

PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

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One of the greatest moments of my life was when I became a member of The American Proctologic Society. I never dreamed that one day I might become its president. Words are so inadequate as I attempt to express my appreciation of the honor you have conferred upon me. There is no greater source of gratification in the life of any man than the realization that he has the confidence and esteem of his fellow associates. It has been said that it is difficult to be humble when one is recognized because of some achievement. I doubt the validity of this statement. Certainly, it has no application in my case. I am keenly aware of the superior capabilities of so many of you, my dear colleagues, that it would be very difficult for me to feel other than humble in your presence. This feeling is responsible for the depth of my gratitude which I am attempting to express so inadequately now. All I can say is that I thank you from the bottom of my heart and I hope I have been worthy of your confidence and even more important, your friendship.

The success of this 1958 Annual Meeting can be attributed to the interest of members of the Executive Council, to the work of the Committees, to the presentations of guest speakers and to contributions of members and fellows who are participating in the scientific portion of our program.

There can be little doubt that progress is being made in Proctology. In 1940 the American College of Surgeons published a bulletin providing a survey of all the United States. The purpose of this survey was to determine the existing facilities for post graduate study and training in the specialties of surgery. According to this survey there was only one institution in the United States where proper facilities were provided for training in the specialty of proctology. A recent report of the Council on Medical Education in Hospitals of the A.M.A. reveals that there are now twelve institutions where approved facilities for residency training in proctology are provided.

Membership in the American Proctologic Society is a great privilege, but it should be remembered that this privilege carries with it a profound responsibility. While speaking on the subject of Privilege and Responsibility, the Commissioner of Education of the United

States had requested educators throughout the United States to publicize as much as possible the "Declaration of Human Rights". Dr. Harvey Branscomb, Chancellor of Vanderbilt University, replied to the request stating "that the Declaration was an immoral one." His statement was based on the fact that the Declaration "contained six pages which dealt on the subject of the rights of everyone," but only a brief and vague reference to their responsibilities. The demand for rights is detailed, specific and elaborate. One statement, for example, reads as follows: "Everyone has a right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care, necessary social services, and a right to security." All of this without the slightest reference to any obligation involved. I agree that the document is immoral because morality consists chiefly of the willingness on the part of individuals to assume obligations and duties which are in the interest of others. The Declaration includes 29 articles devoted to rights which everyone is encouraged to expect from others. There is no comparable insistence upon obligations imposed by these rights. I consider this evidence of a moral weakness of our times. I agree with Dr. Branscomb that it would be helpful to include in the Declaration the following: "provided the individual endeavors to render to society such services as are within his capacity."

Dr. Branscomb does not find fault with the statement of the rights of people. His sole criticism is that the "Declaration fails to emphasize a vital aspect of human relations." I am in complete agreement that we do have rights, and the rights of everyone should be respected. However, our nation has a Christian duty and obligation, insofar as possible, to help other nations and countries provide the "human rights" for their subjects. We must never forget that rights are counter-balanced by obligations and privilege walks hand-in-hand with responsibility. The validity of this entire philosophy is revealed in this admirable statement of Henry Van Dyke: "Are you willing to forget what you have done for others, and to remember what other people have done for you; to ignore what the world owes you and to think what you owe the world; to put your rights in the background and your duties in the foreground; to know that probably the only good reason for your existence is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to contribute to life; to close your mind to complaints against the man-

agement of the universe and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of health and happiness? Are you willing to do these things even for a day, a year? Then it might be said about one that the world has been made better because he lived."

The history of this Society provides ample proof that its members have always been willing and anxious to contribute of their time and effort toward the advancement of the Science of Medicine and the improvement of the quality of medical care. Probably one of the most important contributions towards the accomplishment of this ambition is the recent establishment of the Journal, "Diseases of the Colon and Rectum," which, as you know, for a number of years has been a dream of our Society. This dream has been realized finally because of the persistent and assiduous efforts of a few of our members. This Journal is now a reality and is sponsored by The American Proctologic Society, which is able to guarantee its financial security because of the interest and generosity of its members. The high purpose of the Journal is expressed in an Editorial which appeared in the first issue, a portion of which reads as follows: "Within the pages of this Journal will be collected authentic communications pertaining to diseases of the colon, rectum and anal canal. In these pages will be found papers devoted to basic research in metabolism, pathology, virology, radiology and the clinical practice of medicine and surgery. We propose, moreover, to present comprehensive abstracts of medical literature. We submit that this journal will not only lighten the toil of the over-burdened reader as he seeks information about the diseases of the colon, but will also assure authors in this field of a commanding place in the forum with an audience that is pre-eminently interested in their presentations."

The success of our Journal is entirely dependent on the quality of material included in its pages; and, here again, I would like to return for a moment to one part of the subject of this address, namely Responsibility. Every member of this Society should assume this obligation. This is our Journal and the responsibility for its success or failure rests squarely on our shoulders. We should prepare reports of our experiences and, of equal importance, we should invite and encourage our illustrious colleagues to submit articles for publication. By so doing we can participate in a venture which is, and will be, a source of justifiable pride.

There is further evidence that our Society is responsible for progress. Your chairman appointed a committee, of which Dr. Hyrum Reichman was chairman, to organize and establish a Research Foundation for Proctology. Dr. Robert A. Scarborough has been serving as its president.

The Foundation is making good progress and is ready to receive tax-free monies from such sources as philanthropic organizations, individuals who wish to establish memorial funds, pharmaceutical houses and others interested in philanthropy. The object of this endeavor is to aid medical students who are desirous of specializing in Proctology.

The Education Committee has been active. This year a fine beginning has been realized in the establishment of a lending slide library. This accomplishment has been due to the enthusiastic efforts of this committee since most of the slides have come from their own material. Through our Education Committee we have established a ten thousand dollar loan fund for such students and a portion of it is now in use. There can be no higher objective than that of providing opportunity for the cultural and scientific advancement of medical students.

With fearless minds, American physicians have founded Medical Schools and established laboratories for study and research. Now a ceaseless search into the unknown is being prosecuted, for the purpose of conquering disease. Since the beginning of this century, the number of years a man may live has almost doubled. Four hundred years ago the average duration of life was little more than twenty years. This almost unbelievable record has been possible because medical education has progressed unhampered.

Finally, may I remind you that the avowed objective of the medical profession is the common good of mankind. Physicians dedicate their lives to the alleviation of suffering, to the enhancement and prolongation of life and to the destinies of humanity. They share their learning and their discoveries with their colleagues and recognize instinctively that the need for improvement of medical knowledge and capability is never at an end. They are zealous in their efforts to make available the aggregate of progress in medical education, research and discoveries. They are not content to

limit their activities to the care of the infirm, because they recognize also their useful place among the vast concourse of citizens upon whose shoulders the destiny of our nation rests. In their relationship with patients, with colleagues, and with the public, they will always maintain a most inflexible standard of personal honor. The members of this Society will continue to play their part in this noble scheme. They understand that this is their greatest privilege and they are very happy that they can assume the responsibility which accompanies it.