

History of Medicine in Massachusetts.

A

CENTENNIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

AT CAMBRIDGE,

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BY

SAMUEL ABBOTT GREEN, M.D.

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Massachusetts Medical Society was organized. It was no small affair to bring together from all parts of the Commonwealth the representatives of the medical profession, and to harmonize their conflicting views. Berkshire county was two days distant from Boston, and relatively as far off as Chicago and St. Louis are to-day; while that large northeast territory, called the District of Maine, was as little known as the farthest northwest region is known to us now. Between the different sections of the State there were then small conveniences for general travel, and few postal facilities, by means of which an interchange of visits and ideas, so conducive to unification of action, could be brought about. The formation of this Society at once increased professional intercourse, in spite of these difficulties, and accomplished excellent results.

The Act of Incorporation, under which this Society first met one hundred years ago, is found in the first volume of its "Communications" (pages viii-xi), and is as follows:—

COMMONWEALTH of MASSACHUSETTS.

In the Year of our Lord, 1781.

An ACT to incorporate certain PHYSICIANS, by the Name of *The MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY*.

As health is essentially necessary to the happiness of society ; and as its preservation or recovery is closely connected with the knowledge of the animal economy, and of the properties and effects of medicines ; and as the benefit of medical institutions,

formed on liberal principles, and encouraged by the patronage of the law, is universally acknowledged :

*Be it therefore enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, That, Nathaniel Walker Appleton, William Baylies, Benjamin Curtis, Samuel Danforth, Aaron Dexter, Shirley Erving, John Frink, Joseph Gardner, Samuel Hollen, Edward Augustus Holyoke, Ebenezer Hunt, Charles Jarvis, Thomas Kast, Giles Crouch Kellogg, John Lynn, James Lloyd, Joseph Orne, James Pecker, Oliver Prescott, Charles Pynchon, Isaac Rand, Isaac Rand, jun. Micajah Sawyer, John Sprague, Charles Stockbridge, John Barnard Swett, Cotton Tufts, John Warren, Thomas Welsh, Joseph Whipple, William Whiting, be, and they hereby are formed into, constituted and made a body politic and corporate, by the name of *The Massachusetts Medical Society*; and that they and their successors, and such other persons as shall be elected in the manner hereafter mentioned, shall be and continue a body politic and corporate by the same name forever.*

And be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the fellows of said society may from time to time elect a president, vice president and secretary, with other officers as they shall judge necessary and convenient; and they the fellows of said society, shall have full power and authority, from time to time, to determine and establish the names, number and duty of their several officers, and the tenure or estate they shall respectively have in their offices; and also to authorize and empower their president or some other officer to administer such oaths to such officers as they; the fellows of said society, shall appoint and determine for the well ordering and good government of said society, provided the same be not repugnant to the laws of this commonwealth.

And be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the fellows of said society shall have one common seal, and power to break, change and renew the same at their pleasure.

*And be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That they, the fellows of said society, may sue and be sued in all actions, real, personal or mixed, and prosecute and defend the same unto final judgment and execution, by the name of *The Massachusetts Medical Society*.*

And be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the fellows of said society may from time to time elect such persons to be fellows thereof, as they shall judge proper; and that they, the fellows of said society, shall have power to suspend, expel or disfranchise any fellows of said society.

And be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the fellows of said society shall have full power and authority to make and enact such rules and bye laws for the better government of said

society, as are not repugnant to the laws of this commonwealth; and to annex reasonable fines and penalties to the breach of them, not exceeding the sum of *twenty pounds*, to be sued for and recovered by said society, and to their own use, in any court of record within this commonwealth proper to try the same; and also to establish the time and manner of convening the fellows of said society; and also to determine the number of fellows that shall be present to constitute a meeting of said society; and also, that the number of said society, who are inhabitants of this commonwealth, shall not at any one time be more than seventy, nor less than ten; and that their meetings shall be held in the town of *Boston*, or such other place within this commonwealth, as a majority of the members present in a legal meeting, shall judge most fit and convenient.

And whereas it is clearly of importance, that a just discrimination should be made between such as are duly educated and properly qualified for the duties of their profession, and those who may ignorantly and wickedly administer Medicine, whereby the health and lives of many valuable individuals may be endangered, or perhaps lost to the community :

Be it therefore enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the president and fellows of said society, or other such of their officers or fellows as they shall appoint, shall have full power and authority to examine all candidates for the practice of physic and surgery, (who shall offer themselves for examination, respecting their skill in their profession) and if upon such examination, the said candidates shall be found skilled in their profession, and fitted for the practise of it, they shall receive the approbation of the society in letters testimonial of such examination, under the seal of the said society, signed by the president, or such other person or persons as shall be appointed for that purpose.

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if the said president, and such other person or persons, so elected and appointed for the purpose of examining candidates as aforesaid, shall obstinately refuse to examine any candidate so offering himself for examination as aforesaid, each and every such person so elected and appointed as aforesaid, shall be subject to a fine of *one hundred pounds*, to be recovered by the said candidate, and to his own use, in any court within this commonwealth proper to try the same.

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the fellows of said society may, and shall forever be deemed capable in law, of having, holding and taking in fee simple or any less estate by gift, grant or devise or otherwise, any land, tenement or other estate, real or personal; provided that the annual income of the whole real estate that may be given, granted or devised to, or pur-

chased by the said society, shall not exceed the sum of *two hundred pounds*, and the annual income or interest of said personal estate, shall not exceed the sum of *six hundred pounds*; all the sums mentioned in this act to be valued in silver at *six shillings and eight pence* per ounce: and the annual income or interest of the said real and personal estate, together with the fines and penalties paid to said society, or recovered by them, shall be appropriated to such purposes as are consistent with the end and design of the institution of said society, and as the fellows thereof shall determine.

And be it further enacted, That the first meeting of the said Medical Society shall be held in some convenient place in the town of *Boston*; and that *Edward Augustus Holyoke*, Esq; be, and he hereby is authorised and directed to fix the time for holding the said meeting, and to notify the same to the fellows of said Medical Society.

In the House of REPRESENTATIVES, October 30, 1781.

This bill having had three several readings, passed to be enacted.

NATHANIEL GORHAM, Speaker.

In SENATE, November 1, 1781.

This bill having had two several readings, passed to be enacted.

SAMUEL ADAMS, President.

Approved, JOHN HANCOCK.

A true copy.

Attest, JOHN AVERY, jun. Secretary.

In accordance with the last clause of this Act, Dr. Holyoke published a notice in "The Boston Gazette and The Country Journal," November 12, 1781, calling a meeting of the members whose names are mentioned in the charter. It was called "at the County Court-House, in Boston, on Wednesday the 28th Day of this Instant November, at Ten o'Clock, A. M. for the Purpose of chusing Officers of the Society, and transacting any other Matter (which by this Act they are empowered to