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ADDRESS

AT THE

Dedication of the New Building

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY,

JULY 3, 1850.

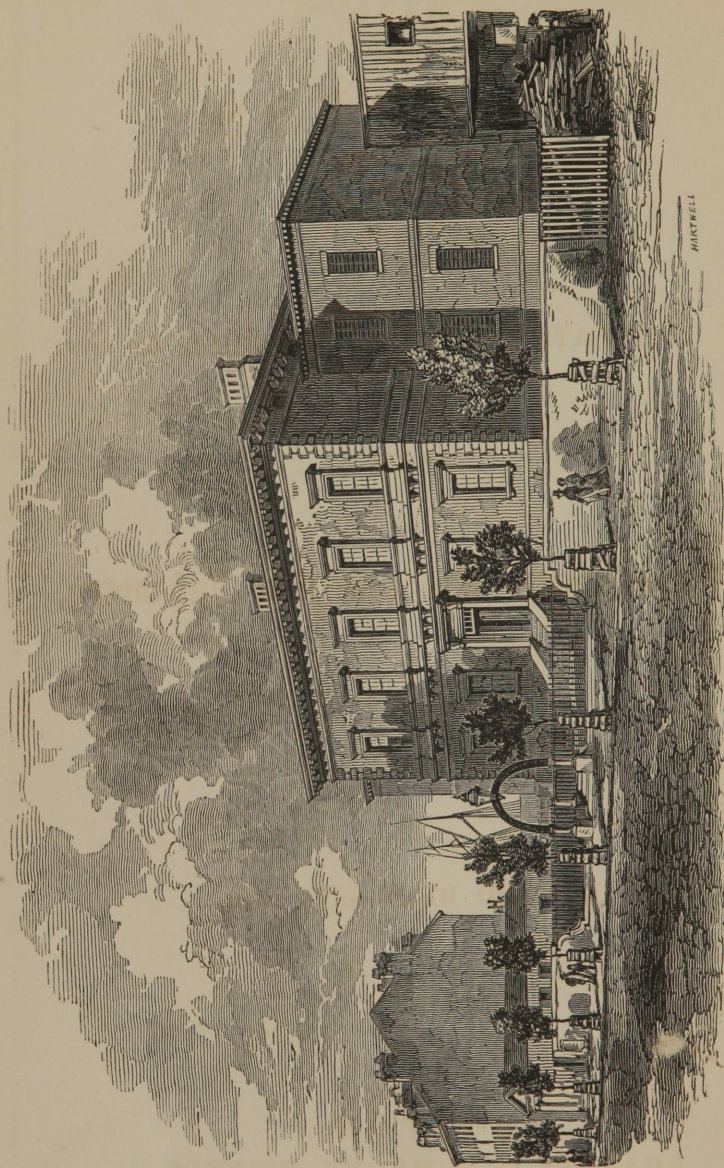
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EDWARD REYNOLDS, M. D.

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MASSACHUSETTS CHARITABLE EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY.
CHARLES STREET. ERECTED, 1850.

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BY

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BOSTON, July 3, 1850.

EDWARD REYNOLDS, M.D.

DEAR SIR,—In compliance with the request of the Managers of the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary, you have given an Address to the public, on the occasion of the Dedication of the new building to its charitable use.

Containing, as it does, a very interesting account of the rise and progress of the Infirmary, hitherto very little known in the community, notwithstanding the great benefits that have been conferred by it upon a large class of the poor; and believing that the publication of your eloquent and appropriate Address will tend essentially to extend a knowledge of the Institution, and promote its benevolent purposes, the subscribers were appointed a committee, to request a copy of it for publication.

With great pleasure we communicate to you the request, not doubting that you will accede to their wishes.

Very Respectfully,

ROBERT G. SHAW, }
MOSES GRANT, } Committee.
JAMES LAWRENCE, }

BOSTON, July 8, 1850.

GENTLEMEN,—

I send you a copy of the Address delivered at the Dedication of the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary, which you have done me the honor to request for publication. Hoping that it may, as you have suggested, subserve the interests of the Institution,

I am, Very truly,

Your Friend and Servant,

EDWARD REYNOLDS.

1851

THE ... OF THE ...

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst.

and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
J. W. ...

TO THE ...

THE ...

OF THE ...

AND ...

AND ...

A D D R E S S .

TO THE PATRONS OF THE INFIRMARY :

WE are assembled in this beautiful structure erected by the wisdom and persevering energy of the Managers of the Mass. Charitable Eye Infirmary. We have invited its friends to enter with us, and to dedicate it by some appropriate services to its benevolent use. It is a grateful task to me, in obedience to their request, to welcome you within its walls; and to congratulate you on the completion of another noble Charity, which through their agency, has arisen to honor and adorn our City; to walk with you about its commodious wards; that you may receive the silent but expressive blessing of the poor and blind, and learn in the true though mute eloquence of these humble individuals, the luxury of doing good.

It is peculiarly grateful to them and to me, to meet on this auspicious occasion, all who have contributed by their wisdom or their generosity to the advancement of our Institution; and to the erection of the building

which we are this day assembled to consecrate ; and which is destined to continue a noble monument of their benevolence ; and to transmit to unborn generations its healing benefits. It is the child of an early love, about which clusters the memory of many of the pleasing associations, and many of the touching incidents that serve to shed an interest over the retrospect of professional life. To the Surgeons belongs its pater-nity ; — to the kindness of its friends, the fostering care that watched its feeble infancy, guided and protected its promising youth, until in the vigor of a useful man-hood, it now stands before you an object of honest pride, affording in a retrospect of the past, the surest pledge of its future usefulness.

There are periods in the history of every individual, and every institution, in which it is wise to pause for a moment, and examine the landmarks that designate its points of progress ; that we may gather up a lesson of wisdom from the past, and be stimulated to new exertions for the future. The dedication of this building to the cause of benevolence seems to be one of the landmarks, to which the former friends of the Infirmary have long looked forward with anxious hope ; and to which its future friends will look back with interest. I propose to pay the debt now considered due to the Patrons of the Institution, by devoting a portion of this interesting hour to a simple detail of such of the prominent facts of its history, as will best show the motives

that led to its formation ; the principles upon which it has been governed ; and the results it has produced ; and thus to make known the faithfulness with which your designs have been fulfilled ; and to enable you best to appreciate the great amount of good already secured by your benevolence ; and the unspeakable benefit, which this simple charity is capable in its present matured condition, of conferring upon the cause of science and humanity.

Public Eye Infirmaries, are the Institutions of modern times. There are persons still living, whose eyes beheld the corner stone of the first that was erected. It was laid in the almost universal ignorance of Ophthalmic Science. One of the most remarkable facts developed in the history of Medicine, is the utter neglect of the study of Diseases of the Eyes, during the long period of two thousand years — from the days of Celsus who flourished in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, almost to our time. While every other branch of medicine, enlarged its boundaries by the accurate observation of each succeeding age, this alone remained stationary. The medical profession, always true to itself, has kept an equal progress with the other sciences ; and successively given in its own character a faithful representation of the wisdom with which it was associated. As we travel down the successive periods of the world's existence, we confidently look to the medical fathers for a progressively increasing light ; and except in this single branch of

science we never look in vain. But here no response is given. The Eye, the noblest and most beautiful organ of the body, through which the mind receives its chief stores of knowledge, and many of its purest streams of joy — and by the aid of which are carried on all the avocations that contribute to the happiness and improvement of society — seems to have been the only part, abandoned to an almost total neglect. This profound ignorance hardly disturbed through a long series of ages, and extending back to a period anterior to the Christian era, is to us who are so able to appreciate the suffering and poverty consequent upon the uncured diseases of the eye, almost inconceivable.

But such is the fact. The union of Ophthalmology to Medicine, and its elevation to the rank of a Science, is the work of our day. The Romans received it rude and imperfect from the Greeks; the Greeks from the Egyptians; and Egyptian Ophthalmology, to which probably very little had been added by either Greek or Roman, was the poor legacy to all subsequent ages, until the latter part of the 18th century; when the Germans made the first effort, by concentrating upon it the light of Physiology and Pathology, to rescue it from its degraded condition; and to elevate it to a rank which rendered it a blessing to mankind. It is painful to look back in imagination, and contemplate the amount of misery entailed on every generation by the annoying affections of this little organ now so easily relieved; and to behold

the multitude of blind ones, now so readily restored to sight, who must then have wandered about in helpless beggary and want. The medical historian is able to comprehend the feelings of the Jew, when he exclaimed in wonder, "Since the world began, was it not *heard* that any man opened the eyes of one born blind." *He* finds no difficulty in believing that no mere human power performed that act of kindness ; or in admitting the truthfulness of its narrator. In the exclamation of that humble man, he sees the low condition of a science, which in our day, has become the rare blessing of the race ; and is able to estimate the debt of gratitude laid upon the friends of humanity, by your benevolent efforts in rearing this edifice.

The eighteenth century was passing away before the light of science began to break in upon this universal darkness. Here and there an individual occasionally appeared, who added some slight improvement to the art. But the ignorance and indifference of Physicians to the subject, had permitted the diseases of the eyes to fall almost exclusively into the hands of a class of men calling themselves Oculists ; men, wholly ignorant of Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology ; who were valued only for a certain amount of manual dexterity in the few cases requiring mechanical remedies ; and for the local treatment, which formed the narrow and unimportant limits of their knowledge ; men, unfitted by nature or education for the treatment of any disease ; who

left the science as they found it ; in a state of almost total darkness ; and rendered the term *Oculist* a bye word and a reproach among Physicians to the present day.

It was not until men eminent for knowledge, and familiar with every department of medical science, took the subject in hand ; such men as Richter and Barth, and Beer in Germany ; and Saunders, Farre and Lawrence in England ; men of general and comprehensive views ; who laid the whole field of medicine under contribution, for the principles which were to guide them in learning the nature and treatment of eye diseases, that the Profession were ready to receive this neglected and much abused branch under its protection ; and that the oculists who had never contributed anything to its elevation, were compelled to abandon it. The gentlemen who have been appointed, ever since, to the management of Institutions for Diseases of the Eyes, have been selected for their attainments in all branches of medical science. It is the law of all these establishments in Europe, that none other are admissible to office. And since the Physician and Surgeon are alone fitted for the comprehensive views required for the treatment of Ophthalmic disease, we are glad that the term *oculist*, is fast passing away with the generations that employed the men who bore it.

With these observations upon the general nature of this subject, we are better prepared to comprehend the

importance of the Eye Infirmary. I begin by saying that Austria has the honor of making the first effort to rescue Ophthalmic Surgery from its degraded condition; and of conferring the unspeakable blessing of an improved state of the science upon the world; when in 1773, under the supervision of one of her most eminent physicians, she opened the first school of instruction to pupils; and devoted two wards of the Vienna hospital to the reception of patients afflicted with diseases of the eyes. At this infant establishment, the first light of science broke in upon the profession. There, the medical student first discovered the value of the eye as a beautiful mirror, where from its transparency, he could best learn, because the only one in which he could clearly see, the progress of morbid action. In the beautiful thought of Latham, "It is the organ where he can see all diseases in miniature; and from its peculiar structure, see them as through a glass; and learn many of the little wonderful details in the nature of morbid processes, which but for the observation of them in the eye, he could never have learnt at all." It was at that little Eye Infirmary that hope first began to dawn upon the sorrows of blindness. It was there that a fountain was first opened, which flowing on in new and ever widening streams, has carried light and happiness to thousands in its course.

A long time, however, was destined to elapse before the example of Austria was followed in other countries.

The universal war in which the ambition of Napoleon involved the European nations, greatly retarded the progress of Ophthalmic Surgery, and kept it within the narrow limits where it began. Thirty years slowly rolled away, before it reached England; and it was ten years later before America received the blessing.

It was not until the year 1804, that the first impulse to the scientific study of the diseases of the eyes was given in England, by the establishment of the London Eye Infirmary, by Dr. Saunders, who brought the ripe fruits of an admirably constituted, and a highly cultivated mind to the study of this hitherto neglected branch. Although he died too early to fulfil all the bright promises excited by the beautiful discoveries soon made at the Institution, he did much towards redeeming the pledge with which he entered upon its duties. Before he went to his reward, this branch of Pathology was adopted as the favorite child of the Profession; and he had opened a closed path, since trodden by many faithful followers; who, while reaping in it invaluable professional knowledge for themselves, have made the hearts of a great multitude of fellow beings leap for joy, through the restoration of a faculty, without which, life is oftentimes hardly a blessing.

In 1810, the London Eye Infirmary was first thrown open to medical pupils; and soon became an object of great interest to a large number who were preparing themselves in that city, for the medical and surgical

professions — to a few, with the intention of pursuing the study of Ophthalmic disease as a speciality ; but to far the greater number, as the neutral ground, where Surgeons and Physicians might both meet, to study the principles of Pathology, as illustrated by the eye ; and to become acquainted with what is now considered an essential part of general medical education. In 1816, it was my privilege for a few months, to enjoy the same opportunity under the teachings of the distinguished Farre, Lawrence and Travers, all of whom are still living, the bright ornaments of the Profession. They were teachings of the highest order, that could hardly fail to excite a strong interest in the pursuit ; as well from its intrinsic utility in acquiring a knowledge of disease, as its power of proving useful to mankind.

As the London Eye Infirmary owes its origin to the Institution at Vienna, so the Massachusetts Infirmary, where we are this day assembled, must claim its parentage from that. The valuable work of Saunders, published in 1816, and the occasional reports of the Infirmary of which it was the first fruits, began to excite a spirit of inquiry among several eminent individuals in our country. But no general movement was made in its favor until 1821 ; when the first Eye Infirmary in America was established by Dr. John Kearney Rodgers, and Dr. Edward Delafield, two of the most distinguished physicians and surgeons in New York, who may be called the fathers of American Ophthalmology. Filled with the

spirit first received at the London Institution, and finding on their return from Europe a great number of poor people afflicted with diseases of the eyes, they were desirous of extending a similar blessing to their native city. Accordingly, at the request of several of the senior members of the profession, they founded the New York Eye Infirmary, where they have ever since labored with praiseworthy diligence; devoting to its interests a great amount of time, that was with difficulty spared from other professional pursuits; uncheered by any adequate patronage of the public, though 36,000 fellow beings have received the blessing of sight and hearing at their hands; and reaping no other reward than the happiness of doing good.

Two years after, in the latter part of 1824, the example was followed in Boston, and the first effort made, whose noble result we are this day assembled to celebrate. Perhaps, on this occasion, I may be pardoned in saying, that the Massachusetts Charitable Eye Infirmary partly originated in the fact that one of its founders had the happiness of restoring a beloved father* to sight by the operation for cataract. The tender relation in this case of surgeon and patient, becoming extensively known among the small population then composing our community, brought to his observation a large number of Ophthalmic patients; and soon revealed the fact, that the poor and laboring classes are peculiarly liable to

* EDWARD REYNOLDS, Esq.

these diseases — a fact now familiar to every one acquainted with the results of these Institutions. Whoever would study the diseases of the eyes, must pass by the houses of the affluent, and enter those of the poor. The great majority of all these cases belong to the humbler ranks of society; and have their prolific parentage in the various privations and sorrows unavoidably consequent upon poverty. The eye though small in bulk, is complicated in structure. It presents a specimen of every texture of which the body is composed; and consequently of every disease. No organ is found to possess more intimate sympathies with all others than this; or is more prone to feel the result of all causes that tend to produce a derangement of the general system. In the unhealthy locations, and the wretched tenements of the poor; in the imperfect ventilation to which they are constantly exposed; in the inappropriate and often insufficient aliment; the scanty clothing, the neglect, the want of cleanliness, and the thousand privations inseparable from their lot, you have these causes all combined. In these darkened wards through which you are invited to walk this morning, you will see it verified. The sickly hue, and the toil worn features of these poor people are but the results of constitutional derangements thus induced; and as clearly reveal the inseparable union between the health of the body and the health of the eye, as between poverty and disease. These affections are not the ordinary trial of the woman whom Heaven's

bounty has blessed with competence or wealth ; but of the widowed mother, whose needy offspring renders every hour an hour of toil ; and the dependent seamstress, whose patient fingers know no repose till the midnight hour. It is the toil worn laborer, whose fatiguing occupations must be continued in the summer's heat, and the winter's cold,— it is the poor foreigner who builds your railroads, and repairs your docks, that seek the aid of this friendly charity. A large proportion of all the accidents to which the eye is liable, is to be found, not in the office of the professional man, or the counting house of the merchant, but in the workshop of the poor but industrious mechanic.

These are the individuals for whom you have erected this charitable Institution. It was of such that He who came down to give sight to the blind once said, “ the poor ye shall always have with you.” Their number now increased an hundred fold by the tide of immigration crowding our shores with the poor of Europe, was so great twenty-six years ago, as to render it impossible to treat them without a sacrifice of time inconsistent with the pursuit of other and more favorite branches of the Profession. Accordingly, in the month of November 1824, the speaker in conjunction with Dr. John Jeffries, hired a room in Scollay's Buildings ; fitted it with such conveniences as their limited means enabled them to procure ; and invited the poor, afflicted with diseases of the eye, to come there for gratuitous aid.

After having continued their daily attendance for the period of sixteen months, it was found that during this time, although the population of the city did not exceed 50,000, no less than 886 persons had applied at the rooms ; presenting every variety of disease, from the simplest derangements that constituted only an annoyance, seriously interfering with their avocations, to the graver maladies destined to terminate in blindness ; or sometimes in the loss of life.

The history of that year's labor, with a simple detail of the condition, ages, character and circumstances of the patients, and the results of treatment, forms a perfect example of the annual result of every similar establishment. There, the unwilling occupant of the poor house recovered from disease, which for years had consigned him and his family to its comfortless abode ; and revealed its salutary influence upon the community by his first subsequent act — the removal of his children from the almshouse ; and a return to the true independence of honest labor for their support. For more than ten years, he annually visited the rooms, to express the grateful emotion, which all that time had not obliterated from his memory. There, the infant of eighteen months, born blind, opened its eyes upon a mother's face ; and the few remaining years of the old man of eighty, to whom the grasshopper was becoming a burthen, were again cheered by the returning light of day. There, the humble artizan, rendered dependant upon the precarious

charity of others, was restored to the fruits of his own honest labor. At these humble rooms, many an anxious mother rejoiced in the restoration of some long afflicted child ; the broken down student returned to his books ; and the lone female, who knew no other protector than her industry, found relief from the brokenness of heart, caused by the loss of a sense that makes poverty a double calamity. In a word, the blind were made to see ; and the deaf to hear ; and hundreds were relieved of diseases, which, if not necessarily fatal to vision, were by their annoyance, constantly interfering with the freedom of labor.

Having thus satisfactorily tested the experiment, the surgeons now thought the time had arrived, which authorized them to present the claims of this large class of the poor to the attention of the public. Accordingly, a meeting was called on the 13th of March, 1826, at which the Hon. John Welles presided. The Report was read. Its simple statement of facts impressed all the gentlemen present with a conviction of the usefulness and importance of the Institution ; and determined them to give it a more perfect trial as a public charity. In accordance with a vote there passed, a subscription was commenced. By the personal exertions of one gentleman, Mr. Lucius Manlius Sargent, more than two thousand dollars were collected in one week, as a permanent fund ; and nearly three hundred dollars in annual subscriptions,

The first meeting of the subscribers who had thus promptly replied to the call of the Committee, was held at the Exchange Coffee House, on the evening of March 26, 1826. Mr. Richard D. Tucker presided. The result of Mr. Sargent's effort being made known by Mr. Bryant P. Tilden, was regarded as a spontaneous expression favorable to the establishment of the Institution. Accordingly, it was then regularly organized under the title of the Boston Eye Infirmary, by the election of a board of officers, composed of the following gentlemen :

EDWARD TUCKERMAN,	<i>President.</i>
LUCIUS M. SARGENT,	<i>Vice President.</i>
WILLIAM B. REYNOLDS,	<i>Secretary.</i>
BRYANT P. TILDEN,	<i>Treasurer.</i>
RICHARD A. TUCKER,	} <i>Managers.</i>
EDWARD H. ROBINS,	
ROBERT G. SHAW,	
HENRY SARGENT,	
HENRY RICE,	
NATHANIEL G. SNELLING,	
JAMES C. DUNN,	
THOMAS C. AMORY, REV. JOHN CODMAN,	

To the faithful guidance of these gentlemen at that period, and of others, who from time to time, have filled the vacancies made by death, and other causes; and who with great liberality of time and money, have cherished its interests; it is indebted for the firm foundation that gives it its present promise of permanent usefulness.

In February of that year it became incorporated by the legislature of the commonwealth, under the title of the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary. By the vote of the managers, its location was continued in Scollay's buildings until the 6th of May, when it was removed to more commodious apartments at the corner of Court and Tremont Streets. At the expiration of six years, it again removed to the Salisbury building in Summer Street, where it continued four years longer, until removed to the Gore Mansion House, in Green Street.

The purchase of this house may be considered the necessary result of the new wants of the Infirmary, which at an early period began to be developed, at these rooms ; where the labors of the first ten years of its existence as a public Institution were carried on. Each of these temporary locations, though they afforded ample accommodations for patients afflicted with the lighter forms of disease, who came daily for advice, and were able to return to their homes ; were wholly unfitted for the more dangerous forms that necessarily confined them to their own places of abode. The increased labor thus laid upon the surgeons, by the duty of visiting them at their own houses, and endeavoring to combat disease in combination with all the privations of poverty, soon showed the importance to the interests of both patients and surgeons, of enlarging the boundaries of the Institution ; and providing some convenient habitation,

where they could be sheltered, and provided with good air, proper nourishment, careful nursing, and the other obvious comforts required for the successful treatment of disease.

Nor was this all. It was not the city alone, that supplied this class of patients. The adoption of the Institution by the subscribers, soon extended the knowledge of its existence beyond the limits of the city; and brought a great number of patients to the rooms; not only from the neighboring towns, but from the most distant parts of the State. This influx of strangers, without money and without friends, with no place of abode on their arrival, and no means of procuring one, and who came wholly ignorant of the inability of the Infirmary to provide for their support, was a source of perpetual embarrassment to the surgeons. A large proportion of these cases were of a serious character; some, requiring delicate operations, and several weeks' attendance for their removal; others, having acute affections threatening the function of the organ, unless arrested by appropriate treatment; and some so much aggravated by the journey to the city, as to render a return home impossible. The Records of the Managers' quarterly meetings show the frequency of these calls, in the small sums of money that were set apart from time to time, for such as were the most urgent; but which, as the By-Laws of the Infirmary permitted none to be withdrawn from its permanent fund, were always inadequate

to the demand. The Record, unseen by the human eye, in which is written every deed of kindness, would show, that most of these patients, were supported by the donations of private benevolence, until they became so numerous that even that source failed ; and so it went on increasing, until, as appears by the statistical report of a Committee appointed to bring the condition of the Institution before the Legislature in 1835, and 1836, one hundred and fifty-three towns in the State had been represented at the rooms by their sick poor ; and that no less than one-third of the annual applicants came from the country.

The frequent occurrence of these facts, had impressed the Managers with the importance of securing some permanent abode for such patients, as early as 1833. It had been a subject of much thought and frequent discussion at every meeting : but from a determination to adhere strictly to their early resolution to keep the Institution under all circumstances, free from pecuniary embarrassment, they never led to any action until June 1836. It then appeared by the Treasurer's accounts, that the funds amounted to sixteen thousand dollars. They accordingly concluded, under the pressing necessities of the Institution, to purchase the Gore Mansion House, which several months previous had been offered to them on terms so liberal, as to be considered equivalent to a valuable donation from the heirs of the late Samuel Parkman ; as appears by a vote of thanks entered to that effect on its records, Nov. 3d, 1836.

This purchase exhausted all the resources of the Institution. The managers now believing that a ten years' trial of its results was of a character authorizing them to seek legislative aid, appointed a committee to prepare a petition, and present it to the legislature. The highly favorable report of the joint committee subsequently appointed by the Senate, to investigate its claims, and the noble manner in which the two honorable bodies responded to their appeal, by the generous donation of five thousand dollars for the repairs of the house, and two thousand dollars per annum for the period of five years, was a gratifying evidence of their high estimate of its merit ; and a strong incentive to its future efforts.

To Messrs. HENRY H. CHILDS, ETHAN A. GREENWOOD, CHARLES THOMPSON, J. V. C. SMITH, and RUFUS SAXTON, the gentlemen, who on this occasion so kindly befriended its interests, the managers would take this opportunity in behalf of the 3816 poor individuals, who, in the succeeding five years, received its benefits ; to offer the expression of their grateful thanks ; as well as to those who on two successive occasions, came forward to reiterate its claims, and obtain a renewal of the generous grant.

The repairs of the building were hardly finished, when on the evening of June 4th, it came near being destroyed through the wickedness of some midnight incendiary. The progress of the flames were not arrested, until one end of the house and all the out

buildings became their prey. This misfortune delayed the completion of the work, until the 19th of July, 1836; when it was first opened for the reception of patients.

The removal to the Green Street House was a new era in the history of the Institution. With the grant of the legislature — an honored seal of its merit — with adequate accommodations for the homeless of the city and the country — with the increasing facility thus acquired for the successful treatment of disease — and the confidence produced by a temporary relief from pecuniary embarrassment, it entered upon a course of new and more prosperous action. Restricted hitherto by narrow means and inadequate accommodations, its efforts had been wholly expended upon the patients who sought its aid. The surgeons were now desirous of extending its usefulness by making it a school of observation to medical students, to whom its doors were from that time freely thrown open. A course of lectures on the diseases of the eyes, were established by the Directors; and delivered at the Infirmary by Dr. John Jeffries; and subsequently for six successive years at the Tremont Medical School, by Dr. Reynolds; and at a still later period, by Dr. George Bethune. Having been thus rendered a school of surgery, it was visited by a large number of medical pupils; many of whom have since become eminent in this, as in all other branches of medical science. The Institution is proud to number

among those, some who now hold in great honor, the highest places in the gift of the profession. Thus its benefits have been extended far beyond the city of its origin ; until a knowledge of this once neglected branch, through the influence of this and other similar Institutions, has come to be considered, here as in Europe, a necessary branch of medical education ; and produced an amount of good over the whole country, probably far exceeding any direct relief afforded to the patients who have been treated within its walls.

The medical history of the Infirmary, during the sixteen successive years of its location in Green Street, presents nothing materially different in its details from the results of every annual report of the surgeons, except the more satisfactory result of the treatment of disease ; and the great increase of patients, in consequence of the extraordinary immigration, which commencing soon after its occupation, began to crowd our shores with the poor of Europe. The Infirmary was the first Charity to feel its influence. From year to year the applicants for aid went on increasing, until it appears that while in 1836, which was the first year, the number was only 698 ; during the past year, the names of no less than 2004 persons are recorded on the surgeons' report. Since the foundation of the Infirmary, the same record shows the names of more than 25,000 patients, of whom, since the occupation of the Gore House, 1580, have been received as inmates within its walls. The

existence of such an amount of disease in our midst, so obviously incapable of being treated at Hospitals or any other establishment designed for the treatment of general diseases, however similar they may be in the constitutional causes that produce them ; and in the principles on which they are to be treated ; presents a most unanswerable proof, not only of the utility, but of the necessity of such an Institution in every crowded capital.

The records of the Institution during the last ten years, afford an almost startling proof of the truth of this assertion. From 1836 to 1841, the rooms of the new Infirmary provided a sufficient accommodation for all persons who applied for admission as House patients. In 1841, their numbers began to increase, and went on advancing in a progressive ratio, until, as appears by the annual reports, in 1845 they were more than doubled, and 1848 and 1849, they were nearly trebled. The house, originally considered large enough for all its future demands, had thus become too small for the accommodation of the vast crowd that now sought its shelter. Not originally intended for its present purpose, it was inconvenient in its domestic arrangements ; deficient in the spaces allotted to the patients ; and to its attendants, medical and domestic ; and unprovided with all the modern contrivances demanded for the successful treatment of disease. Once more, as in the early periods of the institution, it was frequently compelled, for want of room, to shut its doors upon many who sought and

needed its shelter ; and once more the managers were forced to take some decisive measures to procure a situation better adapted to its new and increasing wants. After much deliberation, they determined to erect a building, which by embracing every necessary arrangement, should be as permanent as the future history of the Institution might require.

In the hope of procuring the necessary funds, the managers once more sought the aid of the legislature ; who again expressed their confidence in the Infirmary, by the liberal donation of fifteen thousand dollars, on condition that ten thousand dollars should be raised from other sources. To this grant, they afterwards added, in May 1850, another of five thousand dollars. In addition to this, the President of the Infirmary, Mr. Robert G. Shaw, whose zealous interest in its welfare is recorded in all its acts for the long period of twenty-four years, in which he has been one of its officers, offered the generous donation of five thousand dollars, on condition that fifteen thousand dollars should be raised from other sources, exclusive of the \$15,000 granted by the legislature.

The ready manner in which the community responded to both these calls, by subscribing the above sums, best shows the gradual but certain progress of the Infirmary to public favor through the healing influence of its salutary labor.

The necessary funds thus obtained through the be-

nevolent donations of the State, and private individuals of the city, the lot of land on which this building now stands was purchased May 17, 1848; a building Committee was appointed on the same day, consisting of MESSRS. ROBERT G. SHAW, I. W. EDWARDS, and SAMUEL HOOPER, who immediately commenced the duty imposed upon them; selected the talented MR. EDWARD CABOT as its architect, and MR. JONATHAN PRESTON, as its builder, and gave to the work their undivided attention, and the fruits of their wise experience, until May 7th, 1850, when it was finished, and ready for the reception of patients; and where we trust it will ever remain, an honor to the gentlemen by whose wisdom it was erected, and a blessing to the poor of our State and city.

The fiscal, like the medical history of the Infirmary, is a subject worthy of a moment's notice, as an illustration of the character and results of the Institution. Commencing in 1826, with the small fund of \$2,700, and \$300 in annual subscriptions, the property gradually accumulated, without any especial effort on the part of the managers, until in 1836, it amounted to \$16,000; in 1838, to \$31,079; in 1842, to \$33,476; in 1844, to \$38,283; in 1845, to \$43,379; and in 1846, to more than \$50,000; since which period, by the liberality of the legislature, and the citizens of Boston, in answer to the appeal above mentioned, it has still further increased, till it now amounts to \$97,286. Of this sum, \$70,000 is invested in real estate, leaving a

balance only of \$27,286 in available funds. And yet from the year 1829, no appeal in behalf of the funds has ever been made to the public. With the exception of the sums presented by the State and city for the new building, all its funds have flowed to it in the form of voluntary donations from private individuals. On one occasion only in 1828, the annual report of the surgeons containing a detail of its medical results, awakened a strong interest in its behalf ; and led to the appointment of a committee to investigate its condition and claims, and to devise some measures to promote its benevolent ends.

The forcible appeal of that Committee,* whose names were a sufficient guarantee of the merit of its claims, was not immediately productive of any assistance ; although of great utility in extending information in regard to the Infirmary, till then almost unknown ; and awakening a sympathy in many minds in its favor. From that time, its finances began to improve ; and every new want was followed by a corresponding supply ; not from any appeal to the public, but from the simple offerings of private charity. In the noiseless pursuit of its work of kindness, a voice was heard. It was the grateful voice of the poor man. It came not to the

* Edward Tuckerman, Esq., Rev. Joseph Tuckerman, Rev. Lyman Beecher, Rev. Daniel Sharp, Rev. Charles Lowell, Rev. Ezra S. Gannett, Benjamin D. Green, Esq., William B. Reynolds, Esq.

busy community ; but it reached the ear of the poor man's friend. The noble legacy of ten thousand dollars, by Mr. William Payne, was from the recollection, while dying in a foreign land, of a poor dependant, whom he had formerly confided to its care. The five thousand dollars, bequeathed by Mr. John Parker, was the tribute of a generous emotion for the relief of a servant to whom he was attached. The six thousand dollars, willed in the same year by Mr. Daniel Waldo, was the gift of a heart warmed by what his own eyes had seen of an Institution founded on the wants of the poor. The ten thousand dollars, given by Mr. John Broomfield, treasured in long self-denial, was the gift of the poor man's friend, to the Institution, which, in his wisdom, could best befriend him. The same is true of the valuable legacies of Mr. Todd ; the venerable Jeremy Belknap, and his two sisters ; and of Mrs. Benjamin Joy, all of whom remembered the poor in their dying hour ; and of Mr. Samuel Appleton, whose whole life has been a blessing to the poor. And so of the lamented Gossler, the stranger beloved in our midst ; who in his honored walk with the rich, forgot not the poor ; and who, in confiding their interests to the wisdom of his friends, Messrs. Joseph Iasigi and Nathaniel Thayer, as they were watching with the devotion of friendship about his dying bed, best subserved them, through this benevolent Institution. These instances, with one exception, are recounted in memory of the dead ; but not in forgetfulness of the many still living,

whose names are inscribed among the contributors ; or of that lady, who, in the evening hour, left a thousand dollars in a nameless note, at the Treasurer's door. She never permitted *us* to know or record her name ; but it is written in heaven. If still among the living, she may perhaps learn that the friends of the Institution will ever cherish the memory of her secret kindness.

By the strict economy uniformly exhibited in the expenditure of these slowly accumulating funds, — always keeping within its means, however limited ; and never unable to meet its just demands ; the Institution, if never rich, has never been poor. In 1827, the annual expenditure was only \$473 for the relief of 645 patients. In 1849, it did not exceed \$2483 for the treatment of more than 2000 patients. From these two extremes of its first and last year, may be seen the striking disproportion exhibited in every year, between the amount of professional benefit conferred by the Infirmary, and its pecuniary expenditure ; and from its present prosperous condition, the wisdom of the early decision of the managers, to preserve it under all circumstances, free from debt. No other charity is capable of effecting the same amount of good, with so small an amount of means. Its whole history has been a singular example of rigid economy and enlarged liberality. During the whole period of its existence, its doors have never been closed upon any applicant, whom it was able to receive ; and its last dollar expended for their

benefit. In the freeness of its charity, with constantly accumulating means, it has never gathered a surplus fund ; and in the steadiness of its economy, it has always been able to meet every just demand. In its present elevated position, with its increased capacity of doing good, it is poorer than at any previous time ; more capable of fulfilling the noble work of charity than perhaps any other Institution, it is still itself supported by charity.

Such are the few facts constituting the short history of the Massachusetts Charitable Eye Infirmary — presented as they stand on its records ; and purposely left to tell their own tale of mercy. In full faith we commend it to your continued sympathy and care.

I will not close without reminding its benefactors of the faithful labors, and the wise discretion of the gentlemen to whom they have for so many years confided its well-fare : who have watched its feeble infancy with paternal care ; and guided the long period of its slow growth, with so much wisdom ; maintaining an unwavering faith under all its discouragements ; and persevering in unabated effort, until the noble object of their solicitude has attained a vigorous growth, that gives it this day the promise of enduring usefulness.

I shall be pardoned for a passing allusion to its medical officers — to Dr. John Jeffries, one of its founders, who separated himself from it in 1841, after a faithful service of fifteen years ; with the gratitude of thousands,

who had been soothed by his kindness, and relieved by his skill. And to Dr. Robert W. Hooper, and Dr. George A. Bethune, who have also served its interests with great fidelity, from 1835 to the present time ; often at the expense of their own professional advancement ; and reaping no other reward than the promotion of science, and the relief of human suffering.

Nor should I be true to the spontaneous feelings of my heart, were I to pass over in silence, another,* who, as the matron of this Establishment, has for many years, with great self-denial, and abounding toil, manifested a wisdom in action ; a patience in trial ; and a kindness of manner, that has rendered her influence second to none in the promotion of its benevolent ends. The Surgeons and Managers, the only witnesses of her untiring devotion to the welfare of the thousands who in this humble Charity, have been the objects of her care ; of the sound judgment manifested under the peculiar trials inseparable from the situation ; of her gentleness and firmness to the worthy and the unworthy ; and of the Christian spirit always brought to her difficult task, will bear witness to her merit. The world will know little of the many trials, or the noiseless triumphs of her lot. But if the cup of cold water given in kindness is not to be forgotten, she will receive her reward.

* Mrs. Mary Homer.

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