

**MEMOIR OF JACOB
HARSEN, M.D., READ BEFORE
THE NEW-YORK ACADEMY
OF MEDICINE, JUNE 1, 1864**

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Memoir of Jacob Harsen, M.D., read before the New-York academy of medicine, June 1, 1864
by John G. Adams

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JOHN G. ADAMS

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*Presented to the
with the regards of
John G. Adams.*

Memoir

OF

JACOB HARSEN, M.D.

READ BEFORE THE

New-York Academy of Medicine,

JUNE 1, 1864,

BY

JOHN G. ADAMS, M.D.

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Memoir.

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MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF THE ACADEMY: The memory of a good man's life is the richest legacy which he can leave behind him; to his family, no accumulation of the gifts of fortune can equal this bequest; to his friends and associates, no monument can be more enduring or more beautiful. We have met this evening, to deplore the loss and to honor the memory of one of our associates, who has been called away from a happy life, pleasant and useful employments, and this world of probation, in the midst of an honorable career. Let us, then, for a brief period, turn aside from our ordinary occupations, and recall some of the most prominent events in his history, set forth the distinguishing traits of his character, and cast a few fresh flowers over his untimely grave.

The recollections of our deceased Fellow are full of interest to all who knew him. He has been summoned away in the prime of life, with faculties unimpaired, with purposes unaccomplished, and in the full enjoyment of all that could make life to be desired. He possessed, in an eminent degree, the esteem of his fel-

low-men, while he dispensed the fortune with which a kind Providence had blessed him, with a liberal hand, in the promotion of the great interests of science and humanity. How were we shocked at the intelligence, on the morning of the new year, that JACOB HARSEN was numbered among the dead! Who, among his contemporaries, had a fairer prospect of lengthened years, of enduring even unto old age? Who, among ourselves, was more assiduously engaged in works of benevolence? If the enjoyment of life is enhanced by the abundance of our possessions, who amongst us had larger promise of continued happiness?

But the dark shadow has passed over him, and he is gone—that noble form lies low in the dust; we shall see his face no more for ever. Such is the vanity of all earthly hopes and aspirations—such is human life. Well saith the royal preacher, the inspired King of Israel—the wisest, the wealthiest, the most honored and fortunate of men:

“Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”

Well saith, also, the Roman poet and satirist, of all the human race:

“Pulvis sumus, et umbra, et nihil.”

The family of JACOB HARSEN was, on both sides, of unmixed Knickerbocker descent, his ancestors having been among the early Dutch settlers of the colony of York.

From the family records we learn that JOHANNES HARSEN, great-grandfather of JACOB, was born in February, 1714, and that, in May, 1743, he intermarried with MARGARET COENIOVEN, who died in the same year. On March tenth, 1749, he took to wife RACHEL DYCKMAN, by whom he had seven children: she died in July, 1772.

JACOBUS HARSEN, grandfather of JACOB, was the eldest of the family of four sons and three daughters. He was born in March, 1750, and intermarried with CATHARINE COZINE, on July twentieth, 1773. The COZINE family immigrated to this city in 1684, and soon became possessed of a large landed property in the suburbs, the original title to which was confirmed by patent from the Duke of York. This estate extended from both the North and East Rivers, sixty English roods in width, by two hundred and fifty roods in length, counting from high-water mark; thence northwardly, including the Bloomingdale Road, (which was at that time private property, and which never has been ceded to the city authorities,) the entire property comprising about one hundred and twenty-two acres, in the neighborhood of the village of Harsenville. The DYCKMAN family, before alluded to, were also owners of an adjoining tract, of similar extent. The greater part of this landed estate, on the death of his grandfather, passed into the possession of our deceased friend. It may also be stated, in this connection, that the name of both HARSEN and COZINE is, in the male line, now extinct.

JACOBUS HARSEN died at Harsenville, in 1835, at an advanced age. He was a man of influence, of strong will, and decided character. As City Magistrate and Alderman, he discharged his official duties with great fidelity, at a time when office was honorable, and honest principles a recommendation for office. He was also a prominent and consistent member of the Reformed Dutch Church, having been, for a long period, a Ruling Elder. The spacious edifice of that denomination at Harsenville, erected in 1818, owes its origin and principal support to his liberality.

CORNELIUS HARSEN, father of Dr. HARSEN, was born in November, 1783. In November, 1805, he intermarried with JOANNA HENRIETTA RITTER, of an old Knickerbocker family, whose records extend back for two hundred years in this city. Eight children were the fruit of this marriage. Mr. HARSEN (Colonel HARSEN, as he was ordinarily called) was a man of note in his day, and of genial, social temperament. During the war of 1812, he served as colonel of artillery in the New-York State Militia, having charge of the forts for the defence of the harbor. In all the relations of life he was highly esteemed as a man and a citizen. He died of phthisis, in October, 1838. His wife, who survived him five years, also died of phthisis. Mrs. HARSEN was a devoted mother, a most notable housewife, of the true Holland type; distinguished for her charities, she was esteemed by all who knew her. She was remarkable for great personal attractions, no less than for the purity and benevolence of her character.

JACOB HARSEN, M.D., the second child of this marriage, was born in this city, on February 16th, 1808. His early years were spent in Bloomingdale, (now Harsenville,) five miles from the City Hall, and at the age of eight years he was sent to the Bloomingdale Academy—a celebrated school in those days, under the care of the Rev. Hezekiah G. Ufford. After two years, Mr. Ufford was succeeded by Mr. John Moir, of Edinburgh, who was distinguished as a classical teacher. It was at this period, in 1815, that our acquaintance with Dr. HARSEN commenced. We were members of the same class, and were more intimately acquainted in consequence of the summer residences of our parents being in the same neighborhood. We well remember him as a rosy-cheeked boy, full of fun and frolic, amiable in his disposition, always neat and tidy in his person, and with as much love of study as is usually found in boys of that age.

The school having been discontinued in 1818, it was decided to place JACOB under the charge of Mr. John Walsh, at that time in high repute as a teacher, with a view to his preparation for college. He continued with Mr. Walsh until the fall of 1821, and, in October of that year he was admitted to the Freshman Class in Columbia College, taking a respectable rank for scholarship. After passing through the usual terms of his collegiate course, he graduated in July, 1825. Dr. George P. Cammann, whose recent loss we so much deplore, was his fellow-classmate.

Having selected medicine as a profession, he, in