



IRVIN ABELL, M.D.
Louisville, Ky.
1876-

*Ninety-second President, A. M. A.
San Francisco Session
June 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 1938*



Irvin Abell.

IN THE ELECTION OF DR. IRVIN ABELL for president of the Association, he was unopposed, indicating a remarkable unanimity of action, in keeping with his popularity and long record of service in the medical profession.

Doctor Abell was another son of Kentucky added to the long list of distinguished physicians who had served as president of the American Medical Association.

He was born in Lebanon, Kentucky, September 13, 1876. He received his Master of Arts degree from St. Mary's College, St. Mary, Ky., in 1894, and that of Doctor of Medicine from the Louisville Medical College in 1897, at the age of twenty-one years. He continued his postgraduate studies for a year at the University of Berlin, and in 1900 began to practice in Louisville, Ky.

In 1904 he was appointed Professor of Surgery in the University of Louisville and has served continuously in that position.

Doctor Abell is visiting surgeon of the Louisville Public Hospital and the St. Joseph Infirmary, and consulting surgeon for the Children's Free Hospital and the Kosair Hospital for Crippled Children.

During World War I he was a Lieutenant Colonel, commanding Base Hospital No. 59, then Colonel in the Medical Officers Reserve Corps and Commanding Officer of the U. S. Army Reserve Corps, Hospital No. 59.

His record of service in the American Medical Association has been a notable one. He was a member of the House of Delegates at the annual sessions of 1922, 1924, 1928, 1930 to 1935, and during these years served as member and chairman of many important committees. In 1931 he became a member of the Council on Scientific Assembly, and served as Chairman from 1935 to 1937. During his service as President-elect and President from 1937 to 1939, he was unsparing in his efforts to advance the interests of the Association, appearing at many society meetings throughout the United States, and faithfully fulfilled every obligation that the office required.

His address as president in 1939 on "The Aims of the Medical Profession as they Relate to the Public" reflected his own views and the prevailing thought on the new responsibilities of medical service. He summarized the aims of the medical profession as "(1) maintenance of high standards of medical education, assuring the graduate of competency to care for the sick; (2) adequate provision for graduate education with specified training for the development of specialists; (3) extension of public health and preventive medicine; (4) the widest possible dissemination of health information to enable the public to act intelligently in the preservation of its health and in the prevention of disease; (5) the development and consummation of plans for extension of medical service to all groups of the population, consonant with our established high standard of quality."

As a result of a resolution adopted by the House of Delegates in June 1940, the Board of Trustees created the Committee on Medical Preparedness, of which Dr. Irvin Abell became general chairman. This committee was of great service in mobilizing the medical profession and all available medical and hospital facilities in preparation for the impending emergency. In the membership of this committee were two later presidents of the Association—Fred W. Rankin (1942) and James E. Paullin (1943).

Doctor Abell has been the recipient of many honors. He received the honorary degree Doctor of Science from the University of Louisville in 1937, from Georgetown University and Manhattan College of New York City in 1939. Marquette University conferred the degree Doctor of Laws in 1939. In 1938 Notre Dame University conferred on Doctor Abell the Laetare Medal. Up to that time this medal had been awarded to fifty-six recipients, including a former President of the Association, Dr. John B. Murphy.

Doctor Abell is a Fellow and Regent of the American College of Surgeons, and has had a prominent part in the development of the

extensive postgraduate educational program of the College throughout the United States and Canada. He holds membership in the American Gastro-Enterological Association, the American Surgical, the Southern Surgical, and Southern Medical and the American Urological Associations.

Among other positions indicating his executive ability are Director of the Commonwealth Life Insurance Company, the Fidelity and Columbia Trust Company, and the Louisville Foundation. He is also a Trustee of the University of Louisville.

As chairman of the Ephraim McDowell Committee in 1936, he was instrumental in purchasing the McDowell home in Danville, Ky., and aiding in its restoration.

Dr. Abell delivered the William W. Root Alpha Omega Alpha Lecture in 1940, on "The Spirit of Medicine," and all who were privileged to hear it remember this gem of diction and eloquence with its fluency and charm of delivery.

This genial and highminded medical gentleman graced the office of president and will continue to add distinction and dignity to the sacred calling of medicine.

