

# FIRST MEETING OF THE EDWARD H. ANGLE SOCIETY—AN ADDRESS OF WELCOME

By EDWARD H. ANGLE

*Members and Friends:*

THIS is the first annual meeting of our new society, an historical and surely a happy event. Old friends and new friends, old students and new students (for we are all students, I hope) brought together by a common interest in a common cause, that cause the highest we know: the benefitting of humanity.

Ours is a great opportunity, an opportunity to contribute materially to the health, the happiness, the beauty, the efficiency of the human race; to the making of a stronger, wiser, better, handsomer generation. I know of no other field of human endeavor equal to ours in possibilities for conferring real, tangible, lasting benefits, nor one in which the opportunities for true success are greater, if the measure of true success be usefulness to others. I believe that it is, and I am more and more impressed with the belief that the more we give, wisely, that is, in patient, honest, untiring efforts to render ever more skilful and intelligent service, the more we ourselves are personally benefitted in character and in efficiency, as well as in material things. The narrow, unstudious, unprogressive, selfish man is beaten in the race of life before he starts.

Now this, our first annual meeting, will be of value to us and to humanity just in proportion to the earnestness, sincerity and spirit of progress that we bring to it. Shall we make of it a prominent mile-post in the progress of orthodontia, or shall we spend this precious time, as the time of so many societies is spent, in useless chatter, in passing "bouquets", in boasting and self-exploiting, in political intrigue, in listening to inconsequential papers carelessly prepared on unproved theories, on "borrowed" ideas, without credit, on the time-honored, thread-bare re-introduction of long-discarded or superseded mechanisms for treatment? Such papers, unfortunately, still largely predominate in the published literature of orthodontia, but no science was ever pushed forward by such means. The things worth while in orthodontia are easy to explain and to understand, but they can be mastered and made of practical benefit only by the eternal application of thought, of reason, from basic principles, constantly and accurately applied.

My friends, we have much to be thankful for on this, the opening day of our first meeting, and thankful indeed am I that this society is so largely

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made up of young men, sturdy and vigorous both mentally and physically, with the promise of long, useful lives before them; men with unprejudiced minds who have been most carefully prepared for their special work.

The society is now well organized, functioning smoothly, each member earnest and sincere and determined to do his full part in society work and in practice. Each, I believe, fully realizes the importance of broad general reading, and of the necessity for continuous, earnest study, broadly, and specifically of the human "mill", the building of which it is our province to supervise in establishing and maintaining *normal occlusion*.

I have now to speak of another very important and pleasing bit of history which illustrates in the most impressive manner the interest, the earnestness, sincerity and liberality, the splendid character of the members of this society, and proves their belief in the future of the society and the growth and development of orthodontia, the science.

Never has anything surprised me more nor given me greater pleasure than when one morning, a few weeks ago, Dr. Steiner called on me and said to me, "Dr. Angle, it is with much pleasure I am sent to tell you that the boys you have been teaching during the past two years have gotten together, talked the matter over and pledged themselves to contribute a suitable building for your use in the teaching of orthodontia; a building in which you will have more freedom for your work than you now have. This we gladly do as an expression of our respect and love for you, and of our appreciation of what you have done and are doing for us and for orthodontia."

Such a surprise! Such a joy! And so it had come, after many years of waiting and longing and hoping and striving, and, too, from my own dear students whom I have taught, coaxed, scolded, criticised and encouraged! Never before has anything so affecting and so gratifying come into my long professional life. Can I in words adequately thank you? Impossible. Only in trying to be worthy of this splendid gift and of your love and respect in the use I am to make of the gift through still greater efforts to achieve better results, as a teacher and as a man, can I show my appreciation.

And so, as school and society, we are to occupy our own building where we shall have ample space for all our needs in cheerful, well-lighted, artistically arranged rooms, furnished and splendidly equipped through the generosity of you all, of former loyal students, now prominent orthodontists, and other friends.

At last orthodontia is to have a real home—*the first in its history*; the first opportunity ever given our science to grow unhampered by the blighting influences that have hitherto dominated and hampered its development throughout its entire history. I believe that you young men have

builded better than you know, and that for this token of your high regard for your profession your names will live.

Think of it, my friends. Orthodontia, the very flower of all the branches of the healing art, after centuries, is still—and now more than ever before—in the hands of ignorance, incompetence and charlatanism, with no laws for the protection and control of its practice nor for the protection of its clientele, the children of this nation!

It will always be my pride that this building was given and equipped by my own students instead of being the product of gifts from outsiders not vitally interested. For it is very probable that if we had had a fine endowment from a man of great wealth who would never miss it the result would have been a large and imposing building—with the real spirit of orthodontia forever left out. But, built as it will be, as a result of economy and even sacrifice, each one of you will have a vital and loving interest in all the work to be done in it, an interest entirely above any reward in the way of favor, position or financial return. So it will have the proud distinction of being a tribute to orthodontia, for orthodontia, by orthodontia.

Now, as to the future of this society. Prophecies are usually hazardous, and yet we know that cause and effect are inseparably linked together in the laws of nature,—laws marvellously exemplified in malocclusion of the teeth, with which fact you have all often been greatly impressed. And we may with equal assurance, apply this law in predicting the future of this society and say that it will grow and develop just in proportion as honesty and sincerity, kindness and energy, wisdom and judgment develop and grow in each individual member, for the character of a society is but the aggregate character of its members, and no more. I repeat, if you continue to grow in knowledge, skill, wisdom and brotherly feeling, coupled with energy, adherence to ideals, and governed by a vision of the true orthodontia, it will inevitably be reflected in the solid, enduring future growth of this society the influence of which will be felt broadly. If we are to have a learned and useful society we must have learned and useful men as members. We must hew to the line. We must not forsake our principles.

Again and again have I tried to impress upon you the very grave danger of permitting yourselves to slip from your teachings and the ideals of the principles that govern all your operations, even those that might seem minor. Each slip that is tolerated and winked at, glossed over in your minds with the consoling, “Oh, well, I know it isn’t right, but I’ll let it go now and do better the next time”, foretells the tragedy of the future of your ability, standing and usefulness.

Let me warn you again, that the hardest thing you will have to do in your daily work is to keep from slipping. But if you do not resist the temptation you will continue to slip more and more and will soon take a deserved

place amongst the great and growing body of incompetents; and this society will have to bear the dishonor of it. But if you will, with the greatest conscientiousness, resist the awful temptation to slip, the almost constant temptation to slip that all of us have—I with yourselves—until you have formed the habit of letting *nothing* go that is not your very best,—in your study, your reflections, your practice,—your characters will soon be so developed that slipping will be the last thing you will think of permitting, and if a piece of work is not your best, you will not rest until you have righted your mistake. You will say with the artist, Meissonier,

“I never hesitate about scraping out the work of days, and beginning afresh, so as to satisfy myself, and try to do better. Ah! that “better” which one feels in one’s soul and without which no true artist is ever content!

“Others may approve and admire, but that counts for nothing compared with one’s own feeling of what ought to be.”

Now, are all these but visionary ideals, impractical and out of place, such as a late orthodontic writer has accused me of fathering?

When you know the whole story of orthodontia, as I know it and as you are learning it, you realize that the only true progress orthodontia has ever made has been made because a few men held eternal, rigid adherence to this vision,—to these ideals. This is the only way in which progress has ever been made in any science. I could cite you many proofs. Darwin’s life and achievements, Huxley’s, Spencer’s—all the names that live in fame and honor proclaim the truthfulness of my assertion. Indeed, it is the sidetracking of ideals and the attempt to substitute the easy, noisy way that is the curse of orthodontia today.

It must be our mission, individually and collectively, by all our acts, by all our efforts, to keep the ship of orthodontia ever sailing on a true course. Let no member of this society ever be known as a “slip-er” or a quitter.

I wonder if you realize the important responsibility that is yours: to maintain high ideals in your work as individuals and as members of this society at this special stage in the history of orthodontia? Do you realize, as you ought, that orthodontia has had a great set-back from its progress and promise of a few years ago? That it has degenerated and is floundering as science and literature and art were floundering in the Dark Ages? Then came the Renaissance. A few good men arose in their earnestness, honesty and strength, and art and literature were roused, and after a painful struggle, came back in majesty and power and the progress of the world moved on.

I feel that it is the mission of this society and of you as individual members to act as those men did at the beginning of the Renaissance; to be-

come the leaven that shall leaven the whole loaf; to enable orthodontia to find itself again; and to maintain it at all costs on the high plane of its true worth.

I believe that the Program Committee intended this talk of mine to be an address of welcome and so designated it in the program. Well, I think you will all agree with me that if to give an address of welcome was my intent, I have strayed a long way from the usual form. And yet, if you have comprehended the spirit of what I have tried to say, if you have read between the lines, you will realize that the spirit of welcome is sent out to each and every one of you.

To all the members of this new society and to our honored guests, I bid a hearty welcome. To the loyal former students, many of whom have come great distances to meet with us, I say, thrice welcome, and proud are we to have you with us. Glad will we be to receive your words of counsel and wisdom out of your long experiences. We hope to learn much from you and we, in turn, shall try to contribute to your pleasure, your interest and your edification to the end that this may be a happy, harmonious, uplifting, even, possibly, a momentous occasion in the annals of our beloved science, ORTHODONTIA.

