

**PIONEER PHYSICIANS.**

**Somerset County "Doctors" who Practiced Long Years Ago.**

Living, as the early settlers of Somerset county did, in the pure, piny atmosphere of the virgin forest; drinking the sparkling water as it bubbled from the rock-ribbed Alleghenies—pure as God, the Eternal, brewed it; inheriting constitutions untainted by vice; diseases, which are now claiming their victims annually by thousands, to them unknown, and sickness, of any kind, was the exception. Out-door life, vigorous exercise and plain food made those people perfect specimens of manhood. But as the population increased and blood from other sources was infused—and customs at variance with those then existing, were introduced—this condition changed.

The construction and operation of the now historic National Road poured in a population, some of which at least, wore the badge of coarseness and others the most refined deviltry now found in our cities, and this went far to leaven the whole lump. Prescott says that before the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, yellow fever was unknown in that country. Ever since it has been the scourge of the Gulf provinces, and is epidemic there. From this we might argue that civilization engenders diseases which it aims to cure. At any rate, not more than two score years had passed until dyspepsia, cancer, consumption, and other diseases, made their appearance. What few physicians the country then contained were located in Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore and were graduates of foreign schools. Previous to this time, however, Dr. Rust, Dr. Shippen and Dr. Franklin saw the pressing needs of the country and established the University of Pennsylvania, the first Medical College in the United States, and others soon followed. Meanwhile there were only one or two regular practitioners in Somerset county.

"Pow wow" remedies abounded, and many charms and some witchcraft were used. Where domestic medicines were used they consisted mostly of infusions made of indigenous plants and a little rhubarb, saffron, catnip, etc. Had the fathers confined to use these teas, as they were termed, and refrained from the indiscriminate use of calomel, blue mass and general blood-letting, which were introduced later, much harm might have been avoided, if no good had been accomplished. As early as 1820 general bleeding had become such a fad with the citizens that it was practiced by all. It was the remedy for colds, for the toothache, for falling out of the hair, for the itch, etc., etc. The writer has seen on the arms of the oldest citizens as many as a dozen scars where the lance had done execution in earlier days. A number of persons had it done regularly in the spring and in the autumn with the idea that it drained away "the bad blood." It never occurred to them that "good blood" was more likely to drain through the wound than the other kind. Some claimed that they could cure inflammation of the eyes and felons by charms. Whooping cough was supposed to be cured by passing the child three times through the horse collar, and if the child was old enough to kiss a bald-face horse it was supposed to be a specific. Witch doctors were numerous, and to describe their performances would require a separate article of some length.

Tradition has Dr. Gabriel Kimmell as one of the first regular physicians to settle in Somerset county. Some of his potions were said to be mild in taste but powerful in their action. He had one idea far in advance of his day, and that was that music will cure disease. Had he learned that

"Music hath charms  
To soothe the savage breast?"  
Not more than two years ago this principle was again enunciated by the celebrated Sir Andrew Clarke, of London, and put into practical application in some of the London hospitals. Choirs sing there now at regular intervals. Pianos, violins, etc., are there considered a part of the physician's regular armamentarium. It is claimed that by the soothing effects of music patients sleep who would otherwise require drugs to procure it, that pain is relieved and some diseases of the nervous system are much ameliorated, if not cured entirely. Dr. Kimmell was a violinist of considerable skill. If the testimony of some of the people who heard him may be credited, he was a remote rival of Ole Bull or Paganini. He carried his violin with him and the patients rather longed for a dose of the medicine. It is also stated, on reputable authority, that he entertained a similar view of the action of a mixture of calomel and castor oil, of that which Omar Pasha expressed of the Koran when he was about to burn the great library at Alexandria. When he was remonstrated with and told he would destroy a great amount of information that could never be restored, the Pasha exclaimed: "If the books contain anything contrary to the Koran they must be destroyed! If they contained nothing at variance with the Koran, then the Koran is sufficient, and why save them? Dr. Kimmell kept a large bottle of calomel and a larger one of castor oil on his office table, and claimed whatever fiddling would not cure, these drugs were pretty sure to cure, but if they did not,

the devil and Tom Paine could not cure them, because they were incurable."

Later a physician by the name of Redgrave opened an office in Salisbury. Rumor had it that he had previously tried his luck in Virginia, and that having located in said place early in the spring he sat on his front door stoop or portico most of the season and did not have a single call. One day when he was sitting in his chosen position and was pondering the alarming health of the locality, he suddenly heard a horse coming at a gallop. This being an unusual gait in a slow community he at once (as he naturally would) jumped at the conclusion that whoever is riding that horse is after a doctor. Very soon a man appeared, bareheaded, barefooted and riding barebacked. He rode up to the physician and asked: "Are you a doctor?"

Riding nearer the man placed his foot on the arm of the doctor's chair. "Yes indeed, and a mighty good one, too," was the response. "Doctor, what ails that foot?" The foot was swollen, hot, and had an angry, red appearance. The doctor examined it and asked: "How long have you had this trouble?"

"Since this morning," was the response. "Well," said the doctor, "you have the worst case of erysipelas on that foot I ever saw." "Ery-hell!" said the man, "that's a bee sting. Good day, doctor," and without further ceremony he galloped away leaving the doctor to reflect upon the perverseness of mankind. Incidentally we may remark that not one physician in a thousand could tell the difference between erysipelas and a bee sting by the local appearance alone.

During Dr. Redgrave's sojourn at Salisbury, a girl about 14 years of age was carrying a bottle of whiskey to the harvest men. She fell, broke the bottle, and cut one of the arteries in her wrist. Dr. Redgrave was sent for at once, but before he came, notwithstanding tight bandaging and the use of cold water, the girl had fainted. Instead of tying or ligating the vessel, he tied alum on it which arrested the hemorrhage for a few minutes, when it broke out with renewed vigor. Then he tried, in succession, cobwebs, puffball, iron, scraped sole leather, and ooze from the vats in the tannary. All with the same result. He was about to tear the artery with a red-hot iron when Mr. Beachy said he would not permit it, and wanted Dr. Bruce, who was then practicing at Somerset, in consultation. When Dr. Bruce arrived it was night, and the hemorrhage for the time had ceased. He said he would do nothing till bleeding again set in. He then retired, giving instructions to call him immediately. Dr. Redgrave told the nurses to call him also if they called Dr. Bruce.

During the night there was another hemorrhage, and they aroused Dr. Bruce, who ligated the artery, dressed the wound and cured the case. When Dr. Redgrave awoke the next morning and saw the sun shining in his window, he concluded as there was no alarm during the night his last remedy had been successful and that Dr. Bruce had come on a fool's errand. He came down smiling and said to the nurses, "I never knew the last remedy I applied to fail. I would let Dr. Bruce sleep till breakfast is ready, as there will be no need of his services now, but people will make fools of themselves when they get scared."

The nurses lost no time in acquainting him with the facts. He flew into a terrible rage and poured out a volley of oaths. This proved so detrimental to his cause that he soon sought pastures new.

A man surnamed Bennett established himself as a hatter in the southern part of the county, not long after the above occurrence, and did a thriving business. Not many months elapsed before it was noticed and noted that Bennett had a restless manner and at times was quite moody. One of the citizens put on a bold front and deliberately asked Bennett what the trouble with him was. He told the citizen that several weeks previous he had a dream or a vision, he could not tell which, but in it the genius informed him that he was defeating the purpose for which nature intended him and that he ought to be either a preacher or a physician.

"Well," said the citizen, "I don't see why that should trouble you. Preaching you have already tried, and you know what you can do at that, and the rest of us know how often you have fished on Sunday on the sly after you had preached—so that need give you no concern."

Bennett decamped for parts unknown, but it was ascertained a few months afterwards that he had hung out his shingle in Uniontown as a regular physician. There he was met by a gentleman from Pittsburgh who had seen him before and who said:

"I see you are a doctor. What school do you adhere to?"

"Well," said Bennett, "I used to be Thompsonian, but now I am Epileptic," meaning Eclectic.—Dr. T. F. Livingston in *Mercedale Commercial*.

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**Semi-Centennial Recollections.**

Readers of the daily papers during the month could not have failed to notice the triumphal tour of Hon. George V. Lawrence, of Washington county, a member of the Legislature half a century ago, a member of Congress during the stormy days of the war and reconstruction, and to-day a member of the Pennsylvania Legislature. Seated on the veranda of the Somerset House a few evenings ago, and surrounded by a select number of friends, his reminiscences were very interesting.

Mr. Lawrence was born and reared on a Washington county farm. His father before him was a distinguished man of affairs and held some high positions in public life. The farmer-statesman is seventy-six years old, but he has been accustomed to an out-door life; has always been a great horse-back rider, and is as erect as a soldier. His face is cleanly shaven, his eye is clear and bright, and his memory is almost a cyclopedia of local facts.

During the Sunday he passed here he told how when sitting with a number of his fellow legislators in Harrisburg shortly before the close of the late session, he spoke of the fact that a half a century ago he had ridden on horseback over the route through Somerset from his home at Monongahela to Harrisburg to attend the session of Legislature as a young and newly elected member, and how he would like again to pass over the same ground and see the changes that had occurred in all those years. The response to this came to him in the form of a bloated Kentucky horse and a handsome buggy, and the result was that he and Henry Hall, of the Pittsburgh Times, made the trip together over the mountains.

Mr. Lawrence recalled all the famous old landlords along the line of his route of years ago; said he stopped with Jacob Neff in Somerset, and remembered the late David Lavan, who presided over the only hotel in Lavansville at that time. The venerable statesman was pressed to come to Somerset on the occasion of our centennial celebration, but could give no definite answer at the time.

Among other things he alluded to was his intimate acquaintance with James G. Blaine, and recalled how Blaine had referred to an almost forgotten congressional campaign of half a century ago, in which the late Daniel Weyand of Somerset was a candidate for congress against Andrew Stewart, of Fayette, the great Whig exponent of high tariff at that time.

He spoke also of the late Judge Black, Jack Ogle, the two Forwards, Chaney and Walter, and never seemed to be at a loss for a name or a date. General Koontz, Col. Scull and other distinguished citizens he remembered all about and renewed his acquaintance with them very pleasantly.

As an illustration of the old gentleman's popularity with his own people, he told how on a number of occasions he was elected by the votes of the neighbors of his own township, only being saved by their personal loyalty, regardless of party.

Mr. Lawrence has never been considered a bitter partisan. He has always been ruled by his honest convictions, and those who differ from him politically have the highest opinion of his personal integrity. The old gentleman's trip from Harrisburg to his home in Monongahela was a regular triumphal march.

Speaking of the Forwards, Mr. Lawrence seemed to think that Chaney Forward, of Somerset, was a greater man than Walter, of Pittsburgh, although the latter arrived at the high dignity of a cabinet officer. He alluded to another thing in this connection, the fact that while Chaney Forward was a Democrat, his brother was a pronounced Whig, and said that the latter from a weakness of character—a kind of hesitancy in forming opinions, or adhering to them after formed—was known as "Walter, the doubter."

I noticed that Mr. Lawrence had the peculiarity that belongs to what are called "magnetic men," of taking one by the hand, and at the same time placing his other hand on ones shoulder, detaining him in this way and looking him squarely in the face as he talked.

**Woman's High Position.**

One of the highest compliments man pays to woman's social position is that of according her, on the street, or in general company, the right to select whom she shall recognize and whom she shall not. No gentleman has the privilege of speaking to a lady in public unless she intimates by a nod, a smile, or in some other way, that she wishes to be recognized. This is a high privilege, and ladies should use it graciously.

Some ladies in Somerset seem to forget, or to be ignorant of the fact that they are the possessors of this high prerogative. Unless the male acquaintance they pass on the street is positively distasteful they should show by some sign that they wish to be complimented by a bow or a word. This is especially applicable in country towns where everyone is supposed to know nearly everyone else; but the class I speak of, I am glad to say, is the exception. J. B. T.

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