There Is a Doctor in the House

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The story of medicine in Cleveland begins almost fifteen years after the city's founding in 1796. In 1810, Dr. David Long of Hebron, New York, arrived there and opened an office, which he shared with Alfred Kelley, Cleveland's first lawyer. Long was joined four years later by Dr. David McIntosh, who was also the proprietor of the Navy House, a hotel. McIntosh may or may not have been a skilled physician for his day; there is no record of his medical career. Our scanty evidence shows that he was a bon vivant and apparently a lover of fast horses, since he broke his neck in a horse race on Euclid Avenue in 1834.

In these early years, the inhabitants of the Western Reserve cured their ailments in a variety of ways. Medical folklore, common herbs and crude drugs, and excessive use of patent medicines characterized self-healing practices, particularly before 1850. Many preferred these treatments to regular medical procedures, such as bloodletting, blistering, and purges of calomel and jalap. When early settlers turned to physicians, they had their choice of doctors—the few well-trained who had studied and ridden with preceptors for three years, Thomsonians who practiced botanic medicine and cured by drugs and steam, euroscopists who made diagnoses from patients' urine, or phrenologists and electromagnetic healers. Perhaps wisely, the sick relied mainly on folk remedies, such as horseradish, skunk cabbage, sage, and butternut.

Despite the low public esteem of many physicians, their number increased as the city grew, especially after the opening of the Erie Canal. The city directory listed four in 1839, thirty-one in 1848, and seventy-seven in 1864. In that third year, on June 29, Marcus Rosenwasser, not quite eighteen, the son of Herman and Rosalie Rosenwasser, departed Cleveland for Prague to begin his medical studies. A graduate of Central High School only five days earlier, this was a temporary return for Marcus to the land of his birth. He came back to Cleveland three-and-one-half years later with a diploma from the University of Würzburg as a "doctor of medicine, surgery, and midwifery."

The Rosenwasser family, parents and nine children, had immigrated to Cleveland from the village of Bukovan, Bohemia, in 1854. Their first home was near the Central Market Place, and Herman, typically, began to support his family as a peddler of dry goods. By 1860 there were two more children and Herman had acquired a home on Belmont Avenue (East 29th off Woodland) valued at $600 and a personal estate of $400, according to the U.S. decennial census.

Beyond the census-taker, public attention first came to the Rosenwasser family in 1862, through their oldest son, Edward. During the Civil War, Edward, a Western Union telegrapher, was stationed in the communications room of the White House. At a historic moment in September 1862, he tapped out Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. He later simulated this occasion for the camera, and the image of Edward at the telegraph key is part of the pictorial archives of the Civil War. Edward, who anglicized the family name to Rosewater, moved on to Omaha and there in time founded and published the *Omaha Bee* newspaper. Victor, his son, who inherited the *Bee*, gained political prominence as a leading midwestern supporter of Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party and chairman of the Bull Moose national convention in 1912.

It was Edward, five years older than Marcus and already in Omaha by the time he came of high school age, who became Marcus's confidant as an older brother. The separation resulted in a series of letters, some of which have come down to us and are now part of the manuscript collection of the Western Reserve Historical Society. The letters show that Marcus's studies at Central High included Latin and Greek, astronomy, geology, and chemistry, in addition to declamation and the writing of essays and orations. He was president of the school's debating society, which, as he wrote boyishly, "is the highest pinnacle of glory man is capable of attaining."

Marcus's interest in the sciences and his skills in debate are reflected in the class oration he delivered at his graduation on June 24, 1864. Entitled "Pleasures of the Imagination," he drew his imagery from science with frequent references to nature and the stars, and predictably combined science with the piety of the day. The pleasures of the scientific imagination "elevate our idea of the

Infinite; they only convince us more and more of the power and wisdom and goodness of the Almighty."

Family tradition has it that Marcus wished for an appointment to West Point, a natural ambition for a young student during the war years, and that his father vetoed the idea. As an alternative, Marcus decided to study medicine and sought his brother's advice on whether to go to a university or "enter immediately a medical institution." He had also written, he informed Edward, to Uncle Bernhard in Prague to ask his views on studying in Germany.

What prompted Marcus to opt for a career in medicine rather than in business with his father or, as it turned out, in journalism with Edward in Omaha? There was no role model in medicine in the family, and there was no one in Cleveland to inspire the son of a Jewish immigrant. It is unlikely that Marcus knew of Cleveland's first medical school at Willoughby University—defunct by 1850—or that its dean from 1836 to 1841 had been Dr. Daniel Levy Maduro Peixotto of Sephardic descent, who had come from New York and returned there long before the Rosenwasser family arrived. Peixotto's poor health—he died in 1843—and the factionalism within the medical faculty, which wrecked the school, very likely caused his departure.

Tradition conceivably turned Marcus, with his father's consent, to medicine, as may have the immigrant experience in a free society. Since ancient times, Jews saw a clear relationship between healing and God, between medicine and religion. Judaism did not regard calling upon a physician for aid as a failure to rely upon God to restore health. The Jewish physician was not acting in defiance of God but as a servant carrying out the will of his master. In fact, in biblical times, priests were in charge of public sanitation, and King Solomon in his day was regarded as a great physician. The Talmud, to stress the point, enumerates ten conditions for a city to qualify as a residence for a scholar. In addition to a house of prayer and a law court, they include a physician in the event that illness interrupted his studies for any protracted time. The injunction is made explicit in another book of the Talmud: "A scholar is forbidden to live in a city in which there is no physician."

The sanctioning of medicine by biblical law was reinforced by

exclusionary laws in the Middle Ages which left medicine as one of the few dignified occupations open to Jews. It also had the advantage of being portable. It was applicable everywhere and did not have to be relearned in a new country. In sum, medicine required knowledge, was everywhere useful, and could not be confiscated. Small wonder that Papa Herman approved son Marcus's choice of a career. Now there remained the question of where to study medicine.

When Dr. Daniel Peixotto left Cleveland, there were only thirty-eight medical colleges in the United States, four of them west of the Alleghenies. The chief medical centers then were New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Twenty-three years later, in 1864, when Marcus thought of a medical career, there were two in Cleveland, the medical department of Western Reserve College and Charity Hospital Medical School, only recently established in association with St. Vincent's Hospital. Reserve by then was rated as good as any medical college in the country in size and arrangement. An American school, even a Cleveland school, would have served Marcus well, but there were a number of cogent reasons to send him to Europe to study.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Pierre Louis, who pioneered statistical measurement in medicine, and Xavier Bichat in pathology had made Paris the center of medical progress to which Americans desiring European training gravitated. In the years after 1825, the German university system enabled Berlin and Vienna to supplant Paris with such medical stars as Johannes Muller in physiology, Hermann von Helmholtz, and Rudolph Virchow, described as the "pope of German medicine."

Herman Rosenwasser possibly knew of Germany's growing ascendancy in science and medicine when he left Bohemia. Marcus's inquiry to Uncle Bernhard about the advisability of studying in Germany suggests some awareness of this trend; but there may have been other, more practical reasons for the decision to study abroad, not in Paris, Berlin, or Vienna, but in Prague. Marcus very likely could not have concentrated on medical studies at home in the midst of a large family of younger brothers and sisters. A medical school in the east might be too expensive and leave young Marcus unattended by family or friends. In Prague,

by contrast, he would literally be surrounded by relatives, costs would be less, and the German language would be no barrier to academic achievement. And so the decision was made. Marcus, who had left Bukovan in 1854 at age eight, departed Cleveland ten years later on June 29 to study medicine at the University of Prague. That same day he began the diary which he kept faithfully, if briefly at times, throughout his medical-student days.

Marcus arrived in Prague on July 19. He was accompanied by his father, who was to visit family before returning home in September. During those two months, father Herman, perhaps by design, assured his son's ties to an extended circle of uncles, aunts, and cousins in the Bohemian villages south of Prague. The excitement of visiting relatives, seeing the house where he was born, and meeting new cousins began to fade in three weeks. On August 7 Marcus "Passed forenoon in studying a little botany," and similar entries became more frequent in the days before school began. Too many boring evenings, one suspects, were spent watching father at card games with relatives, to judge by the tone of the entry on August 22 while at Bukovan: "In the evening looked for the last time on a game of cards between Uncle and Pa." Undoubtedly his mood changed two days later when a letter from Uncle Bernhard informed him of his admission as "extraordinary hearer" to the university.

By August 28, son and father were back in Prague and made arrangements for Marcus to board with a Mr. Singer while at school. The next week was highlighted by attending religious services (in the Altneuschul?), visiting the Cafe Bahnhof, seeing a Schiller play, and lastly hearing a performance of Ernani at the Prague Opera, "splendidly sung for those who understood." Not long thereafter, Herman left for Cleveland, and Marcus at last was on his own, although never out of touch with relatives and family friends. The next entries in the diary are succinct and almost alive in their excitement. On October 7 Marcus registered at the university, on October 10 he heard his first lecture, two days later a lecture in botany, and the very next day "fine lectures" in chemistry and zoology. He missed one lecture in November to attend a family wedding, but in mid-December he wrote, "Began for first time to dissect—a new era on my life's career."

In his last entry for 1864, Marcus reverted to his declamatory

style to sum up his experience of the past six months and his hopes for the future, not without a twinge of homesickness. "At your beginning," he wrote, "I took the first step toward the accomplishment of that, which at your end finds me here far from home, parents and comrades. . . . Your end has finally given me a fair introduction to that calling in the pursuit of which I have determined to pass the rest of my life. But do thou who art about to enter and slowly unfold the rolls . . . keep me on the path which have so favorably begun." Marcus closed with the wish that the new year would be "the harbinger of peace and happiness to my country so long distracted with civil war." And then the last sentence: I bid thee welcome, thrice welcome, thou usherer of the dawn of 1865!" Marcus, it must be remembered, was only eighteen years old, not too long out of high school, and far from family on New Year's eve.

Marcus passed his first exams in March and spent the break between semesters with relatives in Zaluzan. On April 28 classes resumed, and he attended his first lecture on vaccination. June 29, he recalled, was the anniversary of his leaving home, and he went to the theater to distract his thoughts from Cleveland and family. In a contrasting mood on September 6, he marked the day as the "anniversary of my independent life." Five weeks later he passed a colloquium on zoology with *ausgezeichnet Erfolge* ("exceptional success"). The remaining months of 1865 passed quickly in intense study, to judge by the brief entries and the absence of an apostrophe to the second new year away from home.

Still in the middle of his second year, Marcus continued to achieve. At the end of February, he passed topographical anatomy and ten days later general pathology, both with *sehr guten Erfolge* ("very good success"). Soon, however, his peaceful world of medical study was disrupted by political tensions between Austria-Hungary and Prussia. On March 17 martial law was declared in districts around Prague, and riots were reported in various parts of the empire. Three months later the Hapsburg Empire and Prussia were at war, and the University of Prague closed its doors.

Marcus followed the progress of the war and Austria's defeat from the town of Zaluzan to which he retired. There life was "all dull and quiet—not a drum heard nor a fife." He complained that he was "almost entirely ignorant of the outer world of which all I

know is the Austrians are being beaten to mash and that cholera is spreading in Bohemia." Six weeks after leaving, Marcus returned to Prague. He found the "people sulky and dejected" by their defeat but at peace. The university reopened, and he resumed his studies early in November, but with a difference. He was now deeply in love.

Marcus first met his cousin Jane in Prague some six weeks after he arrived from the States. It was the Sabbath, and that afternoon he had walked with cousins Anna and Jane, only briefly because of threatening weather. Undoubtedly he saw her the following April at Anna's wedding in Zaluzan, "where I danced more than I ever had in one night before," probably only because Jane so moved him. Nothing more is known of cousin Jane, who lived in Zaluzan. Marcus wrote that he found her beautiful and on September 29, 1866, recorded in his diary that he had declared his love to her.

To span the distance between Prague and Zaluzan, Marcus and Jane corresponded frequently, to judge by the many brief references to letters received and written. Whatever their hopes, they began to dissolve late the following summer of 1867. Marcus had shared his romantic secret with Edward in Omaha, and the reply he received on September 7, 1867 "scattered his plans for the future to the winds." Quite clearly Edward, writing for his parents, objected for reasons which are not recorded. Marcus only entered in his diary that "I must renounce all my own inclinations: the voice of parents is sacred law to me regardless of interest or consequences."

Marcus, when his brother's letter arrived, was already Dr. Rosenwasser, a diplomate of the University of Würzburg. His degree, possibly because of his status as an "extraordinary hearer," could not be awarded by the Prague school. Knowing this, Marcus in June had contacted the medical schools in Berlin, Munich, Glasgow, and Würzburg and had succeeded in enlisting Dr. Rinecker of the Würzburg medical faculty as his sponsor. On July 19 Marcus left for the Bavarian city to become a "candidate of medicine" and to graduate. Interestingly, on his arrival, he needed to obtain police permission to matriculate and was required to leave his passport at the station.

On July 23 and 24 Marcus took his written exams and completed all eight questions in fourteen and one-half hours. These he

passed. Six days later he and four other candidates were questioned for two hours, and all passed their oral examinations. The final step came on the morning of August 1, 1867. Dressed in a swallowtail coat, Marcus delivered his inaugural lecture at 11:15 a.m., defended his thesis, and was declared "doctor of medicine, surgery and midwifery." The next day his diploma was delivered along with a note from the university for the police, stating that it had no objection to the return of his passport. The next day Dr. Rosenwasser started for Prague and shortly resumed his work in obstetrics at the lying-in hospital there.

Then came the September letter which darkened the new doctor's joy in his success. A trip to Zaluzan to talk to Jane failed to resolve their dilemma, and Marcus sensed the end. In his diary for September 29 he wrote: "A feeling of sadness, loneliness, and remorse overwhelms me on calling to mind the anniversary of my pure love today. How tedious, how lonely is the world now to me! I never thought I could feel so indifferent to everything around me." For the next two months, Marcus submerged his disappointment in postgraduate study in obstetrics in Vienna.

Finally, on December 13, 1867, Dr. Marcus Rosenwasser, in snowy weather, left Vienna on the first leg of his voyage home via Munich and Stuttgart, where he saw a performance of Fidelio before taking the train for Strassbourg. There he wrote in his diary that the customs officials were crude and dishonest, and that he was relieved to continue to Paris, arriving on December 17.

He stayed there four days, sightseeing, attending medical lectures, and visiting hospitals, noting one morning that he had "attended the ambulatory Le Docteur Maisonneuve." On December 21, still in Paris, he wrote what may have been a final letter to Jane; it is, at least, the last time her name appears in the diary.

The journey homeward continued the following day. Marcus crossed the channel from Calais to England and spent the next seven days walking around London and visiting friends. On the December 29, he moved on to Southampton. The morning of December 31, he boarded the ship America, and at 2:00 p.m. the second phase of his return journey began. That evening he noted the passing of the year. Twelve months earlier he had welcomed

1867 as the year he would reach manhood and obtain his American citizenship. He wondered then whether he would receive his medical degree and whether his "family connections would be settled." Echoing his debating rhetoric at Central High, he had raised "the banner of 'Excelsior' to hail the new year."

Now the eventful year was ending. In a calmer frame of mind than three months earlier when his romance had been shattered, he wrote: "It affords me great pleasure to see how much I've accomplished in this past year. All the questions then entrusted to time are now solved. I'm perfectly content with the result." The new physician seems appropriately sober and serious, but his statement is tinged with resignation. The sea voyage to the States was cold and stormy and made even more distressful by seasickness. But finally, on January 13, 1868, it ended. Marcus disembarked that morning in New York, cleared customs, and in the evening took the train to Cleveland, where he arrived at 9:00 p.m. the next day. A half-hour later he was at home, only to find his parents already asleep. He went to brother Joseph's home, from where he contacted his parents. Sometime after midnight on January 15, he returned to Belmont Avenue. At least, after three and one-half years, there was a doctor in the house.

The rest is epilogue to the diary of Cleveland's first home-grown physician. According to Dr. Marcus Rosenwasser's account, his forty-two months abroad, including tuition, lodging, vacation trips, recreation, and the voyage home had cost the family 3,341 florins, approximately $7,000, less $850 earned by giving private English lessons in Prague. Now the doctor had to earn his way and repay his providers.

When Marcus left in 1864, the Cleveland city directory listed seventy-seven physicians. Within a year after his return, 1869—70, the directory listed 135 physicians, 111 allopaths, and 24 homeopaths to care for 103,000 Cleveland residents. It included Dr. Marcus Rosenwasser and two other identifiably Jewish physicians, also allopaths, Joseph Goldberg and Louis Rosenberg. Our new doctor's combined office and residence was at the corner of East 29th and Woodland, then on the eastern fringe of the Jewish immigrant district. He remained there until 1905, when he moved his

office to the Lennox Building on the southeast corner of Euclid and East 9th Street, and his residence to fashionable East 32nd Street off Euclid Avenue.

From the onset, Rosenwasser's practice was centered in a neighborhood containing a large and expanding foreign population. It was already the center of the Jewish community and remained so until the early 1920s. To the German Jewish pioneer families and to the East European immigrants, Dr. Rosenwasser was one of their own, and they made increasingly heavy demands upon him. The Jewish Orphan Home was established the year he returned, 1868, and he served as its medical advisor for forty-two years until his death. In 1893, his health affected by the pressures of twenty-five years of general practice and obstetrics, Rosenwasser eased his practice and became a specialist in gynecology.

Rosenwasser was also ever the student and became a teacher as well. He went to Boston in 1888 and to Europe ten years later for special study. He taught at the Wooster Medical College beginning in 1888 and in 1891 was elected dean of the faculty. He was later professor of gynecology at Cleveland General Hospital and a founder of St. Luke's Hospital in 1908. He was esteemed by his medical colleagues, who elected him president of the Cleveland Medical Society in 1897. Later, in 1902, he was elected a member of the first board of trustees of the Academy of Medicine. That same year he was also president of the Cleveland Board of Health.

Rosenwasser was ever aware of the importance of medical literature for the profession. He joined with Doctors Dudley P. Allen and Henry F. Henderson in 1894 to incorporate the Cleveland Medical Library Association. In his will he left a bequest of $10,000 to the library, its first endowment, to be used for the purchase of books and journals. The anatomy and surgical atlas he bought to celebrate his graduation from Würzburg is also part of the Allen Library collection.

One note on Rosenwasser's personal life. The good doctor's thwarted student love may have had a lingering effect. Perhaps his efforts to start his practice restricted his social life, or perhaps he remained a bachelor longer than usual to satisfy a Victorian sense of romance. In any event, Marcus did not marry until he was thir-

ty-one years of age in 1877, ten years after his return. He married Ida Rohrheimer, daughter of a pioneer German Jewish family.

In failing health during his last years, Rosenwasser died in 1910. The obituary in the *Cleveland Medical Journal* described him as an intelligent, trained, and painstaking medical practitioner, whose success was based on a sound and comprehensive mind rather than upon technique. He possessed an unusual lucidity and directness that made him a "surgeon from his brain outward rather than from his fingers inward." The *Journal* notice concluded by fixing Rosenwasser's place in the development of medicine. He lived, the editor noted, in an interesting transitional period "when art languished and science expands and when diagnosis rests on positive demonstration rather than on deduction. . . . He was, finally, a thorough physician, a student and a lover of books."

One other point could have been added to the Rosenwasser tribute, admittedly more relevant to community history than to medicine. He was Cleveland's first Jewish home-grown physician.

— Judah Rubenstein

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