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AN EDUCATIONAL NEED.

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*Editor of* MED. AND SURG. REPORTER:—  
Certain epochs have taken the lead in certain lines of progression—in greatly improving of literature and advancing particular sciences and arts nearer perfection. There are periods in which there is something more than natural or historical growth—where there are evidences of great leaps.

Medically and surgically we acknowledge our great debt to the genius of the generations that have preceded ours. We have no disposition to decry or quarrel with our inheritance. We cherish the lessons of many great problems solved for us. But from these problems new corollaries have been evolved to be worked out by our better light. Many of the old systems have had their day. With the advance of civilization, the increase of populations and the change of modes of life, new modifications are needed to meet new or better understood conditions.



When we consider the progress that has been made—what generations have done—the problems mastered, the lessons learned, which we have no need of unlearning, we have reason for the hope that we can do better than has yet been done. We are not ready to accept as fact that the processes of development and evolution in the medical and surgical profession have been worked out—that our science and art have reached completeness. The gratifying truth is that there has never been a time in the history of the profession when there was more vigor and intellectual activity than now, a very flood tide of high effort swells the veins of the profession. The question present and urgent is what lines can we adopt to hurry along our advances. The majority of the active and strong brained practitioners of every section of our country, of cities, rural towns and districts spend some time each year at some of our centres of medical and surgical education endeavoring to enlarge their professional knowledge in the clinics of our public and private hospitals.

The spirit of inquiry and research is widespread. Only the *diluted mediocrity* of the profession is content with what is known. The desire pervades nearly the entire profession to gain more and better knowledge, familiarity with the more simple and accurate methods. By some cooperation, some organized plan, of our college and hospital authorities and our widely known clinicians and teachers, our visitors of the general profession would find much to tempt them into our midst. It is not possible to measure the great benefits that would accrue to post-graduates, to the general practitioners who visit the city for the purpose of improving their knowledge in general or in some specific line of practice, if the wards of our general and private hospitals were thrown open to them and they could be given the benefit of the bedside lessons and clinical teaching of our eminent teachers. We will not attempt to sketch a plan or mark out lines to be pursued; we will leave that to more competent hands. From the fact that the carrying out of some such idea as we have sug-

gested would be in the interest of the entire profession and certainly in the interest of our medical colleges, the matter should command the attention of the profession. The men who visit us are not dull, but bright and earnest men, who come with an earnest purpose, and the only way we can perfect some plan to give them general and hospitable welcome and aid in promoting their educational plans is to begin. Some plan certainly is possible in a great city famed for hospitality, philanthropic and educational systems. If a distinct institution could be so organized as to best serve the purpose that could be established. The enterprise would also have a commercial as well as a professional value, and thence be of interest to the general business public. Nor are the social features, the widening of the fellowships of the profession, to be left out of consideration. The encouragements, strength gained by professional association, and the great benefits growing out of comparison of methods and results are not appreciated to the extent they should be. The interested association which

promotes intimate acquaintance, softens professional antagonism and does much to drive out those vulgar jealousies which detract from the dignity of the profession. Such an institution in all its appointments and in its general management could be so conducted as to furnish an excellent theatre where could be brought into fellowship men of high character, talents and good work, many of national repute, both as specialists and general practitioners; where could be discussed those diseases which lie peculiarly within the field of medicine and as well those which by their very nature are without its domain and which require surgical means of investigation and surgical treatment. And there could be taught valuable lessons of guidance for those thrown in the narrower lines of professional life. One of the very certain and patent tendencies of such an institution would be to improve the teaching in our schools and draw to them the best talent of the country. As a rule the sons of our eminent physicians and surgeons and their students enter the medical

school where their preceptors received their best lessons, they go where they are directed. If we would make Philadelphia a great center of medical and surgical education we must look to the influence of the general practitioners of the country. We must convince them that it is here that the best work is done and the best lessons taught. Then this free educational institution, blending with its work home and professional hospitalities would become a feeder for our best medical colleges. It would not draw from the schools but put better material in them, would have the healthful effect of relegating to the museums for stuffed animals the duds who would enter the profession, and put workers within their walls. It would be auxiliary to and contribute largely to elevate the standard of our organized system of medical education. Aside from its specific educational features, to such an institution there would be a home side appealing directly to home pride.

So manifold are the details of our medical science, so rich and varied its literature that the inviting and welcoming of general

practitioners and specialists visiting our city into such an institution could not be otherwise than fruitful of much good. We would get the facts of many active and rich experiences, the history of new departures from old traditions and methods. Our period has impressed its characteristics upon our current medical literature; there is little of the ancient in its lines; it has in it the research, energy and noble genius of the living. With the old we are linked only by the tested truths of science and experience. Give to them who make our literature an arena in which they can discuss the results of their work. It is only those who *never knew much* who are *tired* of learning. There is a growing, vigorous life in the American physician and surgeon no matter what his location whether country side, barracks or prairie and he is willing to work hard and make many sacrifices to keep in the front rank of his profession. He has the good practical business sense to go where the best facilities are offered him to obtain what he feels that he needs.

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Preston Retreat.





