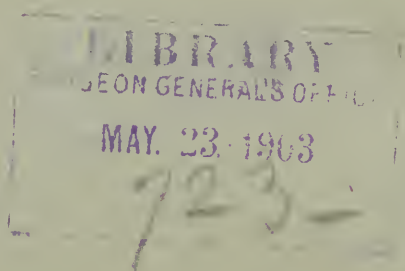
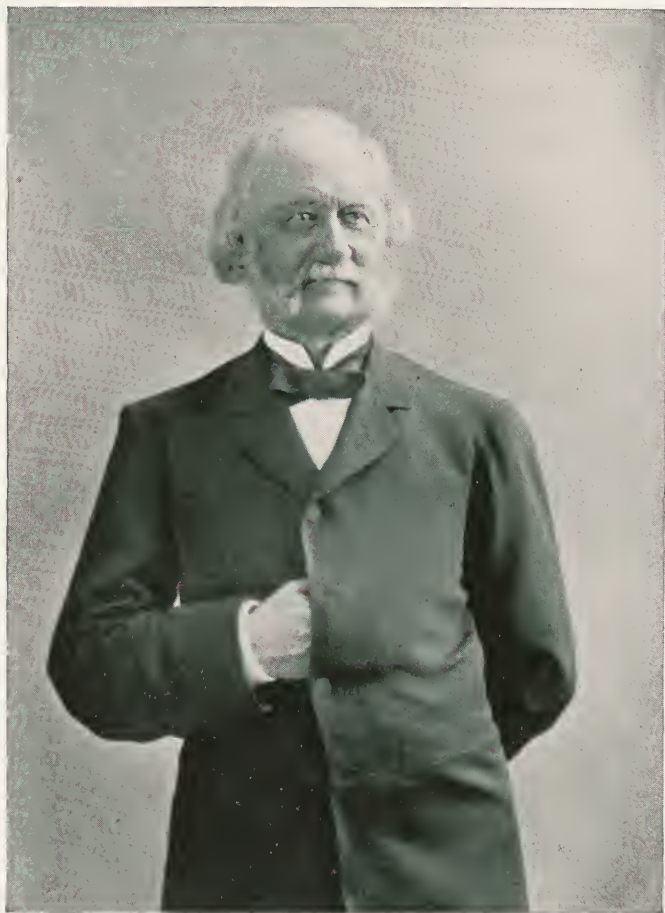


WYMAN (MG)

In Memoriam.

William Williamson Wellington, M. D.





A Memorial

OF

WILLIAM W. WELLINGTON, M. D.

OF CAMBRIDGE.

*Read before The Cambridge Medical Improvement Society by
Morrill Wyman, M. D., 28th December, 1896.*

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WATERTOWN, MASS., APRIL 21, 1897.

WILLIAM W. WELLINGTON, M. D.

BY MORRILL WYMAN, M. D.

“IN the early summer of 1800,” as the story is told in a little volume of then recent events, in a letter to her friend, “a Boston gentleman, Hon. James Sullivan, jurist and statesman, afterwards Governor of this Commonwealth, upon a tour of business and pleasure, visited the ‘District of Maine,’ as it was then called, accompanied by a friend, Mr. William Williamson, of North Carolina. The part of the country through which they travelled was unfrequented. The scene was rural, the air refreshing, the birds carolled on every spray and all nature was in a most agreeable humour. The hearts of the two gentlemen, which vibrated to the harmony that pervaded Creation, were open to every tender impression. Every discordant idea was hushed in silence and every step seemed to cement their friendship. In one of their excursions in South Berwick township they met a little girl, five or six years old, whose beauty and sweetness, like some little wandering

wood nymph, attracted their attention : they stopped to speak to her.

“ ‘What is your name?’ said Mr. Williamson, dismounting from his horse, ‘What is your name?’

“ ‘Eunice, sir,’ returned the child.

“ ‘Who is your father?’

“ ‘I have none,’ she said.

“ ‘Ah ! that’s hard, indeed. Where is your mother?’

“ ‘She is sick and going to die too,’ cried the poor little girl. The feelings of the gentlemen were touched by the simplicity of the child. They followed up their interest by further inquiries and visited the house of the mother and found the sick woman and her friendly nurse. The nurse was talkative and in answer to their questions informed them that the mother was in the last stages of consumption, and that her mind was entirely occupied concerning her child who would be left, on her death, in a defenseless and unprotected state. Entering the room where the widowed mother lay Mr. Williamson inquired if she would be willing to put the child under his protection. Her consent was given with joy : to her it seemed that this event

was ordered by that Being who is the father of the fatherless and the protector of the widow.

“ Mr. Williamson promised to send for the child so soon as the mother was no more, and they took their leave, while a very agreeable and lasting impression was made upon the mind of the sick woman and her attending friend. Upon their return they called upon the physician in attendance upon the mother, and begged him to pay her every attention his professional skill could render, and write when she breathed her last.

“ In about six weeks this event took place. Mr. Williamson sent immediately for the child, who was accordingly conveyed to Boston. On her arrival there Maria Eunice Lord, for that was her name, was received by her Boston friend and soon after went to the old town, earlier known by its Indian name of Menotomy, now Arlington. Here she was placed in the benevolent care of a lady, Miss Mary Cook, the daughter of Parson Samuel Cook, the first minister of the Parish, and in her family spent her early years. deriving much pleasure and advantage from her associ-

ation with the children of Mrs. Amory, Gov. Sullivan's daughter, who usually passed their summers here. Mr. Williamson, after returning to his southern home, died of yellow fever, but not before making ample provision in his will for his beautiful and amiable ward." Here the lady's letter ends.

In Aunt Mary's hospitable home there was at the same time a young and promising physician, a graduate of Harvard and its Medical School, and at the age of eighteen Maria became the wife of Dr. Timothy Wellington. The only child of this marriage was William Williamson Wellington who was born 29th July, 1814. Within two years his mother died of consumption.

William remained with his father who, with more than usual paternal care, devoted himself to the education of his son, and later placed him at school with Mr. John Angier in the neighboring town of Medford. So successful was their united care of the bright and promising boy that William was fitted for Harvard College, to which he was admitted without conditions at the early age of twelve, but was retained at home two years longer, entering college in 1828 and gradu-

ating with honors in due course in 1832. These honors were in Mathematics and Classics. In after life he said there were many pleasures he would more willingly forego than those he enjoyed from reading his college classics. He was also a member of the Phi Beta Kappa, an honor then restricted to the first sixteen of the class.

For two years he was a teacher at Northfield Academy, and then in 1835 entered the Medical School of Harvard University, receiving the degree of M.D. in 1838. The following year he settled as a physician in Cambridgeport.

Dr. Wellington acquired the confidence of his patients; he was calm in his manner, gentlemanly in his deportment, too modest, perhaps, for immediate effect, but those who learned to know him were impressed with a feeling that he had their interests sincerely at heart, and were sure that they would receive his greatest care and the utmost of his skill for their relief.

In a short time he received from his fellow townsmen the appointment of Physician to the almshouse, which

was situated in what may be called his district. This appointment was the introduction to a long series of public services lasting through his whole life. He was faithful in his attendance on its inmates and soothing in his intercourse with them, and made the clinical experience he there obtained a source of advantage seldom offered a young physician just entering upon the duties of his profession. I was often invited to visit with him at the almshouse and know well his devotion and the character of the methods he used in his examination of patients, his careful observation, analysis of symptoms, and his application of the principles of medicine.

Dr. Wellington's scholarly taste and the fact that he had had experience as a school teacher was not overlooked by his fellow citizens. He was early elected a member of the school committee. He was upon the Board for forty years, and its secretary for twenty-five years. His strong common sense and his professional training stood us in good stead.

Through this long period he gave to our schools the aid of his accumulating experience, not only as to

what relates to the health of the children in the school-room, but also as to the best methods of preventing the introduction of contagious diseases, or their possible spread in the community of which the school has sometimes been the most obvious cause.

He was also keenly alive to every movement tending to improve the school intellectually and morally. A generation ago some of the Cambridge schoolmasters had fallen into very grave errors in their methods of school discipline. Twenty years before, Horace Mann, then Secretary of the State Board of Education, whose statue stands with that of Webster in front of the State Capitol, had taught the "thirty-one Boston schoolmasters" with whom he had a contest over this very question, that the four corner stones of true school discipline were Duty, Affection, Love of Knowledge and Love of Truth. Horace Mann was no more. The masters had forgotten his teaching and had fallen back upon *their* four corner stones of school discipline: Authority, Force, Fear, Pain. Scholarly in taste, refined in feeling, Dr. Wellington's humanity revolted at such a

return to barbarism. He was a sincere admirer of Dr. Arnold, the great master of Rugby, whose portrait adorns the walls of his library, and he strove to bring to our aid something of Dr. Arnold's spirit, which we would have more apparent in our own schools. It is related that on one occasion, when out of patience with a dull pupil, to whom he had spoken sharply, the boy looked up and said "Why do you speak angrily, sir — Indeed I am doing the best that I can." Dr. Arnold, in telling the story years after to his children, said: "I never felt so much ashamed in my life — that look and that speech I have never forgotten." Our efforts were not successful. In the words of Horace Mann, "There is peace on earth and good will among men. But lo! what hideous spectacle profanes this hallowed vision? It is a spectacle of men and the likeness thereof is as the likeness of the school-masters still flogging boys and — flogging girls."

A crisis came, — a girl of fourteen was the victim of this barbarous practice. The father of the girl appealed to the School Committee for redress; a majority sustained the teachers. Dr. Wellington

with us of the minority, who believed in better methods, finding that no arguments would move the obdurate majority who claimed their rights without making any exception as to age, sex or disposition, then appealed to our fellow citizens. Two large meetings were held in the City Hall, the whole subject of school discipline was fully discussed, the methods of the majority of the School Committee were condemned and the practice abolished. It was a victory of Love over Force.

At the dedication of our present English High School Building the orator of the occasion had these words "I feel justified in saying that Dr. Wellington has done more and better work in your school than any other single citizen. He is the Nestor of our education life and like his Homeric prototype has seen two generations of speech-gifted men, and is now living in the third. His modest courage and sage counsel were prized by the worthies of former days and may yet serve you in important crises. A reminiscent volume from him would be a cynosure for your committees in the coming century."

In 1870 Dr. Wellington gave the customary annual address before the Massachusetts Medical Society. His subject was "Modern Medicine: its needs and its tendency."

It is a scholarly record of the observations of a mind trained in scientific methods at the bed-side of the sick. "Life is short, chemical combinations numerous, and over-medication the besetting sin of the medical profession. The pressure upon medical men to polypharmacy is so strong that he is a brave man who can resist it; in fact, the only idea some people have of a physician is that he is a man who gives medicine." His estimate of the increasing value of modern medical science and the advance it has made with means and instruments at our command that our predecessors never dreamed of are drawn with a judicial care that we may well imitate.

In 1888 his son Charles died. This young man had qualities of mind and heart that rendered his death more than a private loss. Soon after receiving his degree of Doctor of Medicine he was, at the opening of the Cambridge Hospital, chosen its House Physician.

His kindness, tenderness and devotion to the welfare of the patients at the Hospital won for him their love and gratitude and his fidelity to all his duties secured the respect of the Guardians. He had that open and cheerful manner that brought with it something of the light and breeze of the summer fields, while his readiness to respond to all the calls of his office carried assurance to the sick that he regarded their needs far more than his own ease. If time was not granted him to make that mark in the community we had hoped, he had already formed a character that gave promise of an aim to be useful to his fellow men. His father had already passed the Davidean period of three score years and ten, and looked to him as a most interesting companion and as an aid for the rest of his professional life. In the spirit of the Greek epitaph :

“ His father’s arms were round him,
 And when he breathed his life away,
 The joy of youth had crowned him.

Old man ; thou wilt not forget
 Thy lost one, when thine eye
 Gazes on the glowing cheek
 Of Hope and Piety.”

After the death of his son, Dr. Wellington found his greatest relief in the occupation his profession gave him, and in the Cambridge Hospital of which he was a Trustee from its inception. He did not decline any professional calls in consequence of his affliction, but it was evident that his mind had received a severe shock from which he never fully recovered. Many months after the death he said "I wish I could speak that boy's name without tears." He was very conscientious in his profession, a little too much so his family thought, but, though fully aware of its weighty responsibilities, these did not become burdensome to him until at the age of seventy-five years he was induced to relinquish professional work altogether.

The rest and pleasure that then came he was well fitted to enjoy; he entered into the haven of its peace and freedom from all anxiety with the glad spirit of a little child; he lived over the experience of the long past. He kept up his interest in public affairs, he read the medical and scientific journals and the literature of the day; and with special interest everything relating to his Alma Mater. The last book that was read to him was Morse's "Life of Dr. O. W. Holmes."

He hailed with pleasure the advances in Biology and rejoiced in the consequent victories our profession is achieving over disease. Although he was called to witness, as all old people must, the death of contemporary friends, he was one of those rare examples of old men of whom it has beautifully been said "that their losses are largely compensated by that which, except health of body and mind, is the best gift of God to man, a large capacity for friendship which takes in and welcomes the new generations as they come."

He never complained — he never showed impatience with himself or his failing faculties of body or of mind. A heavenly peace seemed to possess him and a sweet serenity shone from his countenance that melts the hearts of those who recall it. When asked what portion of his life he had enjoyed the most he replied "the last eight years."

His decline was peaceful. Gently and quietly death came to him on Tuesday afternoon, the 27th day of October, 1896.*

*The funeral services were held at his home on Inman St., Friday, Oct. 30th. In consequence of his own church being without a pastor the services were conducted by Rev. Francis Tiffany, assisted by Rev. Francis Peabody, D. D., of Cambridge.

We began our professional work at nearly the same time. The two principal villages of Cambridge, Old Cambridge and Cambridgeport combined, had at that time but about 6,000 inhabitants; we lived less than a mile apart; both were young, ready and eager for work, our courses were often in the same neighborhood. We met frequently and discussed medical questions freely and with advantage to each. In our professional consultations we fully appreciated the duties and responsibilities laid upon us, endeavoring to give full weight to the views advanced by each and due respect for opinions offered; we were always close and warm friends.

I trust that these personal reminiscences may be pardoned. In the midst of our losses it is grateful, and much to be thankful for, after so many years, to recall to mind some of the pleasant and profitable scenes witnessed with a good man, a wise physician, a faithful public servant and true friend.

Dr. Wellington was a member of the following societies :

Massachusetts Medical Society.

Boston Obstetrical Society — Honorary member.

Associate member of the Boston Medical Improvement Society.

Cambridge Society for Medical Improvement.

Associate member of the Massachusetts Medico-Legal Society.

One of the seven persons applying to the General Court for an Act of Incorporation for the Cambridge Hospital, and a Trustee for the remainder of his life.

Coroner of Middlesex for ten years.

A member of the Cambridge School Committee for forty years, and its Secretary for twenty-five years.

Physician of the Cambridge Almshouse.

President of the Dowse Institute.

