Bernard Samuels
— July 26, 1959

It is with profound regret that we record the death of Dr. Bernard Samuels which occurred at Wiscasset, Maine, July 26, 1959.

Dr. Samuels was associated with the New York Hospital and the Cornell Medical College for many years. Beginning as instructor in ophthalmology in 1914, his outstanding abilities were soon recognized and his responsibilities gradually increased. From 1927 to 1941 he served as head of the Eye Department and as Professor of Ophthalmology, continuing afterwards as Professor Emeritus and consultant in his specialty. It was during his term as head of the Eye Department that the present building was opened, and he was largely responsible for the physical arrangement of the Eye Clinic, which has proved so satisfactory that it still remains essentially unchanged.

The teaching program of the Medical College was one of his chief interests, and he possessed a remarkable flair for student teaching. He always employed many charts and models, believing that the student should be shown as well as told. His methods were so successful that many a student, years after graduation, would clearly recall Dr. Samuels’ demonstrations. We are fortunate to still have a large number of these same helpful teaching aids, which he acquired here and there in his extensive travels and donated to the Eye Clinic.

He was always interested in the welfare and education of the young physician who wanted to study ophthalmology. Nothing was too much trouble for him to further this aim. His personal advice and the contacts he arranged were frequently the starting point for a young doctor’s successful career.

With the residents on his service, he would spend long hours instructing in the clinic, on the wards, and in the operating room. When reading and describing the daily pathologic eye sections at the New York Hospital and the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, he was enthusiastic and inspiring and usually was surrounded by a group of appreciative and eager young physicians.

Dr. Samuels was of a scholarly type of mind, and books on medical and historical subjects were one of his chief pleasures. He possessed a fine library of his own and was always actively interested in improving the medical library of the College. He enjoyed writing and was the author of numerous lengthy publications on the subject of ophthalmology, many of them dealing with the microscopic changes in ocular tissues, in health and disease. His
historical interests were made evident in papers he wrote on the history of ophthalmology in New York City, and on the history of eye hospitals in New York and London.

No attempt is made here to recount his medical achievements, which were important. He was an active member, and usually an executive officer, of most of the ophthalmological societies here and in Europe, where he traveled each summer. It was a fitting and well deserved honor that he should be chosen, in the twilight of his career, to be the president of the XVII International Congress of Ophthalmology, which was held in New York City in 1954. This was only the second time that the Congress had ever been held in the United States.

Dr. Samuels conducted a very large private practice.

He always moved rapidly and was endowed with the most unusual and boundless energy. He was a fascinating and entertaining conversationalist and had a knack for learning foreign languages. He was fluent in several and could make himself understood in most of the languages encountered in a large New York City clinic.

In the setting of his spacious home and large gardens, situated in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, surrounded by his furnishings, books, and paintings collected over a long lifetime, he was a most charming host and dearly loved to entertain. Those who knew him well will sadly miss this talented friend.

Eric C. Richardson