

**MEMOIR OF GEORGE P.
CAMMANN, M.D.: READ BEFORE
THE NEW
YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE,
OCTOBER 21ST, 1863; PP. 4-38**

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Memoir of George P. Cammann, M.D.: Read Before the New York Academy of Medicine,
October 21st, 1863; pp. 4-38 by James R. Leaming

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JAMES R. LEAMING

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1864.

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well she fulfilled her duty may be inferred from the honorable positions held by her children, as well as from their devoted affection for her during her whole life. In 1813, Mrs. Cammann removed with her family to Newark, N. J., and placed George in the Latin School of the Newark Academy.

A companion of his childhood thus writes of him at this period: "He was a lively, active boy, always busy and very mischievous; ever 'slow to wrath,' but very affectionate, and so sensitive that, even when quite a large boy, a hasty or harsh word would bring tears into his eyes; and yet he was patient and uncomplaining when suffering physical pain." An anecdote illustrating his fortitude is related of him. While fishing near a bridge, he ran a fish-hook into his lip, and went to the family physician and had it cut out, fainting three times during the operation. He concealed the occurrence from the family at home, although his lip was so much swollen and so painful that he nearly starved from inability to eat. It would ever have remained a secret, had not the physician alluded to it some time afterwards. The same unselfish heroism made him in after-life a "silent sufferer rather than mar the happiness of his family."

At the Academy, his intimate friend was Thomas Ward,—now Dr. Thomas Ward of this city, who was two

or three years his junior; and an endearing intimacy sprang up between them, lasting during Dr. Cammann's life. Much of the material concerning his schoolboy and student life was obtained from Dr. Ward. He held a respectable position in his class, more by his indomitable industry than by his aptitude in learning; for he committed to memory slowly and with difficulty. He showed great fondness for the natural sciences, especially for geology; and his room was filled with specimens which he had collected in company with his young friend during their holiday excursions.

In 1821, he entered Columbia College, where he was graduated in 1825. Of his university career we have no particular account, as Dr. Ward was at Princeton; but we are assured that as a student he was not less assiduous and conscientious than in other relations. When he first formed the resolution of studying medicine, he was told that he was too tender-hearted to perform the sterner duties of the profession; but he replied, "My nerves are strong enough to carry me through whatever it may be my duty to undertake." He commenced his medical studies in the office of Dr. Lee of Newark; but his mother and family removing to New York in 1826, he entered the office of Dr. David Hosack, at that time the acknowledged head of the profession in this city. Dr. Cammann delighted to speak of his dis-

tinguished preceptor, and related many anecdotes of him as he appeared in the sick-room. No one was ever more master of the situation at the bedside, or commanded more respect by his presence, than did Dr. Hosack; and his acquaintance with pathological changes through the rational signs was really wonderful; but when he approached complicated affections of the chest, he would shake his head and say, "There is a mass of disease here." To him, physical diagnosis was as yet a sealed book.

Dr. Cammann also entered his name as a student in the Rutgers's Medical College, then just opened in Duane Street. Here he took his degree of M. D. in 1828; and during the ensuing summer he sailed for Europe, to avail himself of the superior advantages which Paris afforded the medical student. He took up his abode in the Latin Quarter, devoting himself to the lectures and hospitals during the daytime, and to private classes in the evenings. He was a constant and enthusiastic attendant at the clinical lectures of Louis, who was at that time the great teacher of physical diagnosis. Laennec had but just passed off the stage, after publishing the last edition of his great work on Diseases of the Chest. Auscultation, as a science, was scarcely ten years old; it was as yet a new revelation; and it is no wonder that it excited the most intense enthusiasm in

its youthful devotee, who had already shown marvellous acuteness in distinguishing and analyzing sound.

Louis lectured at clinic in Latin, describing the phenomena of disease, and calling upon each of the students in attendance to make himself practically acquainted with the physical signs in the subject before him, and, in hopeless cases of advanced phthisis, marking out on the chest the position and extent of structural change, which post-mortem examinations uniformly verified.

He was thus diligently pursuing his studies, and had already made great proficiency in knowledge, as well as in the special education of the ear, when the Revolution of 1830 broke out. He and about forty other Americans at that time sojourning in Paris volunteered their services to Lafayette, who promised, if they were needed, to give them a post of honor. They were not called upon further; but the students of medicine had the advantage of seeing a variety of gun-shot wounds in the hospitals.

During the vacations, in company with Dr. Ward, who was still his fellow-student and intimate friend, he made several tours of observation through Italy, Switzerland, and Great Britain; and it was during one of these excursions that he received the injury which, in his opinion, damaged his heart, and was finally the cause of his death. For more than thirty years his consciousness of the serious effect of this accident remained a secret in

his bosom. It occurred in this manner: They were crossing the Alps on pack-mules, when, in a narrow path beside a precipice, another train of mules appeared. To pass was impossible, and the Doctor, perceiving that his animal was preparing to turn, jumped off to avoid being swung over the chasm, and was crushed against the rock. For a moment he suffered intensely from a sense of suffocation, and for several days he had pain and soreness in the region of the heart. He made no complaint at the time, but proceeded on his journey; and Dr. Ward does not even remember the occurrence. When asked, during my first visit to him in his last illness, if he could account for the heart-symptoms which had so long annoyed him, he related this incident, and said he knew of no other cause, having since then felt palpitation and dyspnoea during active exercise or when under excitement.

In the autumn of 1830 he returned to his native city, placed his sign upon the basement of his mother's house in Bond Street, and entered upon the duties of his profession. In 1831 he was appointed one of the attending physicians at the Northern Dispensary. This was before the classification of diseases in the Dispensary; and each physician not only attended patients at the Institution, but visited those who were too ill to leave their own homes.

In 1833 he was married to Anna Catherine, daughter of Mr. Jacob Lorillard, and commenced housekeeping in Macdougall Street. In 1835 he removed to the house known as the Lorillard Homestead, corner of Laight and Hudson Streets. About the same time, through the influence of his friend Mrs. Bethune, he was appointed physician to the Bloomingdale Orphan Asylum, and performed the duties of the office for many years afterwards.

It was in 1838, at the recommendation of Dr. W. Clay Wallace and Dr. Cammann, that the present system of classifying diseases and appointing special physicians to each class was adopted by the trustees of the Northern Dispensary. As this is an interesting fact in the history of the dispensaries of the city, it will not be out of place to give the classification and the names of the physicians appointed during the first two years, or until the system was in successful operation.

1838.

Surgery.....	R. W. Cairnes, M. D.
Heart and Lungs...	{ G. P. Cammann, M. D. J. H. Borrowe, M. D.
Head and Abdomen	{ Alex. Elder, M. D. W. Steele, M. D.
Eye and Ear.....	{ W. Clay Wallace, M. D. W. N. Blakeman, M. D.
Skin.....	A. N. Gunn, M. D.
Women and Children	Edward Earle, M. D.