

A Half Century of American Medicine: Dr. Simon Flexner

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A HALFW CENTURY OF AMERICAN MEDICINE

By Dr. Simon Flexner

THE ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

By a happy coincidence it is just a half-century since I entered the University School of Medicine at Louisville as a student. For fifty years, therefore, I have been an observer of the medical developments taking place in this country, and during much of this time I have also followed the developments going on abroad. It is my purpose on this occasion to attempt a brief and rapid review of American medicine of this period in relation to European medicine as it existed at the same time.

But first I must express to you the happiness I feel in returning here to my Alma Mater and to the city of my birth and young manhood. I am moved to salute you on the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of your foundation, to congratulate you on your past, and to wish you ever greater achievements in the future.

The early history of the Louisville Medical School is an integral part of the history of the American frontier and the winning of the West. Aber and better-informed writers have recorded the beginnings of the school, brought it into relation with Transylvania University, from which the first nucleus of its faculties came, and followed its later vicissitudes. The school was an important link in that historical chain of peripatetic schools which, before the middle of the last century, attracted the experienced physicians and surgeons of the day who wandered up and down the country from east to west, doing their part, and a very significant part, in subduing the wilderness. It is a pleasure and an inspiration to recall some of the remarkable men who taught here, among whom were Daniel Drake, Samnel D. Gross, Austin Flint, Elisha

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1 Address delivered on April 3, 1937, at the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the School of Medicine of the University of Louisville.