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## OBITUARY

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Daniel Hale Williams, M.D., LL.D., F.A.C.S.

By U. G. Dailey, M.D., Chicago  
After over two years of incapacitation due to illness, Dr. "Dan" Williams, as he was familiarly and affectionately known by his patients and friends, passed away at his summer home at Idlewild, Michigan, August 1931.

Born January 18, 1856, at Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, he was the sixth of seven children of Daniel and Sarah Price Williams. In his childhood he attended school at his birthplace, later at Annapolis and Baltimore, Maryland. In early youth the family moved to Janesville, Wisconsin, where he received his preparatory education. For one year he studied law, but coming under the influence of Surgeon-General Henry Palmer of Janesville, a Civil War veteran, he decided to study medicine, and for two years served under the preceptorship of that distinguished surgeon. In 1880 he entered the Medical Department of Northwestern University Medical School, then known as the Chicago Medical College, from which he was graduated in 1883. After a year's internship at the Mercy Hospital, Chicago, he entered practice. He immediately became surgeon to the South Side Dispensary and Demonstrator of Anatomy at his alma mater, numbering among his pupils many who later became leaders in the profession. In 1887 Dr. Williams was appointed a member of the Illinois State Board of Health and was re-appointed in 1891.

In the same year he founded the Provident Hospital, that most enduring monument to his name. Realizing the necessity for hospital training for colored nurses and internes, he interested the Armour family and other wealthy persons in his project. The hospital came into existence in a modest way and grew into the institution of today with its tradition for opportunity and service. He served on its staff as attending surgeon until 1912. This period was broken only by a term of years

(1893-1898) during which time he was surgeon-in-chief to Freedmen's Hospital, Washington, which he re-organized and placed upon a modern scientific basis. Always interested in medical teaching, in 1900 he began the series of clinical visits to Meharry Medical College, which were to exercise such a tremendous influence upon the professional lives of those who sat at his feet. The early work in surgery at Nashville was done in the R.F. Boyd's office and little hospital, Boyd and Stewart assisting and Kenney giving the anesthetic. Hundreds of Meharry graduates testify to the impressions made upon them by this enthusiastic clinical lecturer from the North. Dr. Williams was attending surgeon to the Cook County Hospital from 1900 to 1906. He made the most of the abundant clinical facilities afforded there. From the lips of his former internes, some of whom are now heads of departments in various medical colleges, the writer has heard testimony of the esteem and respect in which his ability was held. Dr. Julian H. Lewis has taken the trouble to examine the hospital records of those days and has unearthed many interesting sidelights on Dr. Williams' participation in the staff-transactions of that period. From 1912 to his death Dr. Williams was associate attending surgeon to St. Luke's, one of Chicago's largest, wealthiest and most important hospitals.

Dan Williams' true place in medicine must be measured against the background of his times. It will be remembered that in the late seventies Pasteur had laid the foundation of bacteriology and Lister was promulgating his theories of antiseptics. Few of us are old enough to recall what a furore was created and how hard it was for the doctrine of antiseptics to gain acceptance among the older men of that day; but it is a familiar fact that a new era in surgery was beginning at about the time of his entrance into the study of medicine in 1880. As a graduate in 1883, he was of a group of young men unfettered by the prejudices of the previous generation, and receptive to new thoughts and practices in surgery. Billings, Franklin H. Martin, Charles S. Bacon and E. Wyllis Andrews were among the men in school with him. Nicholas Senn was a young surgeon at that time but was already making himself felt. A. J. Ochsner was his assistant. John B. Murphy came

along a few years later. Arthur Dean Bevan was a young professor of anatomy at Rush.

Dr. Williams was a disciple and worshipful admirer of Christian Fenger, the great pathologist-surgeon to whose inspiration and work all of that generation of surgeons in the middle west bore testimony. The then young brothers Charles and William Mayo were making regular pilgrimages to his clinic. Fenger did much of his productive work at the Cook County Hospital during the time of Dr. Williams'

tenure at that institution, and from the anecdotes and quotations in his clinical lectures it was apparent that he was greatly influenced by Fenger's teachings.

There had been several colored practitioners in Chicago antedating Dr. Williams, but none had essayed surgery. Later came George C. Hall, 1887, Charles Edwin Bentley, and Allen A. Wesley, 1889, early associated with Dr. Williams at the Provident Hospital. A. M. Curtis was the first interne. A. Wilberforce Williams joined the little band of workers a year or two later.

Let us be reminded that the race had enjoyed barely twenty years of freedom when this remarkable genius joined the ranks of the trail blazers of the more favored race. Throughout a professional life of nearly fifty years he remained in the vanguard.

His various staff activities have already been alluded to. From what has been said, it is obvious that he was a medical missionary, a veritable Moses to the Negro profession. He enjoyed no phase of his busy life more than his annual trips to the South spreading high scientific and ethical ideals of professional work, to say nothing of the priceless benefits of his skill to the suffering. It may be truly said that he had a hand in the making of most of the active Negro surgeons of the present day Curtis, Warfield, Hale, Wilberforce Williams, Stewart, Kenney, Dailey, to name only a few. Although he never boasted of it, it was a source of pride to him, and as one who was fairly close to him for a period of nearly twenty years, I believe he considered this his most valuable contribution to his day and generation.

In 1909 Wilberforce University conferred the degree of LL.D. upon him. With the founding of the American College of Surgeons in 1913, Daniel Hale Williams

was among the charter members, the only Negro so honored. He was for many years a member of the exclusive Chicago Surgical Society, and read papers before this organization and by invitation before numerous state and national scientific bodies.

In 1893 he became internationally famous by reason of a successful operation for the repair of a stab wound of the heart. Heralded by the public press at the time, it was not reported in medical circles until 1897. The article was published in the New York Medical Record for March 27th of that year under the title, "Stab Wound of the Heart and Pericardium-Suture of the Pericardium." This paper gave complete details, technic and dissections with illustrations. Other important contributions to medical literature are listed at the end of this paper.

His surgical work was marked by profound anatomical knowledge, a thorough understanding of physiology, normal and pathological, and an uncanny surgical judgement. Although much of his work was done in the amphitheatre, he never lost sight of the supreme interest of the patient, in an appeal to the spectacular. As an operator, his attention to technical detail was meticulous. He was the methodical, rather than the virtuose type of surgeon.

Like all great men, Dr. Williams was a man of strong individuality. He was nevertheless modest and retiring, almost timid at times. Occupying an entirely unique place in the Negro profession, he was perhaps sensitive to his position. His high rating in the surgical world brought him unusual contacts, social and otherwise, with his white confreres, some of which were highly agreeable; others brought those mean humiliations which characterize the color situation in this country. These facts had much to do with a certain over-sensitiveness and bitterness of spirit which developed in the later years of his life. But he was remarkably self-contained, and consistently strove to live above petty jealousies and bickerings; and he did not allow the acid incidents of life to dominate his character. In spite of his reserve, he had strong convictions, and maintained them courageously. To his friends he was loyalty itself. Many of his friendships endured for forty years and more. Mutual loyalty and devotion marked his marital life. Mrs. Williams preceded

him in death by several years.

His memory belongs not merely to the medical fraternity but to the race, and fitting memorials should be established in commemoration of his abundantly useful life.

Appendix : Partial list of articles published by Dr. Williams follows:

Ovarian Cysts in Colored Women with Notes on Relative Frequency of Fibromata in both races. Chicago Medical Recorder, January 1897.

An Unusual Case of Fibroma Molluscum, Philadelphia Medical Journal, 1900.

A Report of Two Cases of Caesarian Section Under Positive Indications, With Termination in Recovery, American Journal of Obstetrics, Vol. XLII, No. 3, 1901.

The Need of Hospitals and Training Schools for Colored People of the South, National Hospital Record, 1900.

Penetrating Wounds of the Chest, Perforating the Diaphragm and Involving the Abdominal Viscera, Annals of Surgery, 1904.

Unusually Large Pyosalpinx, Surgery, Gynecology and Obstetrics, Vol. 22, No. 6, p 741, 1916.

The Maligner, New York Medical Journal, Vol CIII, No. 15, pp 673-720, 1916.

NOTE.-I am indebted to Dr. Julian H. Lewis and Mrs. Irene McCoy Gaines for a number of important biographical items. Before his death Dr Williams designated Mrs. Gaines his biographer.

#### THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

In the election of officers this year for the National Medical Association, the trend that was noted last year to the selection of younger men of the profession was continued. In the roster of officers there will be noted names that have not been prominent previously in the affairs of the Association. There were many expressions on the part of the older men of a desire to relinquish the arduous responsibilities that they have carried for many years, and a plea on their part for younger men to accept these responsibilities and carry on the work of the Association.

This manifest desire on the part of the older men to step aside, and the growing interest on the part of the younger men to be active in the affairs of the organization, are undoubtedly the factors responsible for the election again this year of one

of the younger men of the organization to assume the duties of President in 1932.

The present Chief Executive, Dr. Peter Marshall Murray, is one of the late comers to the organization; and while the President-Elect has been in the service of the Association a few years longer, yet he is easily classified as a young man.

The President-Elect, Dr. G. Hamilton Francis, is a native of St. Christophel', British West Indies, where he was born November 29, 1885. His early education was obtained in the public schools of Dieppe Bay. Following his public school course, he was made a pupil teacher in 1904 by His Majesty's Government. In the same year he entered Berkley Institution; where he pursued a scientific course, preparatory to the study of medicine. In 1901 he came to America, and matriculated in Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tennessee, graduating in 1911, cum laude. He then served as interne in Hubbard Hospital, giving special attention to diseases of the eye, ear, nose, and throat, under Dr. C. V. Roman, and to abdominal surgery under Dr. J. A. McMillan.

Upon the completion of his internship the Dr. W. H. Baskett prize in obstetrics was awarded him.

Dr. Francis received a certificate for practice in Tennessee, and later in Virginia. He located in Norfolk, Virginia in 1911. He became a member of the National Medical Association in the same year. From the beginning of his affiliation with the N.M.A., Dr. Francis has been a constant attendant at each session, and has been an indefatigable worker for the welfare and success of the National organization. He has also been one of the aggressive, dominant figures in the development and expansion of his local organization, The Tidewater Medical Society, and his State organization, the Old Dominion Medical Association.

In addition to his professional activities, Dr. Francis has been an outstanding figure in the civic affairs of his community, and has been associated with every worthwhile movement for the advancement of race projects and programs.

In 1927, Dr. Francis made an extended trip to St. Christopher and St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, for hospital study of tropical diseases. Recently he has been most active in helping to develop interest among Negro physicians in the Post Graduate