



WILLIAM K. BOWLING, M.D.
Nashville, Tenn.
1808-1885

*Twenty-seventh President, A. M. A.
Louisville Session
May 4, 5, 6, 7, 1875*



W. K. Bowling

DR. WILLIAM K. BOWLING, the second physician of Nashville to be elected to the presidency of the Association, was born June 5, 1808 in Westmoreland County, Virginia, and two years later came to Kentucky. As described by him "like Clay and Drake, I was dropped down in the wilderness of Kentucky and left to fight the battle of life as best I could without education, family influence or patronage."

Most of his early education was obtained from private tutors. After one course of lectures in the Ohio Medical College at Cincinnati he practiced five years and then attended another course at the Medical Department of Cincinnati College receiving the degree Doctor of Medicine in 1836. He then practiced fourteen years in Logan County, Kentucky, which was near the Tennessee line and he soon became widely known in two states. In 1848 he declined the offer of the Chair of Theory and Practice of Medicine in the Memphis Medical Institute, then the pioneer school in Tennessee. Two years later in 1850 he moved to Nashville, Tenn., and established the Nashville Medical School and was elected to the Chair of Theory and Practice of Medicine. Thus a medical school which later became Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and destined to great leadership "was established by the energy of a non-collegebred youth and the wisdom of a backwoods practitioner with the aid of an able corps of teachers in which he became the master spirit."

In 1851 he founded the Nashville Journal of Medicine and Surgery and sustained it with his best efforts for a quarter of a century.

Dr. Bowling at all times was a strong advocate of medical organization, and aside from his eminence as a practitioner and teacher of medicine, he became a leader in all that pertained to the educational social and practical interests of the profession in the Mississippi Valley.

His address as president of the Association in 1875 is described as "a gracious, flowery and eloquent exposition of a cultured gentleman, with a beautiful tribute at the close to the medical pioneers of Kentucky and Tennessee."

He died at his residence on Cumberland Mountain near Nashville, Tennessee, August 6, 1885, at seventy-seven years of age.

