

# Oration from 1904

## Oration Title:

*Forty Years' Progress and the Problems it has Brought to a District Society*

## Orator:

Homer Gage, M.D.

## Abstract of Oration:

In his oration, Dr. Gage aims to evaluate how the members of the Worcester District Medical Society have kept up with the rapid medical progress of the times. First he lists the medical advancements of recent years. He remarks that the 40-year span he refers to begins with Pasteur beginning his experiments on bacteriology and the defeat of the theory of spontaneous generation which has opened the doors for bacteriological theories and treatments. These 40 years have been the "beginning of scientific and preventive medicine." Gage emphasizes the impact of these advancements by describing the public and individual health benefits derived from them.

He introduces his topic of the Worcester medical community's adaptations over the revolutionary past 40 years with a short description of the city's first real hospital in conjunction with a Catholic church. Worcester's "insane hospital" was "one of the pleasantest and best equipped institutions in the State." Gage continues to offer brief descriptions of the founding and functioning of later hospitals such as Memorial and St. Vincent's Hospitals. In addition to the building and expansion of hospitals, the Worcester City government has instituted the Board of Health as a separate division. The Board of Health has enforced a good system of public health including especially a laboratory to diagnose certain major diseases.

Dr. Gage then takes an even more inward look at the Worcester District Medical Society itself. He illustrates the Society's growth with statistics and proposes a system of elections to allow doctors from outside the city itself to participate more in its government. He praises the members for their high meeting attendance and their well-prepared presentations and subsequent intelligent discussions. He also reminds the audience that they have access to one of the largest medical libraries in the country and to take advantage of it.

From these praises, Dr. Gage turns to gently pointing out improvements that might be made in the Society's proceedings. The first is that he wishes to see more case studies prior to treatment to foster a discussion of diagnoses. Second, he sees the need for a Society building to house its library and as a venue for its meetings. Third he notes that the library is not functional as it is in too small a building and its catalog is incomplete. He is also adamant that the Worcester-area doctors are obligated to aid the existing Boards of Health and fulfill the

responsibilities of such if one does not exist in order to extend to all citizens "the full benefits of the progress of preventive medicine." A large part of this duty includes reviewing the Board's policies and reinforcing their instructions and actions with regards especially to the care and containment of contagious diseases.

Dr. Gage's suggestions for directing not only the Worcester community but the Worcester District Medical Society itself toward well-being and cohesiveness are worthy. His grasp of the relatively more minute deficiencies in the Worcester medical network is excellent.