History of Canadian Anaesthesia

William Bayard 1814-1907

William Bayard was born in Kentville, Nova Scotia, on August 21, 1814, the son of Robert Bayard, formerly a Professor of Obstetrics at the University of New York. The family traced its ancestry to the Chevalier de Bayard, a 16th century nobleman who, demonstrating greater valour than discretion, was struck down by a crossbow bolt while single-handedly defending a bridge across the Garigliana river in Italy against 250 Spanish soldiers. Their motto was "*Sans peur et sans reproche*".

During the war of 1812 Robert had to take the oath of allegiance or leave America. So he sailed in an open boat from Portland, Maine, to Saint John, New Brunswick, arriving in May, 1813. After being educated in Fordham, New York, William studied medicine at Edinburgh University, graduating in 1837. After experience on the continent he joined his father in practice in Saint John.

In 1844, two years before Morton demonstrated ether anaesthesia, Bayard administered the first recorded dental anaesthetic in British North America. This first etherization occurred in the dental office of two brothers named VanBuskirk in Saint John. Remarkable though this event was, it appears to have been Bayard's sole involvement in anaesthesia, and he took no further part in the development of anaesthesia.

Subsequently, Bayard became one of the leading physicians of the Atlantic region, winning the respect of colleagues and the general public alike. There was not a city or large town in the Atlantic provinces where he was not consulted. He visited every province in Canada and crossed the Atlantic 21 times.

In 1847 Bayard both treated and survived typhus, and said later, "I had the pleasure of reading my own obituary". Other Saint John physicians were not so fortunate.

In 1848 Bayard married Susan Maria, daughter of John Wilson, of Chamcook, New Brunswick. Formerly a large ship owner and a promoter of the St. Andrews and Woodstock Railway, Wilson sent Bayard the first telegram ever received in Saint John. The Bayards had no children.

In 1865 Bayard, although failing to collect \$10,000 by

private donation, with the support of Thomas Robertson, Sir Leonard Tilley and Sir Albert Smith in the New Brunswick Legislature, ramrodded the building of the Saint John General Public Hospital, the forerunner of today's Saint John Regional Hospital. This would be financed by taxation. In this endeavour Bayard had been frustrated by several opponents, most notable his own father.

Bayard was prominent in many other endeavours. He was instrumental in the opening of the first nurses' training school in Atlantic Canada (in Saint John in 1888); he was Coroner of the City and County of Saint John, physician to the Alms House, chairman of the Board of Health and president of the Board of the Saint John Public Hospital; he was president of the New Brunswick Medical Society, the Council of Physicians and Surgeons of New Brunswick, the Maritime Medical Association and of the Canadian Medical Association (in 1895); he was the New Brunswick editor of the Canadian Medical Journal and the Monthly Record of Medical and Surgical Sciences; and he contributed to numerous journals.

After 50 years, and later after 60 and 70 years, of active practice Bayard was honoured by the citizens of Saint John, the medical profession and innumerable dignitaries. On the last occasion Edinburgh University honoured him with an honorary LL.D.

Dr. William Bayard, the first anaesthetist in British North America, a venerable physician, perhaps the "Osler of New Brunswick" died on December 7th, 1907 in his ninety-third year, after a two day illness.

References

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