforded but little contact with the people. The citizens in each town always welcomed the physicians into their homes with open arms and in a small way I think it elevated the profession in the minds of the laymen.

There are two meetings of the Society that are outstanding in my memory. The one at Carthage on May 3-4, 1898, was exceptionally interesting and pleasant. The attendance was the largest up to that date of any previous meeting, with more prominent physicians and well known laymen. The physicians present from Nashville were—Drs. Duncan Eve, J. S. Cain, Hilliard Wood, W. D. Haggard, and J. W. Handley.

Judge John R. Aust, then of Carthage, now of Nashville, delivered a charming welcome address. In closing he recited a short stanza that I still remember. He said—"I think doctors are all good men."

*"They are great men and useful without doubt,  
Who season pottage, or expel the gout,  
Whose science keeps life in, and keeps death out."*

The address of welcome was responded to by Dr. M. B. Capps of Livingston, in that happy vein of which he was a master.

Judge L. D. Smith, the present\* Attorney General of the State, read a very able paper on "Medical Jurisprudence," that was ably discussed by Drs. Eve, Cain, and Haggard.

I also well remember the delightful meeting held at Celina. Dr. S. B. Fowler of Gainesboro, in his usual charming way of entertaining, had invited all the members to meet at Gainesboro and be conducted by him to Celina by boat. It was a unique and delightful navigation up the river in the little steamboat, with beautiful scenery all along the route. The leading attorney, Mr. Plumley of Celina, delivered the address of welcome and as I remember the response was by Dr. S. B. Fowler. The hospitality

\*Died in November, 1932.

extended by the good citizens in their private homes was most cordial. I remember that some were entertained in the home of the father of United States Senator Cordell Hull.

I wish I had the remarkable memory of some men that I might call back and review the trials, tribulations and wonderful work of such outstanding country doctors of this Society, in their day, as Drs. S. B. Fowler of Gainesboro, John S. B. Martin of Cookeville, Snodgrass and Gist of Sparta, M. B. Capps of Livingston, J. L. Jones of New Middleton, T. J. Jackson of Liberty, Dyer of Cookeville, W. M. Farmer of Buffalo Valley, and W. T. McColgan, the Grand Old Roman of Clay County, and other prominent members who have passed into the Beautiful Beyond. They are dead yet live. I do not believe with the poet that when men die that their good deeds are interred with their bones and that their evil deeds live after them. Both good and evil deeds survive throughout all time.

*"Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time."*

There are a few "old war horses" still living who helped promote and stood back of the Society in its youthful struggles. I can call to mind Drs. Sam Denton, Charter Member of Buffalo Valley, L. R. McClain, Charter Member of Cookeville, Abe King of Chestnut Mound, W. N. Gray of Celina, C. E. Reeves of Gainesboro, T. J. Smith of Laurel Hill, W. A. Hargis of Donelson and Henry Martin of Cookeville—all outstanding lights in the profession. There are doubtless others living who stand high in the councils of the Society, who are now enjoying the happy and contented period of the life of man. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes says "to be eighty years young is sometimes far more cheerful and helpful than to be forty years old."

*"Spring still makes spring in the mind  
When sixty years are told;  
Love wakes anew this throbbing heart,  
And we are never old."  
"So when my years shall total up four score,  
I'll simply pray for 'one decade more.'"*

There was also a group a little younger

than the "old war horses" that came into the Society in its youth and have been for years pillars in the Association—Dr. W. J. Breeding, Charter Member, and Drs. R. E. Lee Smith, A. F. Richards, W. Scott Farmer, C. L. Hill, H. L. Fancher, O. W. Hill, Frank Swope, S. E. Gaines, W. M. Johnson, W. A. Howard, J. T. Moore, W. C. Officer, J. R. Gott, Z. L. Shipley, B. S. Rhea, Vernon Hutton, V. L. Lewis, C. B. Clark, W. M. Breeding, Isaac Barnes, E. W. Mitchell, and many other able but younger men with whom I am not so well acquainted, who have come into the Society since my exit.

Quite a few of the physicians whose names are given above have been honored as Presidents of the Society. Dr. R. E. Lee Smith, once President, was elected Treasurer at one of the early meetings and has served continuously for more than twenty years, to the present meeting, a trust that reflects a high degree of honor. Dr. Z. L. Shipley has been Secretary for two decades, which is evidence of his ability and the high regard in which he is held by the members of the Society.

I also wish I had the memory of most astute politicians, that I might recall some of the unique experiences of each member in days gone by. Of course some of the performances and orations could not ethically be described here this evening, especially in the presence of ladies. The richest rehearsals occurred at the "Round Table" conclaves in private rooms at hotels after the banquet was over, and sometimes after the dawn of day.

If my memory is correct Dr. W. D. Haggard presided at the first "Round Table" and Dr. Hilliard Wood at the second.

This Society is perhaps more deeply indebted to Dr. W. D. Haggard and Dr. Hilliard Wood of Nashville for assistance and prestige in the early struggling days of its existence, than to any of the visiting physicians. They attended almost all of the early meetings, boosting the Society and encouraging us mountain practitioners.

A little later Drs. Lucius E. Burch, Perry Bromberg and other prominent Nashville physicians came into the picture and are frequent visitors and staunch supporters of the Society.

I well remember hearing Dr. McColgan in the evening of his life, state that it had been the dream of his life to see organized and successfully functioning a Medical Society in the heart of the Upper Cumberland Valley. He claimed it was sorely needed, as it was difficult and too great a loss of time for most of the physicians living in this Upper Valley to attend the meetings of Societies in Nashville and other distant points. Of the time he was speaking there was no Tennessee Central Railroad, no State highways, only muddy roads, very few buggies and no automobiles. Traveling was mostly done by horseback.

I have not forgotten that pleasant and all sufficient smile of the Old Roman after several meetings of the Society had been held and he was convinced that it would be a permanent institution and was well on its mission of good will and education among the practitioners of the land he so dearly loved.

About eighteen months after the organization of the Association it was decided to publish a monthly Society organ, to be known as "The Country Doctor." This was a very appropriate name, for most of the members were country practitioners. I was elected editor and Dr. S. B. Fowler of Gainesboro was associate editor and the little journal was published at Sparta by the "Favorite Publishing Company," of which Mr. R. P. Baker was publisher and business manager. The life of "The Country Doctor" was not quite as long as that of most country doctors, it having survived for only three years, due to financial troubles, for the days of small journals had passed. I have now in my library two cloth bound volumes, the IV and V, that I prize very highly for the pleasant reminiscences connected therewith. I understand that Dr. A. F. Richards and Dr. W. M. Johnson, both of whom at different times were my partners in the practice, of whom I have ever been fond, and perhaps other old members, have preserved issues of this little journal.

Some nationally known physicians and surgeons contributed articles to this journal, among whom were—Drs. Richard Douglass, Duncan Eve, J. S. Cain, C. S. Briggs, W. D. Haggard and Hilliard Wood of Nash-

ville, Drs. John A. Wyeth, J. A. Bodine, W. R. Townsend, and Robert H. M. Dawborn, all during that time connected with the New York Polyclinic.

The practical work and far-reaching good that this Society has accomplished I do not believe has ever been surpassed by the work of any Medical Society in a similar area.

The path that we traveled was not always strewn with roses. Occasionally a friendly disagreement regarding the best policy to be pursued by the Society would arise. However, a sincere and learned disagreement among physicians, especially in consultations, is no unusual occurrence, as clearly elucidated in the following few stanzas:

#### WHEN DOCTORS DISAGREE

*"He looked at my tongue and he shook his head  
This was Doctor Smart—  
He thumped on my chest, and then he said:  
'Ah! there it is! Your heart!'  
He looked at my tongue and he shook his head—  
This was Doctor Wise—  
'Your liver's a total wreck,' he said,  
'You must take more exercise!'  
He looked at my tongue and he shook his head—  
This was Doctor Bright—  
'I'm afraid your lungs are gone,' he said,  
'And your kidney isn't right.'  
Perhaps they were right, and perhaps they know,  
It isn't for me to say:  
Mayhap I erred when I madly threw  
Their bitter stuff away;  
But I'm living yet, and I'm on my feet,  
And grass isn't all that I dare to eat,  
And I walk and I run, and I worry, too,  
But to save my life, I cannot see  
What some of the able doctors would do  
If there were no fools like you and me."*

—S. E. Kiser, in *Cleveland Leader*.

#### "THE APPENDIX"

This is just an appendix to my remarks and perhaps just as useless as the vermiform appendix. However, my love for this noble profession prompts me to do a little prophesying, although I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet.

Soothsayers are not held very highly by the Medical profession. However, I claim a personal privilege—being an ex-country doctor of the Upper Cumberland, and now a layman, to prophesy in an unassuming manner, regarding the trend of the Medical Boards and Medical Colleges.

I refer to the severe restrictions at the portals of Medical Colleges and to the exacting requirements of Medical Boards.

Had the same restrictions and requirements existed in the days of some of the ablest and most renowned physicians and surgeons, they would not have been able to enter the profession, for they were very poor young men and the support of others was depending on them.

Pardon my presumption when I say that I believe the pendulum is swinging too far in the direction of such requirements.

I know of several large communities in the Upper Cumberland Valley from which able physicians have moved, and no practitioners have taken their places.

It may be contended that good roads and the automobiles now enable physicians living at some distance to serve these rural communities. This is largely true, but compare the charges the distant physician must of necessity make with the charges of the local physician.

You have only to turn the pages of history to learn that almost without exception every reformation, social, industrial, and political, has gone to extremes and had to suffer a reaction.

I am persuaded, from what I hear from rural communities and the trend of National events, that if the leading members of the profession do not see to it that the swing of the pendulum in the direction of College restrictions, if not halted, it will not be many decades until the State Legislatures and the Congress will furnish the physicians and regulate the practice to the great detriment of the profession.

Communitistic ideas have spread in all civilized countries to an alarming extent. If the Communist becomes politically successful, do you doubt that he will be also successful with the industries and the professions?

As Patrick Henry once said at a very crucial period of this country—"Cæsar had his Brutus and Charles the First his Cromwell." I hope that the profession may observe the signs of the times and not let the States and the National Government be its Brutus.