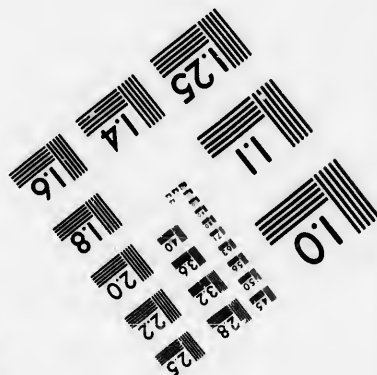
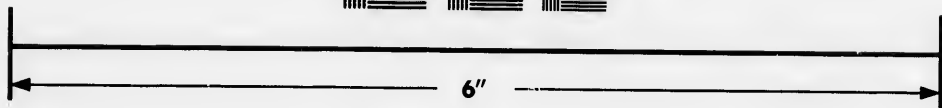
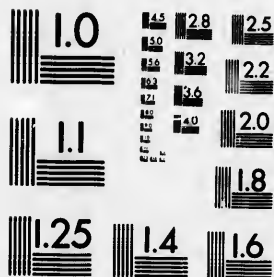


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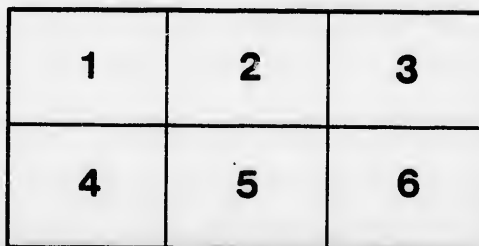
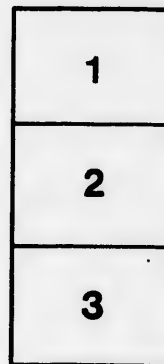
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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

OTTAWA, SEPT. 12, 1888.

BY

GEORGE ROSS, A.M., M.D., 1866
PROFESSOR OF CLINICAL MEDICINE, MCGILL UNIVERSITY.

MONTREAL:

GAZETTE PRINTING COMPANY.

1888.

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RE-PRINTED FROM THE "MONTREAL MEDICAL JOURNAL," OCT., 1888.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CANADIAN
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, AT OTTAWA, ON THE
12TH SEPTEMBER, 1888.

BY GEORGE ROSS, A.M., M.D., MONTREAL.

Gentlemen :—My first duty is to thank the members of the Canadian Medical Association for the great, and I may add, entirely unsought, honor of being called upon to serve as its President. Having been absent from last year's meeting, my election to this important position at that time was still more a source of surprise, but, nevertheless, of much gratification. If a simple loyalty to this Association as one of the rank and file, and humble efforts to sustain it by regular attendance and an occasional contribution, entitle one to any recognition, I may fairly claim that much. To more than that I lay no claim, and I know it is only the indulgent goodwill of my friends and fellow-members which has procured for me this great honor, one which I can assure them I duly appreciate, and I shall always endeavor to give them no reason to consider their kind confidence misplaced.

He whose duty it is to address officially an important meeting of this kind may well claim to be overwhelmed by an *embarras de richesses*. No restriction is placed upon his choice of a subject, and the field is practically limitless. To select is indeed difficult, and even when that difficulty has been overcome, there remains the still greater one of so presenting it as to be deserving of your attention. Following after so many eminent predecessors, it is, I can assure you, no false modesty, but a sense of genuine incapacity for the task which has been constantly present with me.

It may not be amiss, on an occasion like the present, to take a hasty survey of the general standing and prospects of the pro-

fession in the Dominion, and to consider whether it be progressing as it should. In a young country like this, progress is exceedingly rapid in almost every department of life—in trade and commerce and agriculture—in the building of cities and the opening of great lines of railway, extensive systems of telegraphy, and other public works on a commensurate scale—in the establishment of public schools and the foundation of universities—in the consolidation of the professions and giving them their proper status—and a comparatively few years work changes which are rapid indeed in comparison with the more steady ways of older and more settled parts of the world. When we think that the Confederation, just like this Association of ours, is only even now of age,—that, up to that time, we were but a few weak provinces, with diverse interests, and without any common bond—and that to-day, only twenty-one years later, we are a vigorous and lusty young nation, with territories extending across a whole continent and touching on either side the two great oceans of the world, territories with a climate of the most varied and salubrious character, containing vast riches and unbounded possibilities for the present and for future generations—territories which are rapidly increasing in population by natural increment and by the yearly addition of many thousands of settlers from other lands—when we consider all this, it well concerns us to ask, What has been the record of the medical profession during this time? It has been a time of wonderful activity in all the centres of learning. A time during which an almost entire revolution has been wrought in the science of medicine and in the methods adopted for the teaching of the same. A time during which the keenest minds have been directed to the elucidation of innumerable problems in those sciences which form the basis of medical doctrine and practice—Anatomy, Physiology, Biology and Chemistry. A time in which the whole practice of surgery has been changed—been based upon principles entirely new, but proved by the severest tests of experience to be founded upon unalterable laws—a change so great that the accomplished student of twenty years ago would find himself to-day committing the most egregious enormities and sinning perpetually against the first elements as now

understood. A time in which a generous rivalry has been kept up between the two great departments of Medicine and Surgery, and, great and startling as has been the progress in the latter, it is doubtful if the advances in the former have not been fully equal, or even greater. For, whilst Lister and his followers have abundantly shown to the world the enormous importance of what we now call "surgical cleanliness" (a truth till now never properly appreciated), Pasteur, Koch and others have been searching for the true cause and prevention of cholera, hydrophobia, and the other great scourges of mankind. Animalcular life, and its bearing upon the diseases of man and animals, has assumed an importance heretofore undreamt of: and the science of Bacteriology has sprung at once into the forefront as an absorbing pursuit, already fruitful of wonderful results which have opened up a boundless field for investigation, thought, and research! A time in which Preventive Medicine has begun to occupy the place to which its importance justly entitles it. Before this period, sanitary science was but in its infancy, sanitary laws were little understood, and sanitary regulations seldom enforced. Now, the questions of sanitary legislation attract the attention and occupy the minds of the highest statesmanship. The more civilized the country, the more widely is knowledge of public health matters disseminated, the more carefully are statistics collected, the greater the skill and talent exhibited to cope with the difficulties surrounding the sanitary legislator. In fact, there is now no better test of the intelligence and real civilization of a community than estimation of the attention given to the enforcement of sanitary laws and the degree of diffusion of sound sanitary knowledge. A time in which the public have begun to appreciate the importance to themselves of having a constant supply of thoroughly educated young medical men—men learned in all the learning of the day—who, scattered throughout the land, may be ready to apply to them in their need all the resources of modern medicine. Wealthy laymen, acting upon this belief, have endowed hospitals and schools of medicine with funds sufficient to enable them to teach them medicine as medicine should be taught. Bright examples of this are found in the great gifts to the

Johns-Hopkins Hospital and University in Baltimore and the munificent donations to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New York. The same sentiment doubtless animated the generous donors of the endowment fund to McGill University, and the gentleman who has so much enhanced the teaching capability of the University of Toronto. Let us hope that these instances of far-seeing, public-spirited, and open-handed men giving of their abundance for an object designed to be of service to the whole country, will not fail to direct many others towards one way of doing much good in their generation.

It has been a time when the system of medical education has been undergoing a gradual change. The period opens with the old-fashioned medical school—a few professors, a large number of didactic lectures upon a few subjects—practical anatomy being the only branch taught in a truly demonstrative manner—"walking the hospitals" beginning to be supplanted by some clinical teaching. The transition stage is now—the professors are numerous, the didactic lectures are fewer, the subjects taught have multiplied many times, practical anatomy is thoroughly worked up, and the student is obliged to pass through several other laboratories, and acquire a practical and personal acquaintance with the other branches of the curriculum. Old-fashioned "walking the hospitals" is a thing of the past, and, instead, the greatest attention is paid to organizing systematic attendance upon the wards, systematic case-taking, and systematic lecturing upon the cases by a special staff. A time during which we have witnessed the development within the profession of a number of specialties. Specialism is an accomplished fact, and on the whole, the profession has been the gainer by its establishment. The advantages of division of work and devotion to one branch of practice are great and obvious, and, I believe, counterbalance to a great extent the objections that are urged against specialism. Like many other systems good in themselves, it is open to abuse, may readily be overdone, or may be cultivated by unworthy members.

Such are a few of the more striking changes which have been accomplished during the time that this Association has been slowly coming of age. At the time of its inauguration, there was much enthusiasm, and all minds were full of

the great possibilities for the future from the confederation of the provinces. No narrow or provincial ideas were to be entertained, and all regulations concerning medical education and the practice of medicine, it was expected, would be assimilated for the whole Dominion. This Association started bravely forward on this basis, imbued with the idea that it had a great mission to fulfil. Committees were appointed, and elaborate reports prepared upon "The best means for General Education," upon "A Uniform System of Licenses," upon "Registration and Vital Statistics for the entire Dominion," and upon "A Code of Ethics for the whole Profession." During several years much labor was bestowed upon these subjects, and the greater share of time at the meetings was given to their discussion. It then, however, became apparent to the members that, in devoting their energies to working out schemes for medical legislation, much valuable time was being absorbed, and the results produced were by no means commensurate therewith. The Act of Confederation, by taking away from the Federal authorities the governance of educational matters, left each province free to look after these in its own way. Thus, at the present time, we find a curious complexity of medical legislation in Canada—there being no uniformity amongst the provinces in regard to matriculation, to curriculum, or to qualification for practice.

It is to be hoped that, before long, some arrangement may be come to by which, at least, a Dominion Medical Register may be established at Ottawa, so that, on entry therein, it will be possible to practice medicine throughout the Dominion. It is, perhaps, possible that this can be effected without prejudice to the functions of the separate official bodies which now govern the medical affairs of the different provinces. In some such way alone can the existing anomalies be remedied, and the present undesirable confusion be removed.

Compare the general condition of the medical profession in Canada with that prior to the time we are speaking of, and, in so doing, look just for a moment at the condition then and now of the leading medical schools of this country. The number of students in attendance was often sufficiently large, perhaps sometimes nearly as large as even in some recent years.

The curriculum was by no means short, for it covered four full years, but it was composed almost entirely of didactic lectures and some clinics upon general medicine and surgery. The course was not distinctly graded, but divided only into a primary and a final department. Now, the staff of teachers presents a long array—the subjects are divided up so as to allow each one to devote his attention exclusively to a particular department. Many special departments have been added, and skilled teachers placed in charge. Above all, the importance of laboratory work is fully recognized, and in every year a full share of time and attention is exacted for practical work on the part of every student. Hospitals have been enlarged and extended and the work divided and specialized. Carefully-conducted clinics are the order of the day, and the material, both interne and externe, is fully utilized for teaching purposes. Summer sessions—some voluntary, some compulsory—have been established at nearly all the schools, and several months of the best kind of teaching is thus placed at the disposal of the student of to-day. The standard of examinations is high, as shown by the percentage of rejections and by the excellent standing so generally attained by Canadian students both at the examinations of our local provincial boards and also abroad. Is it not certain that, with such marked advance in the facilities for sound medical education, the graduates of recent years must be correspondingly more competent and more thoroughly fitted for their important duties than those who preceded them?

In the general profession there have been many evidences of a better condition of things than formerly prevailed—of a greater interest in the scientific side of medicine and a desire not to practice our Art from a purely perfunctory or purely financial point of view. The best evidence of this is the formation of medical societies. These have sprung up on every side—provincial, county and local societies,—and it is most encouraging to observe how actively and energetically many of these are maintained,—good papers read, good discussions held, and a spirit of emulation evinced in correct observation, the thoughtful care of cases, and their systematic and accurate recording. The difficulties encountered in keeping up such

societies are often great. Our population is still a mostly scattered one, and members have often to go long distances and sacrifice much time in order to attend:—but the gain is worth it all. The best men of every town and every country side will always be found the keenest supporters of their own medical society. Our Canadian physicians, too, are beginning to write more than formerly—not, perhaps, even yet as much or as often as they should—but they maintain medical journals which are alive and active and are a credit to their country and to their contributors. There are now in Canada no less than four English and two French monthly journals, all apparently prosperous. Nor are the contributions of Canadian writers confined to this country. Many of our prominent men are frequent and valued contributors to, and correspondents of, the best of the American journals.

It may be said that, in drawing this comparison between the condition of the profession now and that when this Association began, I have presented an optimistic view and one not altogether warranted by the facts, but I think not so. I believe that, great as has been the progress of science in these years, great as has been the progress of the country in material prosperity, the medical profession may fairly claim that it has not lagged behind:—that it has always had such leaders to frame its policy and such earnest and devoted and able men in its schools as have kept it fully abreast of the busy and stirring times in which we live. Has this Association done its share in securing such a state of things? The programme it laid out for itself at the outset, as I have already shown, was very extensive; it was too extensive for any society to carry out. This was soon perceived, and from the time that the Association got away from the business of framing bills which were never to be enacted, and discussing schemes which came to naught, and settled down to its legitimate work of fostering a scientific spirit in its members, encouraging them to produce good literary work, urging them to original observation, helping them to good understanding amongst themselves, assisting in the maintenance of a high standard of ethics, promoting sociability and good-fellowship—then it succeeded, its meetings were instructive, useful in many ways, and thoroughly enjoyable. It

has no feeling of rivalry towards any other society, and I trust none is felt by them towards it. Each has its own sphere of usefulness, and can accomplish its own good ends, without detracting in any way from the necessity for a general re-union of this kind. This Province of Ontario has successfully organized an active and thoroughly admirable society; other of the Provinces have done the same, and it is only a source of regret to many of us from the old Province of Quebec, that circumstances have not favored our following their excellent example. This Association, I am convinced, has done much good, and will, I hope, continue to do much more in the years to come. For instance, though failing to carry through such comprehensive measures as were at first contemplated both in educational matters and in matters of State medicine, yet this Association has been again and again occupied in considering the important subject of general hygiene; and, at many of its meetings, discussions which have taken place and the resolutions adopted have aided very materially in promoting such legislative measures as have been secured bearing upon the public health. Indeed, it must needs be that expressions of opinion from a meeting of the profession, representing all sections of the country, should command the attention of those who control these matters. The need still existing for further exertions in this direction is emphasized by the lamentable apathy exhibited in so many cases where the public health is in question. The etiology of typhoid fever may be said to be pretty thoroughly understood; but, even in the face of violent outbreaks of that disease in some of our Canadian cities, what want of intelligence, and what unwillingness to be governed by competent medical opinion! What incapacity to realize the extent of injury done to the community, the cruel, unnecessary loss of life, with all the suffering attendant thereon! A town near Montreal was recently thus affected to a most alarming extent, diarrhoea was almost universal, typhoid fever was very prevalent and deaths were numerous. The visitation became notorious, and was much commented upon in the press. The facts were amply sufficient to show two things: 1st, That the water supply was contaminated with sewage. 2nd, The manner in which the contamination was effected. Local health

board there was none, and the disease for months continued its ravages to such an extent that the locality was shunned by every intelligent traveller, while the poor inhabitants suffered and died. It is a reflection upon the intelligence of the age that such a thing could be, and it is a reflection upon some of our sanitary organizations that no sufficient pressure was exerted to remedy the evil as soon as its cause was fairly determined. It is the duty of every member of this noble profession to render all the assistance in his power towards the furtherance of good and effective legislation bearing upon local and general sanitation, and to aid in the dissemination of sound literature upon hygienic subjects. Many examples similar to the above might be quoted to show that we are yet very far from the position in which we should be, in accordance with the advanced teachings of the present day.

One subject which, it will be observed, from the very foundation of the Association, commanded its attention, and upon which much time and labor has been bestowed by individual members at different times, is that of a Dominion Registration Act. It would be futile at the present day to offer arguments to show the importance of accurate and reliable vital statistics. A good deal has been accomplished in this direction, here and there by local efforts, and in some instances by provincial action, but we are very far indeed from the attainment of that comprehensive system which this Association decided at its early meetings to endeavor earnestly to obtain. It is, indeed, active members of this Association who have been largely instrumental in educating public opinion on the subject, and in pushing forward such measures of reform as have been reached; and it is to be hoped that the same members, with many others to assist them, will continue their laudable efforts until much better results are obtained.

The Association adopted a Code of Ethics, and a very good code it is. There is only one point to which I would allude in connection with the attitude of medical men towards each other, and that is with reference to cases of alleged malpractice. Nothing is more injurious to the best interests of the profession than the wretched lawsuits of this kind which are so lamentably common in certain sections of this country—only

in certain sections, for I am happy to say that elsewhere they are of very rare occurrence, and in some favored localities are practically unknown. There can be only one explanation of this striking difference, viz., that such contentions are originated and fomented by unworthy physicians who adopt this means of harassing and injuring a competitor. Everyone knows that, if medical men were true to each other, these unhappy disputes would hardly ever be begun—that, if rancor and ill-feeling were jealously guarded against, and only fair and reasonable opinions expressed, we should not be called upon to witness those painful exhibitions of a house divided against itself. This is a sore blot upon the boasted claims of the medical profession to engender feelings of mutual charity and goodwill. The main remedy for this consists in the cultivation of the true scientific spirit, in keeping up connections with our medical societies, in indulging our natural social tendencies and preserving that natural pride which produces the desire to stand well with our fellows, especially those whose good opinion is worth having. I am sure it is the earnest wish of every member here present that the scandal of these malpractice suits may yearly become fewer in this Canada of ours, to the great advantage of the whole profession.

Again. Has this Association advanced in membership and in influence as it should during the course of these years? As regards the first of these questions, it is not possible to give an answer in figures, for the reason that the method of recording our membership has been very loose; but, on looking at the minutes of the early meetings, it is seen that the attendance was large, and that the distant provinces were extremely well represented. As much cannot be said for the later meetings, at which, though the actual number present has been good, yet the attendance from the maritime provinces is noticed as having greatly fallen off. It is also matter for regret, that our French-Canadian *confrères*, many of whom were amongst the founders, and who came in large numbers to the early gatherings, have gradually ceased attending till, now, a very few only of the more literary-minded and enthusiastic of them unite with us in keeping up our national Association. It may be that the difficulty of using two languages has had some-

thing to do with this. I should like to see this difficulty overcome, and the Association strengthened by the hearty support of our brethren from the old Province of Quebec. It should be remembered that, at the International Congress, three languages—French, German and English—were recognized, and a speaker could address the meeting in any of these.

A suggestion made in the presidential address of last year deserves, I think, to be repeated, as no action was taken upon it, and it seems feasible and promises to be useful. It was proposed that a committee might be named to take into consideration a scheme arranging for a closer connection of some kind being brought about between this Association and the various provincial and local societies already in existence. Any suggestion which will add to our membership and increase the interest taken in our work, is worthy of being carefully considered. Without having looked into the question, I am not prepared to say just how this can be accomplished, but, if the meeting think with me in the matter, it will be competent for it to take action in that direction.

Another task which it has been thought suitable for this Association to undertake, and which was fully laid before the meeting last held in this city, was, to bring before the proper authorities the question of medical experts at coroners' inquests. I am not aware that anything was done, though the importance of it was strongly dwelt upon by the reader of the address. The value of such expert evidence would probably be admitted by any educated layman; but we medical men appreciate much more fully the difference between the opinion of the average practitioner and that of a thorough pathologist who is constantly making autopsies and conducting pathological investigations of various kinds: and when we think of the enormous interests so often hanging upon such opinions, we might well consider it a duty to seek some means for skilled evidence being furnished when the object is to determine the cause of death in a doubtful case.

My predecessor in this chair offered, in his address, some timely advice to his *confreres* upon the necessity for allowing themselves a due amount of recreation at reasonable intervals, and he draws a disheartening, but perfectly true, picture of the

results of neglecting this important matter. In accordance with such sound doctrine, I last month rested from my labors and spent twenty days in our Great North-West. There is something particularly attractive to the Eastern city-man in seeing something of the open and free life of our great plains, ranches, mountains and Western coast. Having myself derived much pleasure, profit, and renewed health from this short tour in the Western Provinces, I would say to any of my medical friends who feel jaded or overworked, try the tonic effect of a combination of fresh lake breezes, balmy prairie winds, keen mountain air, and soft ozone draughts from the Pacific Ocean. The variety is charming, and whilst the body is being refreshed and renovated, the mind is being delighted with some of the finest scenery in the world. Upon the route, one spot in particular engages the attention and excites the interest of all medical visitors. I refer to the hot sulphur springs at Banff, which are only now becoming known, and are not nearly as well known as their merits entitle them to be. The springs, as every one is aware, are situated in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, and in one of the most picturesque parts of that wonderful region. The steaming water, clear as crystal, bursts forth in unlimited quantities high up on a grand mountain side, some four thousand feet above the sea-level. It is strongly sulphurous and its medicinal properties are of a high grade. Such springs are sufficiently rare, there being but two or three of any note even in the whole of the United States, and, most assuredly, none of these possess the additional attractions of this choice locality—exquisite lofty mountains, affording a surrounding panorama of truly Alpine character, and a lovely valley containing a broad blue river which has well been compared to the great Rhone of European fame. The natural attractions of Banff would alone suffice to draw multitudes of pleasure-seekers there, and, as the value of these natural waters becomes more appreciated, it is certain that more and more of our patients will be sent there every year. Apart even from those who would go to drink the waters, there is another class of invalids that I believe could be sent to this high region with the happiest results. The Davos-Platz in Switzerland has been gaining greatly in favor in England and elsewhere as a winter

resort for cases of phthisis in an early stage, and for those who may be looked upon as disposed to tubercular disease on account of family tendencies or defective physique. This resort is high in the Alps, and the winter is rather severe, with an abundance of snow, but there is plenty of sunlight. Necessarily, our information concerning the meteorology of Banff is yet extremely deficient, but, from all I could learn, the conditions are very similar to those which have been found to operate so beneficially in the case of Davos-Platz and such-like Alpine sanatoria. As there is now an excellent hotel, with every comfort, there is no difficulty as regards accommodation. A proposition has actually been made by some members of this Association that our meeting next year should take place at the Banff Springs, an idea which has much to commend it, but will need to be carefully considered. The Nominating Committee will, as usual, take this matter up and report upon it to the general meeting.

It is often asked, What becomes of all the medical graduates? Let any of you pass through that enormous extent of fertile country traversed by our transcontinental railroad and observe the villages and towns springing up like magic from one end of it to the other—let him take note of the solid settlement of large areas even away from the beaten track of the railway—let him step off at any station and, more likely than not, he will meet some young *confrère* who is quietly located there and is growing up with the healthy growth of the town or the country-district. The important mines in various parts, the advancing railways, the great ranching posts, require the services of still more medical men, and in connection with some of these are to be found positions of trust and value unsurpassed in the Dominion. In this way can be accounted for a large number of the graduates from the Eastern schools, and it is pleasant to find good opportunities thus opening out for Canadian doctors in their own country.

It is my melancholy duty to have to refer to some distinguished members of our Association who have been called away from amongst us during the past year. Of these, two were from the roll of our former Presidents, viz., Dr. Marsden of Quebec, and Dr. Botsford of St. John, N. B., both original

founders, regular attendants, and well worthy of the high honor bestowed upon them. Dr. Marsden was a man of strong individuality and remarkable tenacity of purpose. Taking a lively interest in the affairs of this Association, his opinion and assistance was much valued on account of his long experience and intimate acquaintance with all matters pertaining to the medical profession. His outspoken expressions, and his example of unswerving loyalty to the best interests of the profession, made him a prominent figure at many meetings. An old man of keen intellect and without garrulity, full of anecdotes concerning a now fast-fading generation, Dr. Marsden will long be missed by those who had the good fortune to be intimate with him. Everyone will remember the massive form and fine head of our late friend, Dr. Le Baron Botsford. One of our founders, and imbued with a lively faith in the possibilities for good of this Association, he was always one of the genuine workers, and was eager to assist in all good works. His greatest delight was to participate in discussion destined to promote correct views about, and legislation upon, public health and state medicine. A very noble, whole-souled gentleman, whose best thoughts and much of whose time were devoted to the good of his fellow-man. Dr. Henry Howard, that kindly and gentle physician—retiring, thoughtful, and given to abstruse metaphysical enquiries, the best years of whose life were given to the study of mental disease and to the care of the mentally-afflicted. He it was who had the manliness to condemn flagrant abuses in some of our public institutions, and, at the risk of his official position, to call upon a timid government to correct them. For this alone, if for nothing else, his country owes his memory a debt of gratitude. Amongst others, I may mention Dr. Richard Zimmerman, for some time an official of the Association and one of its warmest friends; Dr. John H. McCollom, Dr. W. N. Woodill, and Dr. Brouse, worthy gentlemen all, who worthily served their generation, each in his separate sphere, and reflected credit upon the high calling of the physician.

You have, gentlemen, many and important subjects to engage your attention. I trust that this Ottawa meeting, this coming-of-age meeting, may long be remembered as one at which some

good scientific work was done, and something accomplished towards forwarding the general interests of the profession, promoting its dignity, and elevating it in the estimation of the public.

In closing, I should like to say that it is always a great pleasure at these meetings to receive some of our *confrères* from across the line. As members of a sister Association, we give them a hearty welcome, and we are glad to have them participate in all our proceedings. Without prejudice to the political leanings of any one, I am sure I express the views of all when I say that in international visiting and in scientific discussion, all we desire is the most absolute "unrestricted reciprocity," and I am equally certain, from what I know of their hospitable character, that our American cousins are correspondingly pleased when we "retaliate" by joining the meetings of the American Association.

