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from J. M. Da Costa

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THE SCHOLAR IN MEDICINE: AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE HARVARD MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, JUNE TWENTY-NINE, 1897, BY J. M. DA COSTA, M.D., LL.D., PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA.

THE SCHOLAR IN MEDICINE

An Address

DELIVERED BEFORE THE HARVARD MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION JUNE 29, 1897

BY

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Mr. President of the University, Mr. President of the Harvard Medical Alumni Association, Alumni of Harvard,— When you, Mr. President of the Association, asked me to address this distinguished gathering, I begged that it be not on the subject of medical education, which, with all its great interests, had been for the present exhausted by the many who have treated of it before you so well and so often. I then thought that, in place of considering those whose minds are still to be moulded, it might be not inappropriate to give our attention to those who are fully formed; and so, with your permission, I will say a few words in regard to one of the best types of these we meet,— the scholar in medicine. It is particularly fitting that I should do so here, while speaking in a city that is justly proud of its general culture, and under the shadow of the great university to which you all belong, to a profession that has been always distinguished for its love and appreciation of scholarship. It is fitting, surely, to speak of scholars to the pre-eminently scholarly profession of Boston.

In mentioning the scholars in medicine, I shall refer more particularly to those who have been men of cultivation and mental training other than merely in their own line; who, while actively pursuing their profession and learned in it, were not learned in it alone. I mean the men who, whether distinguished in the older restricted sense of scholarship chiefly in the classics, or in the much more comprehensive modern sense of general knowledge and culture in many and diversified branches, carry with them into professional life zest for these studies and the attitude of mind they give: I mean in its fullest sense the general scholar in medicine. Nor is it the scholar who has been a physician, but has largely or entirely abandoned his profession to devote himself to scholarship and has been chiefly known through this and his general knowledge, that I am speaking of, though here there would be a noted list to enumerate.

Here is, in comparatively recent years, Adams, whose translations of Hippocrates and of Paulus Aegineta are admirable; here is Greenhill, of Oxford, deeply versed in Arabic lore; here are Bussemaker and Daremberg, the profound scholars, whose Oribasius and other editions of Greek and Latin classics critics everywhere laud. Here is Littré, the celebrated Greek student, who has also produced the best dictionary in any living tongue, and, unaided,

has done for the French language in one lifetime what the French Academy has not accomplished since its creation.

And in older generations we find Linacre, court physician to Henry VIII., envoy, founder of the College of Physicians, the matchless teacher of Greek, having Erasmus among his pupils, the translator of Galen and of Aristotle into Latin so pure and graceful that it was the admiration of his age; Caius, the benefactor of Caius College, Cambridge, the nine-times elected President of the College of Physicians, the physician to Queen Elizabeth, spoken of by Gesner in an epistle to her as the most learned physician of his age, and regarded as being the superior of any man of his time in Europe in profound knowledge of Greek, which he, while pursuing his anatomical studies at Padua, taught as public professor, and always insisted should be pronounced after the manner of modern Greeks. Here is the great thinker, Locke, who to the last liked to dabble in medicine and practise on his friends, not always to their pleasure or advantage; also Sir Thomas Browne, though court physician, yet chiefly known by his extraordinary erudition that shows so conspicuously in the "Religio Medici" and "Urn-burial," and in the quaint conceits of his other writings, who could not, however, have been a very good companion, for it is recorded of him in Dr. Johnson's "Life" that, though always cheerful, he was rarely

merry, "seldom heard to break a jest, and, when he did, he would be apt to blush at the levity of it," unmindful that Bacon himself dictated from memory in a single day a jest book which Macaulay has pronounced the best in the world. Further, here is Rabelais, the inimitable humorist of France, who, after taking his doctor's degree at Montpellier, lectured publicly on Galen and Hippocrates. But I shall not dwell on him, since it is in literature rather than in learning that lies his fame. To dwell on him, too, would bring up forcibly the image of one who resembled him, and revive keenly the sense of the loss of the scholar, critic, man of letters, whose good-natured laughter resounded through the world,— our own Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Nor shall I say anything of the host of physicians that have been distinguished in pursuits different from those we ordinarily class with scholarship, such as wide knowledge and research in the natural sciences; though I cannot forbear to mention Galvani, the doctor of Bologna; and Linnæus, the physician at Stockholm, the professor at Upsala, whose classes his fame trebled; and another renowned Swede, the illustrious chemist, Berzelius; and Young, the Professor of Natural Philosophy at the Royal Institute, who, besides his extensive knowledge in mathematics, natural philosophy, and botany, was master of many modern languages, and of Latin, Greek, Chaldee, Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew,

Persian, and Samaritan; and Black, the popular physician at Glasgow, the discoverer of latent heat; and your celebrated botanist, Gray; and the philosophical comparative anatomist, Owen; and the great naturalist of varied acquirements, the father of popular scientific education in America, one of the glories of Harvard,— Agassiz; and another of our great countrymen, Leidy, that man of deep knowledge of everything appertaining to the natural sciences; and the thinker, Huxley; and the most renowned physicist of our own time, Helmholtz.

But to turn to the men who have been famed in their profession as well as admirable scholars, and whose traits of mind were essentially those of the scholar. It is interesting how some of the illustrious names in medicine appear here in evidence. Harvey is conspicuous,— Harvey, whose style is so limpid and clear that whatever he states becomes at once a demonstration, and grace and propriety mark every utterance. He is the Cambridge scholar all his life, as well as the great physiologist and physician. Boerhaave, the high-minded professor and physician, the man of many accomplishments, of extraordinary simplicity and kindness, thinking nothing of lecturing five hours daily, making the University of Leyden more famous than it had ever been, attracting patients from all parts of the world,— among them, though as pupil rather than as patient, Peter the Great,—

he, too, was all his life the diligent, accomplished scholar. So was Mead, the renowned and most popular physician of the time of George II., a Mæcenas in literature and art, a beneficent and kindly social power, finished writer, ardent mathematician. The celebrated professor of Padua, Morgagni, was also widely known as a practising physician, of whose art he must have possessed some of the best qualifications. "Adeo erat in observando attentus, in praedicendo cautus, in curando felix," is recorded of him; and you may well smile at the *praedicendo cautus*, the caution in prognosis,—a trait it is thought his successors have not lost. He was very popular with his colleagues, and taught until he was ninety-one years of age, whether to the edification of those who looked to succeeding him in his chair is not recorded. Throughout his long life he was a great scholar as well as original thinker, was noted for the elegance of his Latin style, which shows to the last in his splendid work "De Sedibus et Causis Morborum," published in his eightieth year. A further marked illustration of the scholar among famed physicians is furnished by Laennec, the founder of modern diagnosis. He was an excellent writer and a most accomplished Greek scholar. Of this, indeed, and of his horsemanship, he was more proud than of his amazing additions to science. The noted American physician, Rush, too, was

much more than a medical author and practitioner. Deeply interested in public affairs, he was also known as hospital physician and professor, as philanthropist, essayist, and philosopher, and was of activities so widely recognized that the National Institute of France enrolled him among its members.

In the illustrations given of renowned physicians who were noted also for their scholarship, I have selected, among many, those of pre-eminence belonging to times remote from the present. But, without mentioning the living,—and Virchow, famed for most varied learning, and Paget, that master of clear thought and pure language, are still among us,—it would not be difficult to point to examples nearer our own age that uphold the best medical traditions as regards scholarly attainments. It is only necessary to speak of Simpson, archæologist and discoverer; of Brodie, philosopher and psychologist; of Latham, incisive writer of limpid English; of Watson, whose style makes him rank among the classics of the Victorian era; of Graves, finished author as well as consummate clinician; of Trousseau, the eloquent master of French prose; of Malgaigne, the erudite surgeon; of Sée, the medical orator; of Dunglison, the great lexicographer; of Billroth, the many-sided teacher; of Hyrtl, one of the most accomplished of modern scholars, and wonderful linguist as well as illustrious professor,—to make

clear how scholarship and broad attainments have steadily remained in the medical profession.

The scholarship I have been commenting on is the common scholarship of cultivated men,—general culture and knowledge, and not professional scholarship or learning. But, where in a professional man the former exists, we may look confidently for the latter. Scholarship in broad lines brings with it learning in special lines. The habits and tastes of the scholar, and his mental attitude, remain the same, whether in or out of his vocation. And, when we speak of the scholar in medicine, it is to be inferred almost with certainty that he is learned in his calling as well as out of it.

The love of intellectual cultivation is wide-spread in the profession. Let us not suppose that it is only encountered in medical centres or among those whom the profession recognizes as its leaders. You may come across the scholar where you do not look for him. Twice this has happened to me recently. On one of these occasions I found him, in a village, in a country practitioner, as an admirable Greek scholar, besides his being of marked learning in his profession; another time, in a small country town, I met him in one who displayed a knowledge of old English and the changes that time had produced in our language that was amazing, and gave an hour of delightful talk after our medical conference was over.

In this utilitarian age the question may arise, What is the use of the scholar in medicine? We have obvious need for the investigator; but what is there for the scholar to do? Now there is no doubt that the investigator and originator in a science like medicine, with its tremendous problems and tremendous issues, is always of the first importance. And, if there is to be a choice between the scholar and the investigator, if a man can be only one, let the choice be always for the latter,—for the Parés, the John Hunters, the Jenners, the Marion Simses. But there need be no choice: the qualities may coexist, as proved by Harvey, Sydenham, Morgagni, Laennec, and Lister, and lend accuracy and strength to the results obtained by the searcher in Nature's realm. The scholar has, indeed, great uses in medicine. Besides the power of expression that comes, as a rule, with scholarship, he carries into every research, and into the estimate of every research, the facilities and critical judgment of a trained mind. He was never more needed than now, when every atom of discovery is heralded as of prodigious importance, and as sure to influence immediately the laws of the universe. It is the scholar who keeps the sense of proportion and fitness of everything, and who is not carried away into the maelstrom of pretence and assumption. It is the scholar who links the most valuable of the past to the most

valuable of the present, understands, and guards best against, the errors of centuries, reads best the encouraging signs of the times and the bright hopes of the future. It is the scholar whose knowledge teaches him to appreciate correctly the different fads and isms which are constantly cropping up, and which he recognizes as old errors with new faces, susceptible, perhaps, of rational explanation; who traces in faith cures and kindred matters the history of expectant attention; who is able even to appreciate the value of cures by the seventh son of the seventh son.

It is the love of true knowledge and progress on the part of the scholar, and his reverence for the lessons of the past, that counteracts all that is baneful in the tendencies to hasty generalization and unproved statement. He is not carried away by mere assertion: he looks to experience and to the logic of facts. He appreciates at their true value the claims made for the host of new remedies daily introduced, the majority of which, if we wish to cure with, must be employed while they are new. The scholarship that makes broadness also counteracts the worst feature in specialism,—to divide the profession into sections, marring its unity and strength. It is the scholar who maintains the ideal of his calling, who is the agreeable companion by whom men in other professions estimate and appreciate the worth of ours. It is the scholar who

founds libraries, does everything to promote collections and workshops of thought, and keeps his life free from the taint of barrenness. It is the scholar who cements the profession into the best of brotherhoods. It is the scholar who in a community creates an atmosphere of learning and appreciation of learning, that is apt to remain as an heirloom in families, forming scholarly clans, to the great advantage of the Commonwealth; and where could I find a better illustration of this than here in the home of the Warrens, the Jacksons, the Bowditches, the Bigelows, the Putnams, and the Shattucks?

Moreover, it is the scholar through whom we are linked with sympathetic interest to other pursuits. To recall the noble words of Cicero, "Omnes artes, quae ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam commune vinculum, et quasi cognatione quadam inter se continentur." It is the scholar with his wide-spread sympathies who is the near of kin in this blood-relationship of all the arts, and who represents us in the universal domain of knowledge.

The scholar in medicine is, indeed, an attractive figure. We see him pursuing what noble ends; ambitious for what lofty recompenses; passing from life's beginning to its end through what scenes of sustained pleasure,— not grasping and scrambling for petty prizes or fleeting reputation and wealth, but aiming only at lofty objects. Such is the history,

such the life of the scholar in medicine, as in every other branch of knowledge. If, unmindful of the friendly and social character of this meeting, I have treated of a grave and serious subject, and thus temporarily interrupted your pleasure, you must excuse me. But the memory of the famed men of your great University, its traditions, its spirit, its atmosphere of learning and of scholarship, proved irresistible, and caused me to speak, and to speak longer than may have been fitting, on a subject that the circumstances suggested, and with which I know you are in thorough accord.