

"Maryland Physicians Met in 1899"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

Westminster has periodically been selected as the host city for a number of state wide meetings or conventions, including firemen, fraternal organizations, rural letter carriers, national guardsmen, etc. The town rolled out the red carpet for such groups and the visit frequently became a community event with a parade, dinner or demonstration. Physicians from throughout the state gathered in 1899; the story was reported in the November 18th issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper:

"The regular semi-annual meeting of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland was held at Firemen's hall in this city, on Tuesday, and was attended by an unusual number of its members. Dr. Clotworthy Birnie, president of the faculty, presided. Dr. J. W. Hering, of this city, comptroller of the Md. treasury elect, made an earnest and appropriate address of welcome, to which a fitting response was made by President Birnie.

The first subject considered was 'The Medical and Chirurgical Faculty's Contribution to the Welfare of the State,' upon which Dr. E. F. Cordell, of Baltimore, read a pertinent and suggestive paper, which was further discussed by Drs. J. D. Blake and John S. Fulton, of Baltimore, and J. McP. Scott, of Hagerstown. Dr. William Osler, of Baltimore, read a valuable and extremely interesting paper on 'Home Treatment of Consumption.' Dr. C. S. Millet, of Brockton, Mass, gave brief histories of a number of cases treated by him, in which the patients were required to sleep in the open air as the chief method of combating this disease. Some of the patients well nigh recovered entirely under this treatment, and all were greatly benefited. Dr. Millet's experience was in confirmation of the views advanced by Dr. Osler. The subject was further discussed by Drs. L. E. Gichner, W. B. Platt, of Baltimore; H. F. Cassidy, of Roland Park, and J. C. Hemmeter, of Baltimore.

Dr. James Howell Billingslea, of Westminster, read a paper in which he recited a number of interesting cases under the title of 'Bladder Troubles in Old Men and the Treatment.' Dr. Chas. R. Foutz, of this city, read a paper in which he recited very clearly the method of successful treatment of, 'An Interesting Case of Cystitis.' These papers were discussed also by Drs. R. Winslow, Jr. D. Blake, H. H. Beidler, of Baltimore, and V. M. Reichard, of Fairplay. 'The Recent Methods of Treating Hypertrophiea Prostate by Electro-Cautery,' was the subject of a valuable paper by Dr. H. H. Young, of Baltimore, who exhibited a number of instruments used in the process. This concluded the morning session.

After launching at Westminster's elegant new hotel, the Westminster, the Association again met at half-past two o'clock Tuesday afternoon and continued its discussions. Dr. J. C. Hemmeter, of Baltimore, read an entertaining and instructive paper on 'The Use and Abuse of Hydrochloric Acid in Gastric Disease' as the first contribution to the session. Dr. A. D. McConachie, of Baltimore, followed with an elaborate and carefully prepared paper on 'The Naso-Pharynx in Relation to Aural Disease.' Dr. Simon Flexner, of Philadelphia, and L. F. Barker, of Baltimore, discussed in an able manner 'Medical Conditions in the Philippines and India.'

Dr. John S. Fulton secretary of the State Board of Health, gave a short paper on 'Typhoid Fever in Country Districts.' He said that while of the State's population of a million people, one-half is in Baltimore, of the 800 persons who died from typhoid fever in one year, only one-quarter died in Baltimore. One Eastern Shore county reported 56 cases in 1877, with 9 deaths. He said 112 reported cases of typhoid malaria

probably made up the apparent large discrepancy in the death rate. He suggested a sanitary survey of the premises where typhoid may exist in the country districts and the sending of circulars to the affected family, giving instructions as to preventing the spread of the disease. Volunteer nurses should be taught the danger of germs communicating the disease and should be careful in handling soiled clothes and vessels used by the patients.

Dr. V. M. Reichard followed with some practical suggestions about treatment. He said that the doctor should be able to nurse the patient, so that the family might see how it should be done and should also be able to go into the kitchen and cook, in order to be sure that the proper food, properly prepared, is given the patient.

This ended the regular program, but Dr. George J. Preston called the attention of the faculty to the need of change in the lunacy laws of the State. He said if a man has property worth \$1,000 it is impossible to commit him as a pauper lunatic, although his property may not be sufficient to pay the expenses of his family and the charge of \$7 a week for his care.

Dr. E. N. Brush said that he had been told that 1,100 persons had been illegally committed to insane asylums during the past four or five years owing to defects in the law. He offered a resolution, which was adopted, reaffirming the faculty's endorsement of a proposed amendment to the lunacy laws which was offered to the Legislatures of 1896 and 1898, and will be pressed again this winter. The amendment is modeled after the New York law, and provides a certificate by physicians, which is then presented in court for approval.

A short business session closed the proceedings.

Among the physicians present other than those named were: J. T. Hering, T. J. Coonan, of Westminster; E. D. Cronk, Winfield; L. A. Aldridge, Long; S. N. Gorsuch, Gamber; J. Rinehart, Frizzellburg; C. N. Brown, Pleasant Valley; H. F. Baer, Tannery, J. C. Clark, Sykesville, S. L. Moores, Finksburg; J. F. B. Weaver, Manchester, and J. S. Ziegler, Melrose."

By all accounts the Maryland physicians enjoyed an instructive visit to Westminster and, hopefully, some local patients benefited from the knowledge imparted by the speakers.

Photo caption: State Comptroller Elect Dr. Joshua W. Hering of Westminster, shown in a c.1900 steel engraving, welcomed the members of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland when they visited Westminster in November 1899. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.