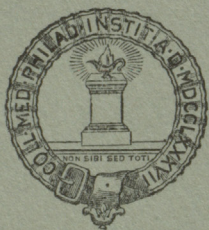


MEMOIR OF DR. FREDERICK A. PACKARD

BY

CHARLES W. BURR, M.D.



READ AT THE MEETING OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
OF PHILADELPHIA, JANUARY 2, 1907

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MEMOIR OF DR. FREDERICK A. PACKARD.¹

By CHARLES W. BURR, M.D.

FREDERICK A. PACKARD was born on November 17, 1862. He was the son of Dr. John H. and Elizabeth Wood Packard. He graduated from the College Department of the University of Pennsylvania in 1882, and from the Medical School in 1885. When he was given his degree in medicine he received the medal for the highest general average, the second award in the demonstrators' prize, and honorable mention for his thesis. He served as resident physician in the University and Pennsylvania Hospitals. Three years after graduation he was offered the position of chief assistant resident physician in Johns Hopkins Hospital, but declined the appointment, preferring to enter upon private practice. He soon began to get hospital appointments, and while still a young man was elected visiting physician to the Children's, Philadelphia, Episcopal, and Pennsylvania Hospitals. During the greater part of his medical life he was a member of the teaching staff of the University of Pennsylvania, and shortly before his death was elected a trustee.

The time when he studied medicine was one of transition in methods of teaching and of great scientific unrest. The relation of microörganisms to disease, accepted here and there by wise and far-seeing men, had not become a part of the orthodox dogma of medicine; on the contrary, he was taught sneeringly by one professor that "bugs" had nothing to do with the causation of disease, by another that it was a proved fact, and by a third that in such questions scientific skepticism was a wise attitude of mind. Pathology

¹ Read January 2, 1907.

was still almost synonymous with morbid anatomy, and the newer chemical pathology was only beginning to be dreamed of in the minds of geniuses who, as is usual, were first scorned, then sneered at, then quarrelled with in serious fashion, and finally hailed as great men. The methods of instruction were much more didactic and dogmatic than today and bedside instruction was much less thorough. Practical work in the laboratories was given less time than now.

The faculty at the University was very strong and all its members have taken their places in the history of American medicine. I think of all his teachers, Dr. Osler had the greatest influence on his mental development. Teachers in those days had one great advantage so far as student reputation is concerned. We rarely were able to follow the patients lectured on to the postmortem table—the great breaker down of supposed infallibility—and we did not always see the patient after the operation unless it was a success. Today some of us fear students are able to follow patients too closely to the end. In all methods of instruction, the students of today are better off than we were, though today, as then and always, many men are crying that there is too much scientific and not enough practical instruction, really meaning that teaching by rule of thumb is better than teaching principles. One of the greatest advances has been in the training of men to be teachers and not merely practitioners who teach as an incident in their lives. There were then only two men in the faculty who did not practice, and in many colleges there were none.

Much can be foretold of the future of a young physician living in a city, by the medical societies he joins and the interest he takes in their work. Dr. Packard, in 1885, joined the Pathological Society, which for years has been the training school for young men in scientific medicine in this city. He was one of a group of young men who, knowing but little of pathology, still were vitally interested in the science of medicine, and determined to learn all they could for mere learning's sake. He was a constant attendant at its meetings, had a strong personal interest in its welfare, and worked hard for its success. It was he, I think, who instituted

the custom of annual exhibition meetings. He was Secretary for several years, and President from October, 1899, until October, 1901. He was one of the founders of the Philadelphia Pediatric Society in 1896, and later became its President. Probably his most important work in the society was the large part he took in carrying on the work of the milk commission. He was elected a Fellow of the College in 1890; served as a member of several of its committees, and did especially good work as a member of the Committee on the Mütter Museum. He was chairman of the Section on General Medicine at the time of his death. He early joined the County Medical Society, the Philadelphia Neurological Society, the State Medical Society, and the American Medical Association. He was also a member of the Association of American Physicians and of the American Pediatric Society. He was Secretary of the latter for several years and was made a member of its Council.

Dr. Packard was far above the average in mental power. His tastes and inclinations were toward the study of the natural sciences, and from his point of view, medicine was a natural science and should be so studied. He sought hospital appointments for the opportunity of study, and for that only. He wrote a great deal, and all that he wrote was worth the doing. He knew what many men who write do not know—how to write clear, simple idiomatic English.

He was an excellent teacher. He lectured quietly, clearly, without any attempt at oratory, and with entire absence of the bearing which says so plainly, "Behold what a great man I am!" In ward-class teaching he was especially successful, because he always remained young enough to appreciate the students' point of view and to understand the strange mental processes by which they make such curious and out-of-the-way mistakes in reasoning. He knew how to teach men to see what they look at. Students admired him for his intellectual honesty. His influence on them both as man and teacher was great.

After all, the chief duty of physicians is to care for the sick. For this, tact and kindness and wisdom are quite as necessary as skill.

Dr. Packard had all the needed qualities. His smile and bright face did as much good as his medicine. He gave hope, not so much in words, as in bearing and manner and by his strong personal charm. His patients loved the man as much as they respected the physician.

He had a singular charm of personality. Men meeting him once wished to meet him again. Acquaintances wanted to become his friends. He was gentle and quiet in manner and yet no weakling. He was an optimist, and looked for good in men rather than evil. There were, doubtless, men whom he disliked; there was probably none whom he hated. He was careful in his speech and slow to criticise adversely. His honesty was absolute and honor life to him.

For a man to whom death came so early he had attained a high position, and all that he got came cleanly. He never bowed the head in the house of Rimmon nor worshipped at the shrine of Baal. He was not a politician, running at the heels of men, bowing, scraping, and fawning, in the hope some favor would fall to him, but a true man, erect, quiet, self-contained, and self-respecting.

His private life, like the annals of a happy country having no history, was uneventful and without any tragedy. He married Katherine P. Shippen, daughter of Dr. Edward Shippen, June 1, 1893. He died of typhoid fever at the Pennsylvania Hospital, November 1, 1902.

I have spoken no evil of this man because I know none. I knew him well, and knew him to be sincere, just, clear-minded, clean-hearted, a friend faithful and true. His influence for good was great, and it will last as long as any of us here to-night shall live. Why men such as he should die at the very time their abilities have ripened, at the very time that they are beginning to be a power and of use, whilst worthless men survive is a question men have asked since thought began and never answered. Nature is prodigal and penurious, careless and careful, slays and spares irrespective of worth or worthlessness. We can only hope that seeming evil may be real good, and that the power behind the appearances of things, that made the universe and rules it, knows best.

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