

Editorial Views

College of Physicians and Surgeons Jubilee

AS AMERICA approaches middle age we can look forward to an increasing number of venerable anniversaries. Thus, in recent years more than a few educational institutions, whose establishment antedated the Declaration of Independence, have taken pride in recalling their more than two hundred years nurturing the minds of men. It was no happenstance that schools of medicine followed closely in the footsteps of the colleges, attesting to the inseparability of mind and matter. In recognition thereof, we take pleasure in devoting a few pages of the JOURNAL to the celebration of the Bicentennial of the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

In their enthusiasm for this occasion, Dr. Mark and his colleagues in the commemorative article appearing in this issue of the JOURNAL, may be pardoned for seeming to have jumped the gun, for the College of Physicians and Surgeons was chartered by the New York State Board of Regents in 1807, subsequently establishing in 1814 a formal relationship with Columbia College.

King's College Medical School, soon to be Columbia Medical College, had been founded in 1767, the second school of medicine in America. Wishing to be second to none, priority is claimed by Columbia's cohorts, for although the Medical School of Philadelphia College (later the University of Pennsylvania) had already given the baccalaureate degree in 1768, King's College was the first to award the degree of Baccalaureate in Medicine, in 1770.

It is no family secret that anesthesia was a child of the later years with a long gestational period and a somewhat retarded development. Although more thorough perusal of

the archives of the College of Physicians and Surgeons might have yielded another tidbit or two, we find that anesthesia is given short shrift in nineteenth century annals. Opposite page 58 in Lamb's History of the Presbyterian Hospital and the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, there is a photograph of an unidentified intern giving anesthesia for an operation performed by a Dr. Andrew McCosh. One can be certain of this because of the omnipresent ether can and what is undeniably a face mask, a head harness and possibly a reservoir bag.

Then in 1907, in spirit with several other advanced institutions, Presbyterian Hospital established the new position of Consultant in Anesthesia—"a timely action since the process was attracting increasing interest and since in the Hospital anesthesia had been administered by inexperienced interns." The first appointee was Dr. Thomas L. Bennett, who had come from Kansas City to pioneer in the field, and was "already the outstanding anesthetist in New York." Presbyterian's gain was another's loss for he had been Anesthetist and Instructor in Anesthetics at the Hospital for the Ruptured and Crippled.

Dr. Mark and his colleagues vividly carry on the narrative from here, to depict the splendid growth of the Department of Anesthesiology at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center and to call attention to this development as a symbol of the maturation of the specialty. They can take just pride in their accomplishments and we in Anesthesiology are grateful for what they have given us.

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