

**DEDICATION OF THE NEW  
BUILDING OF THE BOSTON  
MEDICAL LIBRARY,  
JANUARY 12, 1901**

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Dedication of the new building of the Boston Medical Library, January 12, 1901 by S. J. Parkhill

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**S. J. PARKHILL**

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DEDICATION  
OF THE  
NEW BUILDING  
OF THE  
**Boston Medical Library**

8 THE FENWAY

*Saturday, January 12, 1901*

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AND THE LIBRARIAN, DR. JAMES R. CHADWICK

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1901

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## ADDRESSES.

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ADDRESS BY DAVID W. CHEEVER, M.D., LL.D.,

*President of the Boston Medical Library.*

MEMBERS OF THE BOSTON MEDICAL LIBRARY, OUR INVITED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—By the liberality of many citizens, women as well as men, whose gifts we gratefully acknowledge, and by the free offerings of our professional brethren, we have erected this commodious and safe depository for our medical library. It is with a peculiar feeling of thankfulness that I officially welcome here the physicians of Boston and of New England. The object for which we have striven is so vital to our welfare that a certain solemnity is appropriately mingled with our gratitude. Over and over again, in these later years of financial prosperity, have we seen vast schemes of benevolence, of religion and of education begun and finished promptly by the munificence of a single wealthy citizen. Such has not been our good fortune. We have received but one large gift and that from a lady who wishes to remain unknown.

*"Inter tedia et labores,"* literally, have the doctors toiled to make this library and to give it a safe and suitable building. Our librarian will detail to you, as he alone can do, the long years of effort by which he has raised this to the fourth place among the medical libraries of this country.

It is my simple duty to welcome you here, and to recount, briefly, the importance and the advantages of our work.

A medical library is peculiar in that it must also be a contemporary and a periodical library. The present is even more valuable to it than the past, although the records of the past are inestimable. It has been well said that the burning of the library of Alexandria set civilization back through all the

centuries of the Middle Ages. So, were all records of medicine blotted out, the next generation of doctors would begin as children over again. What has been discovered has been recorded, and were that lost, humanity would be reduced to the rough medical practice of the savage. It is impossible to set a money value on medical science, and without the records of science, there would be no medical art. Were anatomy, physiology and pathology lost, we should be groping in the first footsteps of ignorance. Were the history of all diseases, recorded in our books, destroyed, we should be only children as observers. But to the younger doctors who listen to me it will appear that the present is all important. And if we were suddenly deprived of the knowledge acquired in the last fifty, twenty, or even ten years, what a change would come over medicine! Anesthesia, antiseptics and bacteriology are now the paramount factors of all our progress. And the peculiarity of this species of knowledge is that it is ephemeral; it lives but a day; it is not lost, but its seeds germinate in new discoveries the next day. What we know today may be obsolete tomorrow, simply because it is subject to daily investigation and daily modification.

This form of knowledge requires an ephemeral literature to record it. The monthly, the weekly periodicals supply this knowledge. Hence the importance of a periodical library in medicine. More than five hundred such publications are taken here; read here; preserved here in files. This, then, constitutes a most valuable part of our library.

To allow the busy doctor and the student an opportunity to use this knowledge, it must be rendered accessible in commodious and quiet rooms, for reading, writing, excerpting. In our fine halls we can now offer the wisdom of the older authors, and the discoveries of almost every hospital and clinic and school in the world. Special subjects can be searched and exhausted; and the hurried doctor can drop in for half an hour and find the facts he is in search of, speedily and surely.

This is not all our function. A meeting house for physicians is also here provided; a medical centre, where professional intercourse will be aided by social features also.

I believe that the future influence of this Boston Medical Library on



the doctors of New England will be beyond computation, in advancing science, softening prejudices and modifying opinions.

In 1874 six physicians met in the office of the late Dr. Henry I. Bowditch, and laid the foundation of this library association. Three of these gentlemen still serve us: Dr. F. I. Knight, as vice president; Dr. O. F. Wadsworth, as clerk; Dr. James R. Chadwick, as librarian. We may fittingly recall, also, that our assistant librarian, Dr. Edwin H. Brigham, is still in charge; having faithfully filled that office since 1875. Mrs. Collins, our cataloguer, has served us well for twenty-two years. Such permanence and reliability have been great helps in our progress. In 1877 an act of incorporation was obtained. Twelve of the fourteen original incorporators survive. We have lost three presidents by death: Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, presiding from 1875 to 1888; Dr. Hodges, presiding from 1888 to 1890; Dr. Minot, presiding from 1890 to 1896.

A quarter of a century has elapsed, and we have moved from Hamilton Place to Boylston Place, and thence, here. In this chaste and appropriate edifice we now are domiciled. That it is so well constructed we owe to the good taste of the architects, Messrs. Shaw & Hunnewell, aided by the suggestions and the oversight of our building committee, Drs. J. Collins Warren, J. R. Chadwick, Farrar C. Cobb. It is a noteworthy fact that we have completed our building for less than the estimated cost. This is unusual; and we owe it largely to the prudent management and practical knowledge of Dr. Farrar Cobb, whose experience in building a large hospital has well served him and us.

The young men in our ranks have pushed us on, and furnished that spur of enthusiasm which conservative age sometimes lacks. We owe also much of our financial success to the tact of our committee to solicit subscriptions, of which Dr. John Homans, 2d, is chairman. I consider that we have made a financial success, because we have collected by subscription about \$73,000.

We have paid out \$125,000; and \$15,000 will complete our building and furnishing; thus bringing the total cost up to rising \$140,000. Sixty-seven thousand dollars are still due; but we have \$25,000 to meet this, in

land we own, unsold, leaving a balance of debt of \$42,000. We have mortgaged this library, building and land, for \$50,000.

Our younger members have generously guaranteed the interest on \$25,000 for five years. And this leaves us a yearly burden of interest of about \$1,000. We are not so badly off then. Fifty thousand dollars would clear us of debt.

But looking forward to the future we need an endowment to buy books. Many physicians have given us their libraries; others will do so as time goes on. But we need modern contemporary books. We ought to have on our shelves every modern treatise and textbook, in English, French or German, as soon as published; medical students and doctors alike need this. We need a fund with a yearly income to enable us to receive students freely; to give them a room to themselves. We want students to come here as well as doctors, and we want to be able to give them good facilities for study.

Our hall for business meetings has been beautifully fitted up in memory of Dr. Richard Sprague, by his mother and by the Hon. C. F. Sprague. Mrs. Fifield, the widow of our late genial associate, has furnished a room, as a memorial. Holmes Hall speaks for itself. I need not describe its excellence. Would that some one might decorate and furnish the hall we occupy this evening. From the walls of Holmes Hall, from other rooms, look down upon us the portraits of many of our medical forefathers and teachers: The Warrens, Bigelows, Jacksons, Homans, Shattucks, Wyman, Bowditch, Cabots, Putnams, Storer, Ellis, Buckingham, Holmes! How can I cease the enumeration? These were scholarly doctors. We need to continue this patrician *Gens*. Science enlightens, but does not wholly satisfy; the humanities in education soften manners, nor allow them to be harsh.

The moral effect produced on the patient and the community by the learned, as well as gentlemanly, physician, is great and wholesome. Let the doctor cultivate books, and let the influence of this library help him to do so.

It is now my privilege to introduce to you our librarian. If any one man were named who had collected and created our library, it is he. He is a bibliophile, who travels over Europe with a list of missing numbers always in his pockets. Persistent as the bee, he never comes home without honey.

## ADDRESS BY JAMES R. CHADWICK, M.D.,

*Librarian of the Boston Medical Library.*

"*Horæ periunt et imputantur.*" "The hours perish and you must account for them." These words, taken from the sun-dial at Oxford University, seem to express the sentiment with which you give me your attention today, when I speak to you, fellow-associates, in the name of the governing body of this library. Hours have lengthened into days, days into years, and years have spanned the quarter of a century, since you laid upon our shoulders the burden of creating and building up a library to meet the wants of our profession in this community. Most of us have become silverites in the process of time and regard the ratio of sixteen to one as very moderate. A few are in position to follow the example of a friend of mine, who has discarded a brush and comb from his toilet set and claims that all he needs to do in the morning is to dust off the top of his head. A few, happily but few, of our early collaborators have fallen by the wayside and are no longer with us today to enjoy the full consummation of their efforts. I cannot mention them all; you know them—the impetuous, high-minded Bowditch, the beneficent Shattuck, the quiet, persistent Ellis, the sturdy Buckingham, the erudite Fifield, that dazzling genius Bigelow, and among the younger men, the scholarly Curtis, the wise Hooper, the wholehearted, witty Wigglesworth.

Last to be mentioned, but first in all your minds today, is he who lent us the prestige of his name at the inception of our undertaking—Oliver Wendell Holmes, our first president, litterateur, poet, wit, and for thirty-five years professor of anatomy at the Harvard Medical School. Our debt to him can never be paid, but we intend to keep it alive in our memory by dedicating to him our principal reading room, to be known through all time as Holmes Hall. His bust in bronze, a replica of that made by R. E. Brooks for the