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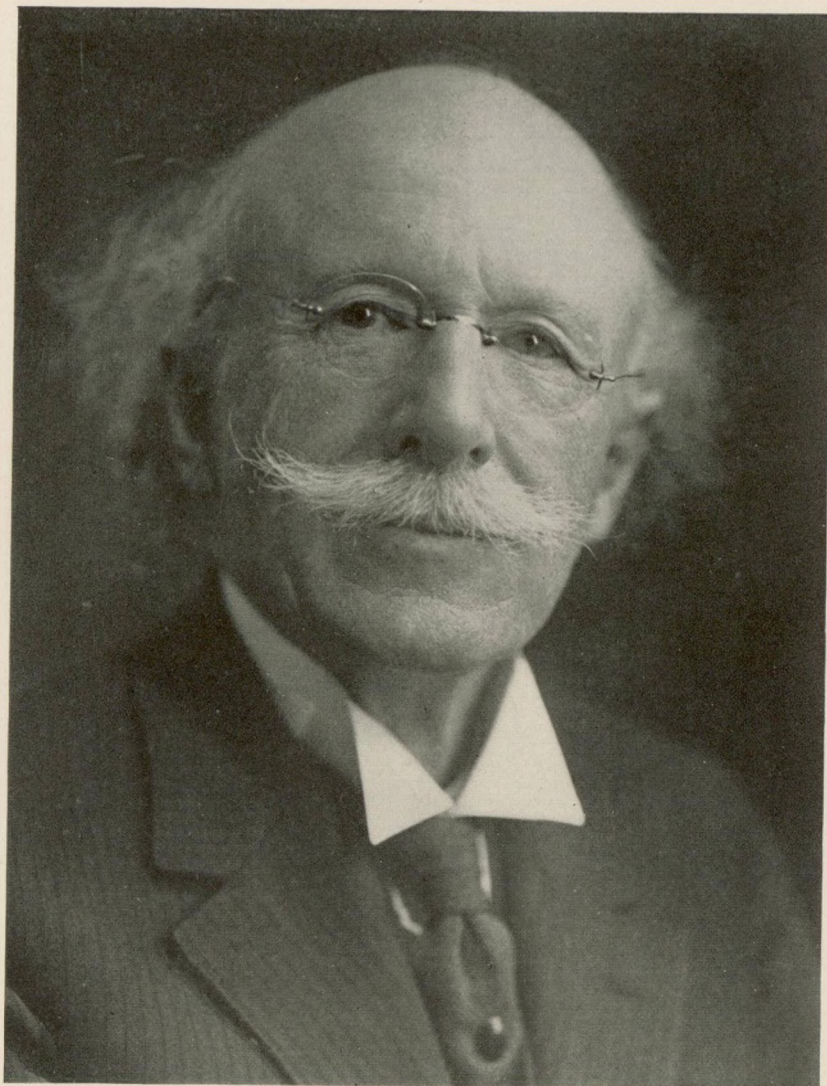
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REPRINTED FROM

THE JOURNAL OF DENTAL RESEARCH

Vol. xii, No. 6, December, 1932, pp. 877-885





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New York City

Samuel Smiles tells us that when the Archbishop of Canterbury wished to draw the character of his deceased friend, Lord Buckhurst, he dwelt not upon his abilities as Lord High Treasurer of England during two reigns nor upon his genius as a poet, but rather upon the quality of spirit in which he met the ordinary affairs of life.

Now that my friend has gone, I find myself thinking less and less upon his achievements in anatomy, histology, pathology, the science and art of dentistry, photography, painting, literature, anthropology and philosophy, and more and more of the zest for intellectual adventure with which for sixty years he faced unsolved problems, mistaken beliefs and powerful opponents. His scientific work carried the banner of thought forward in his day. What in it is right others will confirm and adapt to later days. What in it was mistaken they will correct. That is what he desired.

On April 18, 1852, was born James Leon Williams, one of a long line of idealists and idol-breakers. Somewhat more than two hundred years before, Roger Williams had left England to seek spiritual freedom in Plymouth Colony, then no more than a noble experiment. He found there wider horizons than he had left, but either they contracted or he grew. Driven by his vision, he founded Providence Plantations, where for the first time in America the white man was free to worship God after the dictates of his own conscience.

During the next century other Williamses fought for political freedom as Roger had fought for spiritual freedom, and some among them rose to distinction during the struggle. The war over and peace palling, Capt. Jacob Williams set out to conquer the wilderness. In 1785 he paddled up the Kennebec River in Maine in a canoe, selected an attractive spot just below Caratunk Falls and founded the settle-

¹ Dr. Williams was one of the founders of the International Association for Dental Research, and a member of the board of editors of the *Journal of Dental Research*.—[Ed.]

ment into which, sixty-seven years later, James Leon Williams was born. Fortunately for Leon, as he came to be called, some of the conditions in his home were what a youth of today would call primitive. Books were few, but they were read, pondered, discussed and reread. He learned his letters and his first words out of the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress. The grand old Bible stories came to him as they might well come first to all of us, merely as stories fitted close to life, the spiritual significance of which develops as experience broadens.

Authors now studiously avoided by all of our young folks and by too many of their elders formed the backbone of the home library: Bunyan, Comstock, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, and Fisk. Out of them he stored, unconsciously, treasures that were to stand him in good stead, so that when, for instance, a little known stripling, he was called to public account for his idol-breaking, with the cards stacked against him he met and defeated Garretson, then one of the most popular figures and powerful speakers in the dental profession. From association with these authors he developed the effortless grace which characterized his writing.

Leon seems never to have been robust in that all-conquering physical prowess by which Maine farmers wrung a living from a rocky and reluctant soil. About the age of seventeen he entered the office of Dr. Roberts, a dentist of North Vassalboro, Maine. After two years of industrious apprenticeship he began practice in the same town. Later he passed examinations for the degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery at Baltimore, and for the degree of Licentiate in Dental Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland.

The contact with vital things of which only the beginnings were known awoke in him the same spirit of adventure that had sent Roger Williams to Providence Plantations, and Capt. Jacob Williams to war and to the wilderness. He joined the Maine Dental Society and obtained the loan of its microscope. Working with home-made accessories and learning the technic of microscopy, specimen preparation and photography by reading and correspondence, he extended the knowledge of the histology and pathology of enamel and fought valiantly on the platform and in print for his discoveries. I have summarized elsewhere² the outstanding results of this work and of his

² *The Life and Work of James Leon Williams*; The Dentists' Supply Company of New York, 1925.

achievements in photography, painting, anthropology and literature and need not repeat them here.

Dr. Williams used to insist that the dreamer and the scientist might be among the most practical of men, and the achievements of his later years seemed to prove him right. Certainly his contributions to the craft of dentistry and through that craft to the public were of greater immediate and practical value than the results of the researches he loved so well and pursued so long.

In the early 80's, when the principles and technic of crown- and bridge-work were generally unknown to the profession, when information concerning it was difficult to get, and when this form of service was anathema to those dentists who, helpless from lack of knowledge, suffered from competition by it, he made information about it available to all through the pages of *The Dental Cosmos*.

In 1895 he entered upon a crusade which was to engage most of his time and thought thenceforward. It was to arouse an insensitive and indifferent profession to the possibilities in artificial dentures, then probably the least esteemed and most poorly rendered form of dental service. Conceiving that better forms of artificial teeth were a necessity as well as a means to improved service, he expended his first efforts upon the manufacturers of artificial teeth; but, since nobody in the profession but him seemed much concerned, they, comfortable in the assurance of easy business, declined to venture out onto the seas of experimentation and expense. Turning toward the dental profession, he splintered the lances of his earnestness and eloquence, for nearly ten years, against its inertia and indifference, without apparent result. Finally, he was able to conclude with an American tooth-manufacturer an agreement to carry out his program if the dental profession indicated a reasonable desire for it. Renewed efforts, now with the support of important leaders in this country, procured the necessary manifestation; and at the age of fifty-eight, when most men have passed the physical and mental zenith of their lives, he entered upon a new campaign for his beloved profession. He discovered the typical forms in teeth and gave Berry's law of harmony between face form and tooth form practical meaning where, previously, only theoretical meaning had been possible. He isolated the more frequently seen combinations of the typical forms. Then he

conquered the art of carving plaster pattern-teeth, which has been mastered by but few men in the world, and brought to it a professional knowledge and artistic ability never before evidenced in it, so that the forms which he carved are now accepted the world around as unequalled in beauty and naturalness and in theoretical and practical value.

Then he dropped the carver and took up the pen and piled art upon science in persuasive argument, which demolished the temperamental theory of tooth form, and substituted for it the science of his new discovery. It is now a little more than eighteen years since that March night when he made the initial presentation before The First District Dental Society of the State of New York. He lived to see his work acclaimed the world around and given the sincere flattery of imitation. The best proof of its practical success is that all the anterior teeth which now seek the dentist's favor on a quality basis are efforts to incorporate the principles of form he introduced or are copies of the forms he presented.

There are men who measure the success of lives only by their power to earn money. Dr. Williams made no effort to earn great sums for himself, but there is excellent reason to believe that his last crusade has enabled the dental profession to earn at least two hundred million dollars more than it would have earned but for him, and if we go back forty years to the days when he made crown- and bridge-work available to thousands of dentists who might otherwise have long remained ignorant of it, that sum might probably be increased to five hundred millions. Even on this lowly basis, his was a great life.

Many of the circumstances of Dr. Williams' mature life were very pleasant. He enjoyed a wide circle of friends on something like his own intellectual level, and received from the dental profession and from scientific men in other walks of life many testimonials of esteem and admiration. He was a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Fellow of the New York Academy of Science, Fellow of the American Academy of Dental Science, Fellow of the American College of Dentists, President of the International Association for Dental Research, President of the National Society of Denture Prosthetists, member of La Société Odontologique de

France, and honorary member of more than twenty other dental organizations in others parts of the world.

A few years ago he purchased the farm upon which his boyhood had been lived, and built there a summer home in which he passed many happy hours. His winters were spent in New York, where he died, suddenly, on February 23, 1932. He is survived by Mrs. Williams and two sons from a former marriage.

What is it that fires men to unceasing industry and effort from which all save a tiny portion of the benefits must go to others? What does such a mind as Dr. Williams possessed think when in its quiet hours there come to it those questions which come to all of us: why are we here and where are we going?

During more than twenty years in which Dr. Williams and I worked intimately together, often in darkness where we sought light and with little results where we desired great, we often asked ourselves why any one should work thus. He always answered the question by saying that he was bound to follow what he called the "inner voice." His fidelity in following that voice not only made possible his scientific presentations but tempered the mainspring of his life. Let us see to what beliefs about life it led him.

Dr. Williams believed in God. He had his own definition for Him. He never gave Him substance or form. He never tried to comprehend or understand Him. He thought of Him as "Whoever Is Behind Whatever Is." To Dr. Williams He was always present, everywhere, in everything. It was He who held the stars in their courses and gave teeth their form. When Dr. Williams looked out of his window and saw the ships move to and fro upon the river, some by wind on their sails and others by the energy of sunlight stored up millions of years ago in the form of coal, they moved, to his eyes, by the power of God. It was God who gave form and color to the landscapes he loved to paint, and who arranged the bundles of enamel rods so as to distribute the stress to which teeth are subject. Better than most men Dr. Williams knew what the Apostle Paul meant when he talked to the Athenians about that God who made the world and all things therein, and in whom we live, move and have our being. Dr. Williams believed in God.

Dr. Williams believed in religion. He had a definition for it which you will not find in the dictionaries. He was not afraid of definitions. He and I made them as we needed them, put them to work in our lives and changed them as experience required. We defined religion as "man's search for a friendly God." When man first visualized his universe, he found himself surrounded by forces he did not originate nor understand and could not control. He knew only personalities and so he thought of these forces as gods. Because he and his fellows often suffered and died from conflict with them, he thought of them as hostile gods and lived in fear of them. When he was mentally a little older, he began to think that perhaps he could win their friendship by prayer and gifts. Man was searching for a friendly God.

Within recent years science has taught us that favor is to be won from nature not by sacrifices and prayer but by understanding and cooperation. Thus science becomes the hand-maid of religion in the search for the friendly God. Dr. Williams always had it in mind that his labors should bring about a better understanding of a bit of the divine handiwork and so make man and God more friendly. Dr. Williams not only believed in religion, but lived it.

Dr. Williams believed in inspiration. When he and Prof. Gysi and I became sufficiently well acquainted to talk freely about those things which a reticent man mentions only to his intimates, we found that we had come, individually, to four identical beliefs:

That nothing we could do by our own knowledge and strength was likely to prove importantly constructive.

That God had constructive work for every man to do.

That if man would breathe in and apply the spirit of service, God would supply knowledge and power and wisdom according to the man's capacity, opportunity, and willingness to use what was given him.

That our little knowledge and strength were, as Trine has said, for keeping us in tune with the Infinite, and that once in tune we should keep ourselves out of the picture and let God's message come through.

Dr. Williams was born into and grew up in a home where the spirit of service was accepted as a fundamental of life. Prayerfully he sought harmony with God. Scrupulously he sought to keep himself out of the presentations he was permitted to make. He believed in inspiration.

Dr. Williams believed in aspiration, which, to us, was the other side of inspiration. You cannot breathe deeply and hold it indefinitely. You have to breathe out so that you may take another breath and live. To us aspiration came to mean "turning the spirit of service into constructive work." He carried that spirit to the end. The last weeks of his life were spent in preparing part of a symposium which he hoped might help to clarify some of the causes of dental caries.

For more than fifty years Dr. Williams scorned delights and lived laborious days and nights so that he might contribute to his beloved profession the things that were given him. Dr. Williams lived aspiration.

Dr. Williams believed in the evolution of the spirit of man. As an anthropologist he knew that man has not increased much in stature or intelligence in recent ages, and that no noticeable increase seems probable. He traced the unfolding of man's spiritual nature from its first faint dawning down to the present day, and he believed that it was only well begun. He knew the story of its slow advance through ignorance, fear, superstition, and cruelty. He regretted that man should keep his head down and stumble when he might lift it and walk, but he knew that man will learn in no other way.

He knew that under favorable conditions certain physical organisms never undergo natural death, but are immortal. And he believed the spirit of man to be immortal. He was well aware that many intelligent and earnest people hold such a belief unfounded, that they believe all ends at death. He always felt sorry for those who held such belief, and he would have been even more sorry if they could have proved their faith right. If the paltry spiritual advances which man has so far made, with their sin and inequality and suffering and their all too frequent defeat of fine enthusiasms and ambitions, are the sum total of the long-drawn-out and often fierce and painful process of evolution, then is the universe not only the riddle that Haeckel called it; it is a more ghastly tragedy than the mind of man could conceive.

But if this life is only the childhood of the spirit, a sort of training ground wherein man learns the habit of breathing in inspiration and trying his fledgling wings in aspiration, and if he is promoted, on merit, to levels on which he works out his spiritual youth and maturity,

things fall into a more understandable and tolerable and hopeful order. And we agreed that we could live and work more happily and hopefully in the belief that the spirit of man is immortal and would get a chance to work out its youth and maturity, even if such a faith were mistaken, than we could in the belief that death ends all and that only altruism, like a painted candle, is left as the source of our inspiration. Our faith, with its hope of personal gain, might be more selfish, but for us it was more vital. Dr. Williams lived in faith that the spirit of man is immortal.

A few years ago, when Dr. Williams knew he was failing physically and on a day when I think he felt especially infirm, he related the following incident and left with me a message.

"In my boyhood," said he, "I lived on a farm near Solon, Maine. On all sides, save one, our view faded easily into the horizon, but on the north it was shut off by Old Moxie, which seemed to me, as a child, a high mountain. Always, when I looked at it, that mountain aroused in me the desire to know what was on the other side of it. So, while still a little lad, I said to my father: 'What is on the other side of the mountain?' And he, answering me in words from Pilgrim's Progress, which I knew well because it had been one of the primers from which I had learned to read, replied: 'The Delectable Land.'

"This change which we call death, which shuts off so abruptly our view of the other world, arouses in me much the same feeling that the mountain aroused in me as a boy. I am curious to know what is on the other side. So, if you outlive me and any one asks where I have gone, tell him that I have gone to find out what is on the other side of the mountain."

Dr. Williams has gone, and many of us will miss him. He has left something of his vision and spirit to those of us who worked with him and whom he expected to "carry on" when his part of the task was finished.

As regards his memory, two courses are open. We may hug his loss to our hearts and selfishly grieve, or we may think of him as gone on a journey for which he had a strong curiosity and was unusually well equipped, and we may wish him, in the most literal sense of the term, Godspeed.

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