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ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE LAYING OF THE CORNER-STONE OF THE NEW YORK ACAD. OF MED.

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ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, OCTOBER 2, 1889.

[By Dr. Abraham Jacobi.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FELLOWS OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE:

The New York Academy of Medicine has called upon the profession and the public alike to assist it in this ceremony of laying a corner-stone. Where we are now standing there will be the home of the Academy, we believe, for generations to come. If we be mistaken, if this large building will be too small before long, it will be the pleasant duty of our successors to provide for their wants. That this may become necessary is possible, for the Academy has experienced a development rapid beyond expecta. tion. Forty-three years ago it was founded, dozens of years it held its meetings in hired quarters, ten years ago it occupied its own building, No. 12 West 31st Street, to-day we are preparing accommodations such as the profession of New York, or any other city of the country, has never possessed. Meanwhile, however, the spirit and the aims of the Academy have remained intact. Amongst these aims are the cultivation of the science of medicine, and the promotion of public health.

In the words of a circular published nearly two years ago in behalf of our building fund, "these purposes are accomplished by lectures and discussions in the stated meetings of the Academy and its numerous sections; by maintaining reading-rooms which furnish nearly all the medical journals of the world, and by collecting a library containing about sixty thousand books and pamphlets, which are free both to the medical profession and the public." The number of its fellows is nearly six hundred. They have been selected from amongst those who have practised medicine in New York City or its vicinity three or more years. Some time ago fellowship has been extended to those residing in the State.

In its composition the Academy participates in many of the peculiar features of our political organization, which means to benefit all through the co-operation, if not of all,

(See: N. York Acad. M. 1890, 2.s., VI, 113-121.)

still of the best. In Europe an Academy of Medicine means a small body comprising a few select men only, appointed by the body itself when there is a vacancy, or by the political rulers. Thus the Academies form an aristocracy of the mind parallel to the aristocracy of birth, with all its exclusiveness, and real or assumed superiority. They are representative bodies only in this that the best minds and most scientific workers are expected or believed to fill the seats.

The New York Academy of Medicine, however, is a democratic institution. It is not limited in numbers—on the contrary, it is desirable that the many respectable physicians should gather round its flag. Like our political commonwealth, it must look for its development and success in the co-operation of the competent and cultured masses. Like the Union it is a voluntary confederation of peers who make their own laws and obey them because they are of their own making.

The members have common interests both scientific and professional. Since its foundation, with the changes for good and bad appertaining to everything organic, the Academy has prospered constantly, in spite of, or as I am more inclined to say, in consequence of its very constitution as an independent and democratic body. In the words of the same circular alluded to before, "the Academy is not connected with any school or college. It is self-supporting and is carried on in the interest of the whole profession. There are no fees nor emoluments of a private or individual nature. It is not supported nor subsidized by the State or municipality." Whatever has been accomplished by it: its scientific labors most of which are laid down it its Bulletins and Transactions, and in the medical journals of the country; the hall in West 31st Street; the library and reading-rooms in the upper stories; the wealth of books and journals at the disposal of those eager to learn, and so numerous that they alone compelled us to look for more appropriate quarters—all of that has been created, with few exceptions, by the exertions and pecuniary sacrifices of the medical men themselves.

All classes of these are represented in the Academy. It

shows you the choice of those who are interested and active in the promotion of medical science and art; those who have earned an international reputation; those who have deserved well of the community by a life filled with services rendered to the public; and those who look forward for the fulfilling of their dreams and the reaching of their aims through coming years of honest labor spent on theoretical study and practical work. In this co-operation of the old and young, the illustrious and those yet unknown, but promising or anxious to earn renown, the mature and the maturing, you have one of the features of a unity of the profession.

Another feature of unity which, moreover, ties the profession indissolubly to the community at large, is the labor performed in the service of one and all. It is in these labors and their results that the community at large ought to take a deep interest. Modern medicine is probably the greatest benefactor of mankind. The more medicine has been founded on the study of the exact sciences, chemistry, physics, and physiology with mathematics, the more has its field of usefulness enlarged. The more theoretical it appeared to become, the more did it develop practical usefulness and dignity. Indeed, the dignity of a science or study rises with its ability of being utilized in the service of mankind. Now, the promotion of medical science and art does not mean only the improvement in diagnosis and in the administration of drugs and remedies, but the discovery of the best means of placing the human being in the best possible condition. The labor of the physician is not exhausted by carrying you through a severe case of illness, he renders you the greater service, less remunerative to him though, of preventing you from falling sick.

The peculiar relations of the individual physician to his patient or the family entrusted to his care, are widened in the relations of the profession to the public. Great epidemics take the place of a single case, the protection of a community that of the guarding a person, the hygiene of schools that of a dwelling, the sanitation of a large city that of inspecting a suspicious trap or sewer in a private domicile. The more in your health department the medical

element will predominate over the military and political, the more actual benefit will the people derive from it. The hygiene of the whole population, the superintendence of public buildings in which many people old or young are gathered, public hospitals, quarantine stations, the questions of physical and mental elevation, of legal responsibility, of the State care of the insane, they all belong to the domain of the profession. This is not theory only. No grave question of the kind has come up without the gratuitous and spontaneous aid of medical men. The health board of the city has long appreciated that. The Academy has furnished a consulting board to all the health department's hospitals. A committee of the Academy was entrusted with the inquiry into and the report on the condition of Quarantine. It is to its report that the first appropriation for the rebuilding of the Quarantine Station was due, and to its recommendations that improvements are being carried out at the present time. In this way the medical profession excludes epidemics, and guards both the physical health and the economic interests of the city. Imagine the pecuniary loss to the city if the cholera and the yellow fever scare of a year and two years ago had not been prevented by the profession, as indeed it was. A week's panic would have been a pecuniary calamity amounting to the loss of a good many millions.

These are but a few examples of the value of medical services, both paid and unpaid ones, to the public. The health of the city is the foundation of its prosperity. Let epidemics prevail, and not only will your children die, your families be decimated, and the graveyards be filled with places where flowers and tears mingle, but your commerce will be drawn to other ports. It is due to increased knowledge and activity on the part of the profession, both official and inofficial, that in spite of the unchanged severity of the epidemics and the rapidly increasing population of the city, the number of cases of diphtheria shows an absolute diminution.

Such amongst many are the services of the profession, not to speak of the gratuitous daily work of hundreds of medical men in the hospitals and dispensaries. Nobody can

count or calculate, but everybody can appreciate how many lives are preserved, how many millions are saved for the poor and rich alike. From that point of view, a whole-souled, generous woman presented to the Academy twenty-five thousand dollars, in recognition of the services to the public on the part of the profession, and in accordance with the esteem her husband held the profession in while he was alive. To this consideration we owe the bequest of seventy thousand dollars, coming to us under the will of Mrs. Alexander Hosack, who had spent a large part of her valuable life with illustrious examples of professional worth. It is the same thought which induced men and women of means, intelligence, and public spirit, to tender us donations of five, two, or one thousand dollars. All we require now is fifty thousand dollars to complete this building. There must be many who have that sum or a part of it to spare in the interest of the profession; perhaps to commemorate the name of a dear one who has passed away, or to imprint his or her name—and a legitimate ambition it is—on one of the halls of the new building, or to perpetuate the memory of one who has been saved from a premature grave by the endeavors of one of those who are now striving to erect a home for the most practical and beneficent of all sciences and arts.

It is a home we want, more than merely a house. To make the house of the medical profession a home, it requires a library. This is to the profession what a tool is to the mechanic, an engine to the engineer, a telescope to the astronomer. A complete library represents the thoughts, experience, genius, and discoveries both of all previous centuries and the present time. All of these treasures must be accessible to the profession whose knowledge and skill is to be the safeguard of the public's best interests. To accomplish that end, the whole medical literature of all countries must contribute. New York has never been satisfied with anything that is second class; it cannot afford to trust itself to a profession without the first order of learning and erudition.

Why do we insist upon physicians being erudite? Do I ask why do you apply to a particular watchmaker, an en-

gineer, an architect, a milliner? You select him because you believe or know him to be well informed or skillful. And the physician? His practice is the application of knowledge acquired by hard brain work spent on all the learning and practice which have been evolved out of the labor and efforts of thirty centuries. A learned doctor may happen to be an unsuccessful practitioner for more reasons than one; but amongst those reasons erudition is not. An uninformed man is never a good practitioner; under equal circumstances, the more learned man is the the better man in practice. Practice and learning do not exclude each other; on the contrary, the former depends on the latter. It ought not to suffice for your selection of a doctor that you met him at a bar, or a ball, or at a church meeting, or at whist, in a concert, or on a hotel piazza, or that he be well dressed, pleasant, and tells you he is your "friend;" all these are fine opportunities and agreeable social and personal qualities which may also be considered when you are credibly informed that he burns midnight oil over medical literature and that his professional brethren speak well of his abilities and achievements. And as far as medical friendships are concerned, your best friend is he who knows best how to protect you and your children and your parents from disease, and to cure them when they are sick.

The erudition we claim for the profession demands a large library of constant growth. A fund of one hundred thousand dollars will enable us to keep abreast with any similar institution. The library of the surgeon-general's office in Washington which contains at present seventy thousand volumes and one hundred and thirty thousand pamphlets, is the result of industrious and systematic collections. It is not much over twenty years old, but it is the richest and most complete medical library in the world. Still its annual appropriations for the purchase of books have seldom exceeded five thousand dollars. Thus a fund of a hundred thousand dollars will enable us to procure nearly everything medical that appears in any land. Of that sum we have only ten thousand dollars. One half of that sum was set aside by the Academy, the other half is a

donation separately administered in perpetual honor of a departed one. Such special funds, or additions to our general library fund, are urgently requested. The citizens of New York have developed a metropolis of large size and commercial power; they can well afford to tax themselves in the interest of medical science than which there is none more cosmopolitan and humanitarian.

But it is not the medical profession only which will be directly benefitted by the endowment of a large and complete library. The intimate relations of the medical and legal professions are such that much of what we require is found in law-books, and that the lawyer has to look for much of his information in medical literature. Indeed forensic medicine, which originated in law, has its main representatives in medicine. In both the names of Plenck and Plouguet, Farr, Duncan, and Beck, and many others of more modern times, are household words. Moreover, our library is a public one, free to the profession and the public. Now, there is a class of literature which in a free and public library like ours ought to be well represented. Laymen intending to avail themselves of it expect to find mental food adapted to their comprehension and taste. That sort of literature is by no means scarce. Much of it is of fair quality, some of it surpassingly good. Books on anatomical and physiological topics, those on subjects connected with natural history, hygiene and statistics, will always be found interesting and instructive. They ought to be well represented in our library, for they cannot be found in large numbers in the public and circulating libraries. Indeed the frequenters of the latter differ much from the class of readers consulting ours.

The additional knowledge acquired in this manner will not only improve a man's ability to protect himself and his family, he will also facilitate the work of his doctor. A person who has filled his mind with comprehensible ideas and sound facts, will no longer study quack advertisements. He who has learned something about the functions of his body and been taught to consider the correlation of causes and effects, can appreciate a disease to be the result of either a preventible or an unavoidable cause, and recognize

that whatever disease was not the result of faith cannot be cured by faith, not even by faith in panaceas. The business of the quack may thus cease, the nostrum mixers may suffer, but individual and public health will be the gainers. There is less sickness in a man who has some knowledge of his body and its requirements; and when he falls sick he expects relief from natural and intelligible sources only. That man is a better patient, more accessible to reasoning, more obedient to the rules imposed in the interest of recovery. If he knows enough to recognize the superiority or inferiority of his physician, so much the better. To-day most people have not a sufficient knowledge to guide them in their selection; there are many who are so little informed that they do not so much as care. If in a matter ever so trifling a medical man is called as a witness before a court of justice, the first question he is asked refers to his membership in a medical society. The uninformed public, however, often select their doctor for reasons known to nobody, least perhaps to themselves. All this would be changed if a small part of what is the basis of a physician's thinking and knowing were made accessible and intelligible to every man and woman. A library like that which we intend to establish, is destined not only to supply the professional man, but furnish healthy mental food to all those who are thirsty for knowledge. Those who have means to spare in the interest of public education, hygiene and health, cannot possibly apply them better than by providing for a library fund sufficient for the gradual accumulation, from year to year, under the supervision of experts, of all the good popular literature on the subjects of anatomy, physiology, hygiene, dietetics, and statistics.

May all this become true. We are preparing this edifice to be the head-center of medical study in the city, an example to the profession of the country, and a resort for the brethren who come to us from near or distant parts. This building when completed will be an ornament to the metropolis. What is still more important is that we mean it to become, and feel assured that it will be, an additional element of intellectual and ethical power, and in its results a blessing to the commonwealth.