CHADWICK (J.R.)

"MEDICAL LIBRARIES."

ANNUAL ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Maine Medical Association,

JUNE 5, 1902,

—BY—

JAMES R. CHADWICK, M. D., OF BOSTON.

LIBRARY
SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE
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MR. PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION:

Last year it was encumbent upon me as Librarian, to deliver an address at the dedication of the new building of the Boston Medical Library. A reporter, in one of the daily papers the next morning, alluded to me with evident intent to be complimentary, as the "Venerable Librarian." Unfortunately for my peace of mind, the epithet reminded me of this paragraph in an address, which Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes delivered to the same association in 1878:

"A great many books may be found in every large collection, which remind us of those apostolic looking old men who figure on the platform at our political and other assemblages. Some of them have spoken words of wisdom in their day, but they have ceased to be oracles; some of them never had any particularly important message for humanity, but they add dignity to the meeting by their presence; they look wise whether they are so or not, and no one grudges them their places of honor. Venerable figure-heads, what would our platforms be without you?"

I need not explain the suggestion which came to me from these two sources. Nothing controverted my inevitable inference until your President called upon me a month ago and invited me to say a few words to you at your annual meeting, upon the subject of Medical Libraries. With this mental prepossession on my part, it required very little exercise of his winsome smile and hypnotic

power to elicit from me a favorable response to his request. I have come here determined to tell you all I know about Medical Libraries, and if I do not tell you more than I know, it will be from no inherent modesty in me.

I realize that you are all prepared to admit the importance of having the literature of medicine accessible to every member of your Association, but probably few of you appreciate the urgent need of conjoint action on your part as I do, who have been for twenty-six years striving to meet the reasonable demands of the medical profession of Boston and its vicinity.

The health and longevity of life in any community is dependent in great measure upon the knowledge of its medical practitioners. The diploma of M. D. merely certifies that its possessor has laid the foundation of the knowledge essential to enable him to combat disease and death; upon the superstructure he must labor to the end of his days.

In the early years of practice few men can afford to buy or even give shelf-room to a tenth part of the books that they need; no man, whatever his means, can possibly acquire all. A library is consequently indispensable in every center of population, or the health and lives of the community will be jeopardized by the ignorance of its medical practitioners.

In the first place I must make evident to you the radical change which has taken place in the character of the medical publications that are in demand at the beginning of this century, as compared with those in the early years of the last. Despite the opinion enunciated, over a hundred years ago, by Priestley, that "we should accept no man's opinion, however respectable," medical men did accept freely and fully the opinions of the fathers in medicine, and their later exponents. The recognized authorities in medicine were studied and re-studied, and most practitioners could afford to have on the shelves of their libraries the fifty or a hundred volumes which constituted the sum total of medical knowledge. These, when well absorbed and properly digested, supplied them with their equipment for the treatment of their patients.

In illustration of the extent to which this dependence upon authority was carried, Dr. Robert Fletcher recently told me that the bibliography of the separate works, editions, commentaries, etc., of Hippocrates in the library of the Surgeon General's office number over eight hundred. From a recent lecture of his he has since sent me this extract:

"The first printed edition of his complete works in the original Greek was issued by the famous Aldine press at Venice in 1526. It is a beautiful specimen of early typography. Many subsequent editions of the opera omnia have appeared, and they have been translated into many languages. In this library there are 51 different editions of these complete works. They are in Greek, in Latin, in Italian, in Spanish, in French, in English, in German. Next in order come books which contain two or more of the separate treatises of Hippocrates. Of these the library possesses 56 copies or editions. The next division comprises single treatises of Hippocrates, many of which were printed separately, with or without notes, and many are contained in the collected works of old authors, who have included them for the purpose of adding their own notes and glosses at the foot of each page. Of these single works there are in this library 371 editions. Lastly come general commentaries upon the works and doctrines of Hippocrates, bibliographical and biographical articles, and these number 396 treatises, The total number of the works of Hippocrates with commentaries as above described, now in this library, is 874. Some of these are only pamphlets, but all are independent publications."

In the course of the century we have learned to question every man's title to credence. Even entire systems of medicine have risen, had their day, and been laid to rest. No man's authority is now accepted, but the grounds for his expressed belief are scrutinized, and accepted or rejected, only after his facts have been tested in the crucible of science.

An old Greek poet once said: "Gray hairs are wisdom if you hold your tongue, speak and they are but hairs, as in the young"; which means, that in his day if a gray haired man gave his opin-

ion only, it had weight, but if he gave his reasons, his reasons were worth no more than a young man's reasons. While we can all see that there is a germ of truth in this generalization, we hardly listen to the gray haired man to-day, unless he gives his reasons.

The purpose of this brief argument is to impress upon you the unquestionable fact that the form of literature demanded to-day by the physician, is the periodical literature,—the journals and transactions, which contain the crude facts of each man's experience.

Daniel Drake, who was one of the most learned and philosophical medical men which this country has produced, said in an address before the Cincinnati Medical Library Association half a century ago, "Since the emancipation of mind from a slavish devotion to the mind which went before it, periodical literature, in every department of knowledge, has waxed greater and greater in volume and originality, until not only in medicine but all the sciences, it has become a paramount element. It is not only the first to present all discoveries and inventions, but actually supplies to the masses almost everything they read."

The tendency of the times, which was perceptible in 1852 to an alert mind like that of Dr. Drake, has become a fact manifest to the dullest of us. To bring home to you the magnitude of this change in medical literature, I can quote from a catalogue of the "Second Social or Boston Medical Library," dated 1808;—which, founded in 1805, transferred its collection of books in 1826 to the Boston Athenæum: "The Library receives all the periodical publications of Great Britain, that relate to medical subjects," amounting to the imposing total of seven; furthermore, "The publications of American physicians have been procured without any exceptions." This last paragraph may be interpreted as indicating that the Library had been in receipt of (1.) The Medical Repository which, founded in New York on July 26, 1797, was conducted as a quarterly journal until 1824. (2.) The Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal, which issued first on November 1, 1804, ended with the third volume in May, 1809, and finally (3.) "The Medical and Agricultural Register for the

years 1806–7," of Boston, only one volume of which was published. These three were the only medical periodicals which had been published on this continent up to the year 1808. We have thus a total of ten journals printed in the English language prior to 1808. I cannot tell you how many are now issued in the English language, but I know that the Library of the Surgeon General's office in Washington, which aims to have all the periodicals published in all the languages of the world, receives regularly over 1200, not including the transactions of societies, the clinical reports of hospitals; the reports of Laboratories, Boards of Health, etc., etc. This is the form of literature which is in constant demand in the Library under my charge. You may very properly object that nine-tenths of these serials are of very little value, which is true, but you never can tell in how obscure and generally worthless a journal there may have been reported a single case parallel to the one which you have under your care, which report you need to peruse in order to guide your treatment.

Another factor in exaggerating the gravity of our situation today, is the existence of a guide to this immense mass of periodicals in the Index Catalogue of the incomparable library of the Surgeon General's office in Washington. I must dwell briefly upon the scope of this work, which is unique, not only in medical, but all science.

In 1880 the library of the Surgeon General's Office in Washington, under the charge of an army surgeon, Dr. John S. Billings, began the publication of an index catalogue of its collections, which comprised practically all medical literature up to that date. The first series of sixteen volumes, quarto, was completed in 1895; the new series, comprising accessions to the library since the publication of the first series, has already reached the sixth volume.

Its value to medical scholars is inestimable, superseding, as it does, all the time-wasting labor that used to be expended in bibliographical research. By its aid we obtain a reference to every rare case that has been recorded since printing was discovered in A. D. 1450. But by indexing the articles and reports of cases in

the 40,000 volumes of periodicals, past and present, obscure and famous, this catalogue has immensely extended the scope of medical research and created a demand for an array of books, and especially of periodicals, that is simply appalling.

What is an earnest seeker after knowledge to do when he has, for instance, a case of inflammation of the pancreas and refers to this catalogue for the writings on the subject, when he discovers a reference to a case in the Medicinische Jahresbericht von Peter-Pauls Hospital in St. Petersburg, to another in the Bulletino di Scienzia Medica di Bologna, to another in the Moniteur Scientifique and to another in the Zeitschrift fur die Gesammte Medizin of Hamburg, and so on *ad infinitum?* He cannot possibly have complete files of these various periodicals upon his own shelves. He must have within reach a library in which most, if not all, these volumes may be found, or he will fail to learn all that can be learned about this subject, and a consequence, his patient will suffer from treatment based on half-knowledge.

Not content with opening to our ken the treasures of the past medical literature, Dr. Billings conceived the idea, and Dr. Fletcher, the assistant Librarian, as Editor carried out the plan, of publishing from the cards made daily in the Surgeon General's Library, the "Index Medicus," a periodical issued monthly, by subscriptlon, giving a classified Index Catalogue of every publication and every article in all the periodicals of the world within a month of their appearance, thus enabling students to obtain prompt reference to all current literature. This most admirable scheme, admirably executed, was continued for twenty-one years, and finally, through lack of pecuniary support, was discontinued in April, 1899.

The loss of this means of reference was so much felt, that an attempt to fill its place was made in Paris, France, with the Bibliographia Medica, which, while not as comprehensive as the American Index Medicus, was fairly complete with regard to French, English and German publications, but much less so with American and other nationalities. This ran two years, but proved to be so costly that it appears to have closed its career with the year 1901.

The cessation of these last two Indexes to current medical literature, is a serious blow to the advancement of medical science, which will be felt the world over.

These considerations make manifest the necessity of combined action on the part of the physicians to establish libraries in every great center of population in the country. The time has arrived when very few men subscribe to more than the local journals and possibly two or three others. Some of the specialists, in their ardor to keep abreast of the advances in their special branches in the different countries, may subscribe to all the journals in their special lines of work. But the multiplication even of special journals is so great as soon to deter these students. My personal experience must be that of many other specialists. During the fifteen early years of my practice I sacrified much money in subscribing to every periodical in my department of obstetrics and gynecology in all languages. Twelve years ago I suddenly came to appreciate that I was receiving 43 journals and reading only three or four of them; in addition to the cost of the subscription, I had to have them bound and then give them shelf room. I promptly relinquished my ambitious task and discontinued all but three or four of them, and now resort to the Boston Medical Library on the few occasions when I need to consult any of them. My experience and my action are the same as have been those of many other specialists in Boston. Incidentally I may say that my zeal in collecting periodicals, and that of my colleagues in Boston, is enuring to the benefit of our Library, for the reason that these special collections are steadily gravitating to our shelves by bequest of their owners, and often by gift during their life time.

It is interesting to speculate upon the sources of support of medical periodicals at the present day. This must be primarily in the group of physicians in and around the place of publication; then the 120 medical libraries in the country subscribe for a certain number of the most important ones. Outside of these sources of support, it is hard to see how the majority of them can draw any appreciable revenue from this source, yet very few, if any,

can meet the expenses of editing, printing and distributing with such returns. Under such conditions one would suppose that most of them would discontinue publication. But here comes in an element to defeat the usual law governing supply and demand. Many of them are supported by individual men or groups of men because they feel that their ambitions, their reputations, or their purses are indirectly fed by such an organ. Other journals, and these, I believe to be the greater number, are supported by publishing houses, by drug firms, instrument makers, etc., etc., simply as mediums in which to advertise their goods. Certainly the numbers of pages of advertisements in such journals as the British Medical Journal and the Medical Record of New York, make it evident that these sources of income accruing to such journals make them independent of the returns from subscribers.

Of course many of these journals do not have at their command the literary ability or commercial sagacity to succeed, and infant mortality is prevalent among them. Those that survive must show a large circulation in order to secure insertions in their advertising columns, and must, under present conditions, be distributed to a great extent gratuitously. Many periodicals containing the contributions of the greatest permanent value, appeal to a very small number of readers, and are issued in very small editions. It will become increasingly difficult for medical libraries to secure complete files of these journals, a few years after their publication, so that newly-to-be-created libraries will soon find the task of supplying their public with what they demand, proportionately more onerous.

The next most important literature which libraries should collect is pamphlets, because, while more ephemeral, they are yet the more important in their relations to the evolution of thought and the preservation of facts than the more imposing publications which we designate as "books." Miles Davies, in his Icon Libellorum more than 180 years ago, said quaintly: "From pamphlets may be learned the genius of the age, the debates of the learned, the follies of the ignorant, the bévues of the government and the mistakes of the courtiers. There is scarce any class of

people who may think themselves interested enough to be concerned with what is published in pamphlets, either as to their private instruction, curiosity and reputation, or to the public advantage and credit. Pamphlets become, more and more, daily amusements to the curious, idle and inquisitive; pastime to gallants and coquettes; chat to the talkative; catchwords to informers; fuel to the envious; poison to the unfortunate; balsam to the wounded; employment to the lazy and fabulous; materials to romancers and novelists."

To show the extent to which the collections of pamphlets may be carried, I would cite George Thomason, a bookseller of London, who in 1641 began to collect pamphlets relating to the Civil War in England, and prosecuted his task so industriously for twenty years, that when he died in 1666, he had accumulated, arranged and bound in 2,220 volumes, over 33,000 separate publications, which were finally purchased by George III, and given to the British Museum. The various historical societies in America pride themselves in many instances, more upon their collections of pamphlets than upon their array of books. The reason is not far to seek, for the latter can usually be obtained at short notice, when money to pay for them is at command, but pamphlets, many of which, as soon as read, are consigned to the waste paper basket, either cannot be obtained at all, or only after long and patient waiting, and then at prices which are often prohibitive. Everything which has ever appeared in print, even if it be only a patent medicine advertisement, may be of use or interest to some one.

Let me illustrate by two recent incidents in my own experience. Dr. Howard, of the Bureau of Agriculture in Washington, who wrote last year a book on mosquitoes, was lecturing in Boston this winter, on the same subject and seeking to make a complete bibliography of the relations of mosquitoes to malaria. I was able to call his attention to a pamphlet in the Boston Medical Library by Dr. Samuel W. Francis of Newport, published twenty years ago, in which Dr. Francis claimed to have discovered the purpose of the Creator in creating mosquitoes. He claimed to have discovered

that mosquitoes had been created to drive mankind from malarial districts. "When, however," he said, "mankind refused to leave malarial districts when the warning was given in humming accents, what happened? Then the mosquito proceeded to insert his proboscis under the skin of the human being and inject a minute secretion," which Dr. Francis had, "by his chemical and microscopic analyses, discovered was an antidote to malaria"!

Again, in the pamphlets of the Boston Public Library, I recently discovered an advertising circular of Eau de Cologne, approved by the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, in 1727, from which I learned that what we know as exclusively an article of toilette was originally put upon the market as a quack medicine, having the power "to restore the parts of the body that are attacked by any disease or disposition to the same, of fortifying and reëstablishing their natural functions; of insinuating into them a moderate and living warmth, which, sympathizing with their own, reanimates their vital forces, aids the coctions, and forcibly expels all the excrements." This circular was even more specific, saying that "ten drops taken internally would diffuse a gentle warmth throughout the vitals and corroborate the stomach."

To show that I am not alone in the value which I put upon pamphlets, I would adduce the fact that the library of the Surgeon General's office, on January 1, 1902, contained 142,490 books, and 238,772 pamphlets. In the Boston Medical Library we have about as many pamphlets as books, to wit, about 35,000.

Coming now to books, the third category of publications, which a library must collect, you will readily appreciate that most of those coming from the press to-day are handbooks, comprised chiefly for the use of students, which embody the state of medicine as a whole, or some of its specialties, at the time they are written, but are superseded within a year or two by others, or by new editions of the same books, and therefore cease to have value.

There are, of course, the classics of medicine, special monographs, etc., which have permanent value, but they are few compared with the handbooks.

Perhaps in seeking to cater to a busy generation, I have lost my sense of appreciation of the fathers of medicine, together with my knowledge of the Latin and Greek in which they wrote; yet I always recall with delight listening to Dr. Holmes dilate with gusto upon the early writers with which he and men of his generation were still familiar.

"And apart from any practical use to be derived from the other medical authors, is there not a true pleasure in reading the accounts of great discoveries in their own words? I do not pretend to hoist up the Bibliotheca Anatomica of Mangetus and spread it on my table every day. I do not get out my great Albinus before every lecture on the muscles, or disturb the majestic repose of Vesalius every time I speak of the bones he has so admirably described and figured. But it does please me to read the first descriptions of parts to which the names of their discoverers, or those who have first described them, have become so joined that not even modern science can part them; to listen to the talk of my old volume, as Willis describes his circle, and Fallopius his aqueduct, and Vesalius his bridge, and Eustachius his tube, and Monro his foramen—all so well known to us in the human body; it does please me to know the very words in which Winslow described the opening which bears his name, and Glisson his capsule, and De Graaf his vesicle; I am not content until I know in what language Harvey announced his discovery of the circulation, and how Spigelius made the liver his perpetual memorial, and Malpighi found a monument more enduring than brass in the corpuscles of the spleen and the kidney.

"There are practical books among these ancient volumes which can never grow old. Would you know how to recognize 'male hysteria' and to treat it, take down your Sydenham; would you read the experience of a physician who was himself the subject of asthma and who, notwithstanding that, in the words of Dr. Johnson, 'panted on till ninety,' you will find it in the venerable treatise of Sir John Floyer; would you listen to the story of the King's Evil cured by the royal touch, as told by a famous chirurgeon who fully believed in it, go to Wiseman; would you get at

first hand the description of the spinal disease, which long bore his name, do not be startled if I tell you to go to Pott—to Percival Pott, the great surgeon of the last century."

You see, gentlemen, that I am borrowing not only plumes, but figures of rhetoric, from my forebears. Though you may not recognize the fact, I have taken from past writings of my own upon this theme, paragraphs which the circumstances seemed to warrant. But I have not done so for the reason alleged by Prof. Woodhouse, who said of his Introductory Lecture, after delivering it for the twelfth time, that "I find new beauties in it every time."

Every one likes to feel that he has a mission in life; for this half hour it is mine to rouse you to an appreciation of what advantages you would reap from having in this city a library supported by the medical profession.

The experience of one of my friends in coming to your state has been so impressed upon my mind, that I shall not venture to indicate precisely what steps you should take to achieve this result. He was an electrical expert in the employ of the American Bell Telephone Co., and was brought two years ago to Skowhegan, to testify in court in the interest of a fire insurance company seeking to escape its liability for a building which had been burned in consequence of being struck by lightning. He made a good case for the company in his direct evidence, but when it came to cross-examination, the lawyer for the plaintiff said, "Mr. Stone, you call yourself an expert in electricity." "Yes sir, I am here in that capacity," replied the witness. "Well now, Mr. Stone, I suppose you think you know a good deal about lightning and thunder storms, but I want to ask you, sir, at the outset, if you ever saw a Maine thunder storm?" "No sir, I cannot honestly assert that I have." "Hah, gentlemen of the jury, what can this so-called expert from Massachusetts tell us about this particular case, when he never saw a Maine thunder storm?" The jury gave a verdict for the plaintiff, without retiring.

I recognize, gentlemen, I too am in danger of being thrown out of court if I undertake to be too explicit in my advice to you. I

may, however, offer you a few suggestions derived from my own experience and that of others.

I am told that your condition with regard to medical books here is much the same as that which pertained in Boston twenty-seven years ago, when we inaugurated the movement for the formation of the Boston Medical Library. Several societies and corporate bodies had collections of books, for the most part inaccessible, all of them antiquated. So you have several collections which could, if combined, be made a very respectable nucleus of a library. The Maine Medical Association has accumulated gradually, by exchange for its Transactions, many hundred volumes of the Transactions of the other state societies. "The Maine Academy of Medicine and Science" is said to have a library of 1200 volumes, to which a hundred volumes are added yearly, besides about 125 journals received by exchange for its organ, the "Journal of Medicine and Science." The library of the Medical School of Maine, consisting of 3700 volumes, to which but few accessions have been made of late years, must contain the greater part of the medical classics, and could undoubtedly be loaned to any reading room in this city, where it could be properly cared for and made available for use. As soon as the Boston Medical Library made evident that it was to be a permanent institution, the Harvard Medical School in Boston transferred to its keeping its whole medical library of about 4000 volumes, with the exception of such volumes as were needed for the working libraries connected with each of the laboratories. A month ago the University Library at Cambridge asked permission to deposit in the Boston Medical Library, the collection of medical books, to the number of 4500 volumes, which had been accumulating for more than a century.

In 1875, after we had hired two rooms and a custodian, brought together and catalogued these several collections of books, I was then authorized to make a series of raids upon all the private libraries in Boston; the result was that within a few years nearly all the medical books in Boston were on our shelves. The one essential to success in such an undertaking is that one man, with

the tastes or habits of a collector, should put energy and time into the work.

The completeness of our files of journals and transactions I attribute largely to the existence of the volume which I hold in my hand, my "want book," wherein upon the left-hand page is entered every periodical of which we have any part, while on the opposite page is entered every volume or number needed to complete the file of that particular journal. By invariably carrying this with me upon my travels, in this country and Europe, I have been able gradually, at a trifling expenditure of money, to complete the files of all the leading periodicals of the world. I submit this to your special attention, if you wish to know how to build up a medical library with practically no funds for the purchase of books.

I have given you a few hints to indicate the methods whereby we have been able to build up a medical library in Boston until it has exceeded in value and size all others in the country with three exceptions; that of the the Army Medical Department in Washington, the College of Physicians in Philadelphia and the Academy of Medicine in New York; the complete story has been told elsewhere more than once. It does not follow that our form of procedure would be applicable to another community. In fact, I question whether the size of your city and the number of practitioners of medicine, residing in or near it, would warrant so bold a step as we took in Boston. I cannot do better in closing, than to quote a few paragraphs from a paper on the "Medical Libraries of the United States," by Dr. C. D. Spirak, of Denver, a most, ardent and sagacious advocate of my theme:

"Owing to the zeal of many accomplished librarians, medical departments have been organized in 45 public libraries. The youngest creation in medical libraries is the offspring of State and local boards of health, of which we have at least five."

"There is no necessity in having more than one library in any one city. Boston, Chicago and New York have gained much by adopting such a plan.

"There are two ways. A library can be organized in connection with an existing medical society, or in connection with a public library. If the medical society is large enough to pay rent, salary to a librarian, subscribe to journals and buy books, then by all means this is the better plan. . . . . In Denver, the *Colorado Medical Library Association*, subscribes to all the journals, and pays for the binding, and the Public Library, besides cataloguing and taking care of the property, buys all the books and binds them. The Library Association owns all the periodicals, reports and transactions and the public library owns all the books."

These quotations from one of the most accomplished and experienced librarians of the country may suggest the means which you should adopt. For I venture to predict that before the year is out you will realize that you cannot afford to be backward in the movement which has acquired such an impetus in the past few years.

"He is the most reliable prophet, who resolves to fulfill his own prophesies." Gentlemen, I am in position just now to help fulfill my above prophecy, for I am distributing to other libraries several thousand duplicates, and should be pleased to divert them in your direction, should you give evidence, in the course of the coming summer, that they will be the means of stimulating you to start a library under any auspices that promise permanency.