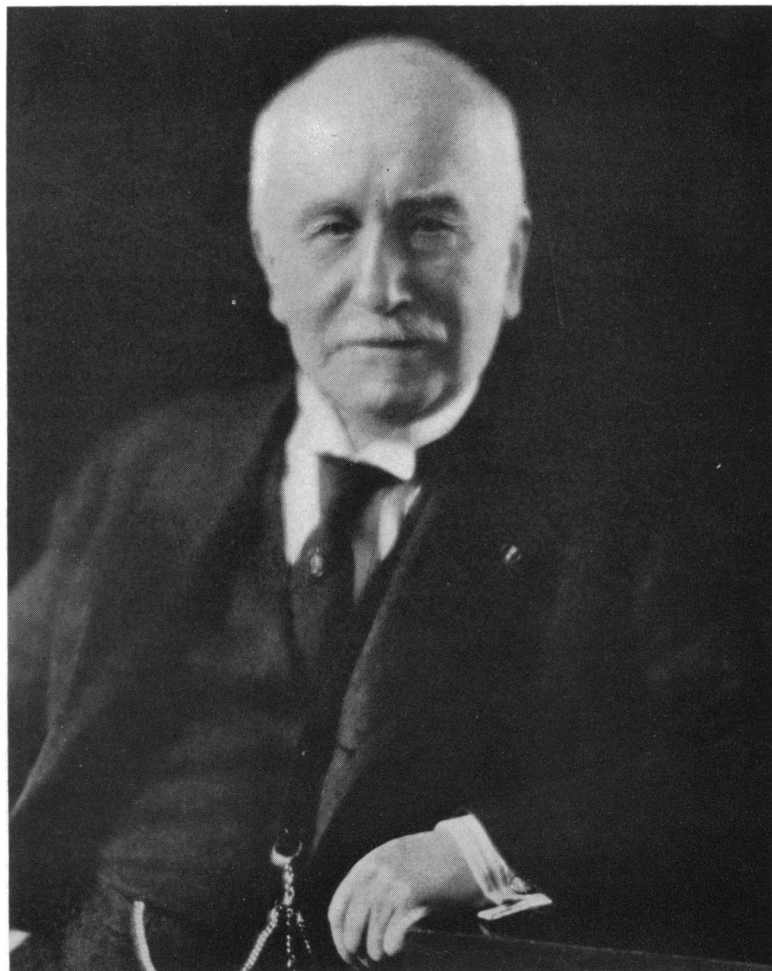


WILLIAM WILLIAMS KEEN

1837-1932

It is difficult to write a comprehensive memoir of Doctor Keen because of the abundance of material from which to draw.

Doctor Keen's accomplishments in the field of medicine and in civic and



WILLIAM WILLIAMS KEEN, M.D.

educational affairs were remarkable and could have been obtained only by one possessed of his earnestness, enthusiasm and love of work, none of which had abated when he had passed into his ninth decade. During the forty years that the writer was more or less intimately associated with him, he was impressed constantly with his enthusiasm, his optimism, his deep religious convictions and his tireless energy. His multifarious duties and engagements

MEMOIRS

throughout his career were met with the most exact promptness and given the most careful consideration. He often said that it was the busy man who was always prompt and who never forgot an engagement. Even in the busiest period of his very busy life he was rarely late for a lecture, an operation or a consultation.

William Williams Keen was born in Philadelphia January 19, 1837, was graduated from Brown University in 1859 and from the Jefferson Medical College in 1862. He at once entered the Army as acting Assistant Surgeon and soon became generally known because of his association with Mitchell and Morehouse in their notable work and publications on nerve injuries. After the War, he spent two years in Europe.

In 1866, he returned to Philadelphia, began the practice of medicine and soon acquired teaching positions. For nine years he lectured on pathological anatomy at the Jefferson Medical College. During the same period he conducted the Philadelphia School of Anatomy in which he had been preceded by so many distinguished surgeons. From 1876 to 1889 he was Professor of Artistic Anatomy at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts and from 1884 to 1889 Professor of Surgery at the Women's Medical College. During the period between 1866 and 1889 Doctor Keen became known in the world of surgery largely through his contributions to literature. Up to the end of this period, he had no large hospital service, but was on the surgical staff of St. Mary's and St. Agnes' Hospitals and developed a large surgical practice.

In the year 1889, on the death of the younger Gross, he was elected one of the Professors of Surgery at the Jefferson College, the other being John H. Brinton. This election marks a distinct epoch in the surgical career of Doctor Keen. He gave up his other hospital and college positions and devoted himself assiduously to teaching, to his surgical service in the Jefferson Hospital, and to writing. His fame and reputation spread rapidly and he soon became a conspicuous figure in the world of medicine. Keen's lectures were all carefully prepared and he always had before him synopses which were carefully followed, rendering note-taking easy on the part of the student. Doctor Keen kept accurate notes of all his hospital patients in his own office which enabled him easily to report his experiences with accuracy. His well-ordered life made possible the accomplishment of work which would easily have staggered any two men whose lives were not so well organized. It was, I am sure, this characteristic of order and arrangement which enabled him to write so extensively and to read not only everything that was worth reading in surgical literature, but a mass of other papers and books relating to science, political economy and religion.

As an operator he was bold but very painstaking and careful. He rarely showed hesitation and never a lack of self-confidence. But for these qualities he could never have contributed so much to the advancement of surgery, particularly that of the brain. He was America's first "brain surgeon" and soon gained and held preëminence in this field of surgery. It is impossible in a brief sketch such as this to discuss or even enumerate Doctor Keen's con-

WILLIAM WILLIAMS KEEN

tributions to literature, but the following, prepared by himself, will give some idea of the wide scope of his writing.

Reflex Paralysis and Gun Shot Wounds and Other Injuries of Nerves (both with Weir Mitchell and Morehouse), 1864; Keen's Clinical Charts, 1870; History of the Philadelphia School of Anatomy, 1874; Early History of Practical Anatomy, 1870; History of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, 1898; Surgical Complications and Sequels of Typhoid Fever, 1898; Addresses and Other Papers, 1905; Animal Experimentation and Medical Progress, 1914; The Early Years of Brown University, 1764-1770, 1914; Ether Day Address, 1916; Treatment of War Wounds, 1917; Surgical Operations on President Cleveland, 1917; Clover Lectures at Brown University on Medical Research and Human Welfare, 1917; Selected Papers and Addresses, 1922, Editor: Heath's Practical Anatomy, 1870; Diagrams of the Nerves of the Human Body, by W. H. Fowler, 1872; American Health Primers, 1879-1880; Holden's Medical and Surgical Landmarks, 1881; Gray's Anatomy, 1887; American Text-Book of Surgery with J. William White, 1892, 1903; I Believe in God and Evolution, 1922; Everlasting Life, 1924; Keen's System of Surgery, eight vols., 1906-1921.

Doctor Keen was an enthusiastic patriot and it was with pride that in his later life he referred to his military service in three wars.

Honors were literally heaped upon him; he was elected president of practically every society of which he was a member, among them the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, the American Medical Association, the American Surgical Association, the International Society of Surgery and the American Philosophical Society; he was an honorary member of most of the European surgical societies and held honorary degrees conferred by the following institutions: Brown, Northwestern, Toronto, Edinburgh, Yale, St. Andrews, Pennsylvania, Upsala and Harvard. There have been few American surgeons so universally respected and honored.

Aside from his professional work Doctor Keen gave a great deal of his time to matters of education, civic improvement and to his church. His only recreations were reading and travel. A continental trip was usually made in the summer, and in his late life his travels were completed with a trip around the world. At the time of his death on June 7, 1932, he was the oldest Fellow of this Association both in years and duration of membership, having been one of the original Fellows. His interest in the Association was very deep and his attendance at the meetings was regular even after his retirement. The year of his Presidency was in 1898.

The death of this great surgeon June 7, 1932, in his ninety-sixth year, not only saddened the hearts of the older Fellows of the Association, but also of those much younger who had drawn an inspiration from his enthusiasm, his energy and his accomplishments.

J. H. GIBBON.

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