

Oration from 1905

Oration Title:

Some Medical Researches

Orator:

Edward H. Trowbridge, M.D.

Abstract of Oration:

Dr. Trowbridge introduces his speech as a tribute to famous physicians throughout history. He begins in ancient Greece with such men as Hippocrates, the father of Medicine, Aretaeus, and Galen. He draws special attention to the fact that these were men of literary and cultural achievement outside of the medical realm. They serve as a contrast to today's physicians who do not have like accomplishments. He then names more recent noteworthy physicians like Vesalius, Pare, and Linacre, all royal physicians during the renaissance. Thomas Sydenham is noted as he was an early proponent of the germ theory of disease. He speaks about Dr. Harvey who was famous for his vivisection work, and of Cheseldon, a talented surgeon who developed a quick and efficient procedure for removal of stones from the bladder. Trowbridge then names fairly recent physicians who were well-noted for their poetry and prose even more than for their medical practice. Examples of these are an 18th century English poet Dr. Goldsmith; Dr. Smollett, a successful novelist and poet whose medical career enjoyed much less success; and Dr. Walcott who left the practice of medicine in favor of the clergy and who was most successful as a writer. Trowbridge includes Dr. Young who is credited with deciphering the Rosetta Stone and Dr. William Rimmer, who added to his medical career many works of sculpture and painting.

Dr. Trowbridge devotes a larger portion of his oration to Dr. Benjamin Rush whom he recognizes as an eager investigator, engaging lecturer, popular practitioner, and a generous philanthropist. Famous for remaining in Philadelphia during the 1793 yellow-fever epidemic, Rush pursued extra-medical endeavors with as much success as his medical career. But he is still most respected for his career as a physician. He "did more for the elevation of the medical profession, for the advancement of scientific research, more for the amelioration of mankind, and the general welfare of the community than any other practitioner."

The speaker's affection for the writings of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes is readily apparent in his tribute to the great personality. He praises Holmes as a writer and barely mentions his medical career. He similarly addresses Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's career, describing his novels and making little mention of his medical achievements.

Dr. Trowbridge clearly holds great respect and admiration for his predecessors whom he sees fit

to include in his tribute to History's most noteworthy physicians. The oration instills, in its audience, respect and pride in the medical profession. It also inspires listeners to continue the legacy established by the men in the speech and perhaps be remembered in some later oration.