

Introductory remarks at the opening of the Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology / by William Pepper.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS AT THE OPENING OF THE
WISTAR INSTITUTE OF ANATOMY AND
BIOLOGY.¹

BY WILLIAM PEPPER, M.D., LL.D.,

Provost and Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine and of Clinical Medicine in the
University of Pennsylvania.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—We have met this afternoon in this formal way for the purpose of declaring open this Institute, wisely planned and generously constructed by General Isaac J. Wistar, as a permanent home for the Wistar Museum and as a centre of investigation and higher teaching in anatomy and biology.

The building itself has been completed for several months, but it was decided to postpone this formal opening until the arrangement of the collection could be shown at the same time. I think that every one present must appreciate the peculiar interest which attaches to this building and to this collection. I know no building on this continent designed for the subjects here represented which is comparable with this in excellence of its plan and in perfection of its details for the purposes of a scientific museum. There is no collection in this country relating to the subjects here represented comparable in historic interest with the collection that is here formally installed to-day.

You will hear from those who follow me as to the labors and the fame of the men who have filled the chair of anatomy in the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania. I will allude only to him through whose energy and generosity this museum originated. Caspar Wistar was elected, in 1792, Adjunct Professor of Anatomy with Dr. Shippen, whom he succeeded in 1808 as full professor, a position which he held until his death, in 1818. He carried the reputation of the chair to a point where it has been consistently maintained by his illustrious successors. By his rare combination of high scientific and personal qualities he became a great force throughout the entire country in the direction of higher education and of the elevation of

¹ Delivered May 21, 1894.

his profession. He did much to insure the early prominence of this Medical School, and, dying at the early age of 57 years, left his name and fame as a precious heritage to the University. That name well deserved to live, and surely it will live in many ways. Naught renders a community or a great institution so rich as the wealth of noble names clustering around it and recalling lives of lofty purpose and sustained devotion to high causes.

General Isaac J. Wistar, in deciding to devote a princely sum to the development of the subjects of anatomy and biology, wisely chose this collection, with which his family name is so honorably associated, as a basis around which there should be developed a great institute. Professor Caspar Wistar has no direct lineal descendant. He had a brother, Thomas Wistar, whose son, a physician, called also Caspar Wistar, born in 1801, and deceased in 1867, was the father of Isaac J. Wistar. In no spirit of personal aggrandizement, but in what all will recognize as a most proper desire to perpetuate a name so long honored in this Commonwealth, this foundation has been termed by him, "The Wistar Institute." Nor may I let this occasion pass without a word of tribute to the largeness of purpose, the generous breadth of view, and the fine liberality which have marked General Wistar's conduct in all the negotiations leading to this foundation. The building and the endowment already turned over to its trustees exceed in value \$300,000. That this will be greatly increased there is no reason to doubt.

The work which is before this Institute is a great one. It will be described to you by those who follow me, and who can speak of it more authoritatively than I can. But there are lessons, too obvious to be overlooked, which this undertaking may teach every man and woman in this room. It was not started as a duplication of any existing institute, nor was it founded as a separate and distinct endowment. Taking a portion of the University, which needed strengthening and developing, General Wistar has made it serve as the basis of an institute destined to be the centre of the highest work in the sciences represented. While he insisted that the financial integrity of this Institute should be scrupulously preserved, by intrusting the endowment to a separate and distinct corporate trustee, he recognized the enormous strength that comes from concentration and co-operation; and for the government of the Institute, and for the promotion of its scientific work, he arranged for a Board of Directors,¹ to be elected annually by the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

The ground upon which this building rests was formally transferred by the University to the Wistar Institute; the endowment is, as

¹ One of these directors is to be a descendant of General Wistar's father, and two others are to be designated by the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

I have stated, in the hands of the Trustee of the Wistar Institute ; the collections that are in this building and every collection that may be given to it become the property of the Wistar Institute. Could any one ask for a more definitely distinct individuality than is secured for this foundation? And yet, with wise farsightedness, it has been provided by the manner of election of its directors that, as far as scientific work is concerned, it is organically connected with and is an integral part of the University of Pennsylvania. Thus there has been put into the hands of the University and added to its great force this splendid foundation ; and can any one doubt that at once the value of this endowment is doubled, nay, is multiplied indefinitely, by the fact that, instead of starting as a new and distinct institution, it takes its place as a cognate department of a great University already engaged earnestly in scientific work of the highest class. One cannot help wishing that other public benefactors, here and elsewhere, might have grasped the possibility of such co-operation, and have appreciated the added strength which would be acquired by their foundations, while they contributed powerfully to the development of great institutions already existing. What splendid results will follow if, throughout this great Commonwealth, the lesson of this Institute shall be taken to heart so that all interested in higher education and in scientific work shall appreciate that, in an institution as broad as is the University and whose administration is as flexible as is that of the University, there is room for the introduction of every form of affiliation and of co-operation.

No matter how distinct the individuality which is demanded for a new foundation ; no matter what special perpetuation of family or individual name ; no matter how specific may be the line of work designated for the intended foundation ; no matter how complete may be the separation of its financial interests from those of the general University, it may here be seen clearly that all of these may be secured, while at the same time there is established such organic relations with the University as will yield immense reciprocal benefit. It appears to me that this demonstration on the part of a man whose distinct individuality and whose definiteness of purpose were so conspicuous as in the case of General Wistar, points a moral which should be taken deeply to heart by every one. Every man and woman who is interested in the development of our great University, and who has come to feel the force of that strong life which is sweeping through its every part, will rejoice in the establishment of this great Institute, and will wish for it a brilliant career in the field it so honorably occupies. Nor can we overlook the encouraging truth that the broader spirit and larger life acquired by the University in these recent years have enabled it to draw to it an endowment of this kind, and that, in its scheme of work,

there is found ample room for an institute such as this, which shall at once take its place as one of the co-equal departments of the University. It is not many years since the University of Pennsylvania made to other institutions engaged in conducting highly important museum and scientific work overtures of the most disinterested and generous character. These overtures were rejected, with the inevitable result that we see to-day continued multiplication of museums. When will we learn that concentration and co-operation are consistent with the maintenance of absolutely distinct individuality, and that they are the secret and the source of power and of rapid progress? When will needless rivalries cease and be merged in a great common effort to elevate the noble cause for which all of us are honestly working?

I do believe that there is growing, here and elsewhere, a larger conception of higher education and of a university and of what those great terms really mean. I hope it is coming to be believed that, so far from a university being a private corporation, managed by a few men in the interest only of those immediately connected with it, we are reaching a recognition of the truth that the university is the people's institution, the people's college, the people's museum, the people's university; that it should be in affiliation with, and be an aggregation of every institute and of every agency, wherever located and however governed, that exists in the community for the promotion of research and the acquisition and diffusion of knowledge. It seems to me that Isaac J. Wistar has placed before us an object lesson from which truths of the greatest value may be plainly drawn.

I have been tempted to speak to you beyond the limits of my privilege by the deep interest of this occasion and by the earnest faces I see before me. My purpose in rising was but to accept formally the completed building and then to have the great pleasure of introducing to you, in the first place, one who but recently was of the faculty of our Medical School and who, though now connected with a sister institution, we well know retains his love for Pennsylvania, as we still cherish him in our hearts. No one can speak with more authority than he upon the importance of such a foundation as this; and our best wish for those who shall labor here might well be that they should display such high purpose and such fruitful activities in scientific work as have marked the career of our distinguished guest, Professor Osler of Johns Hopkins University.