

Banquet and presentation in honor of John S. Billings, M.D., LI.D.

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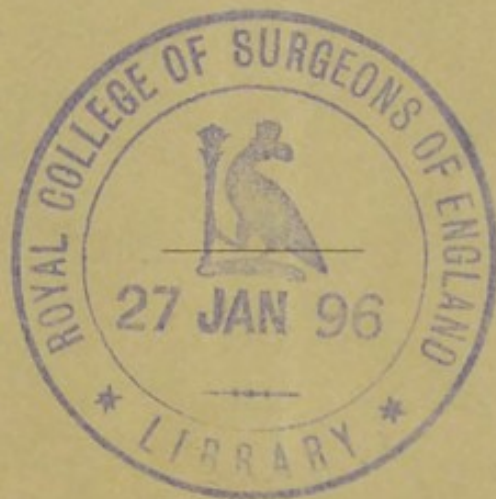
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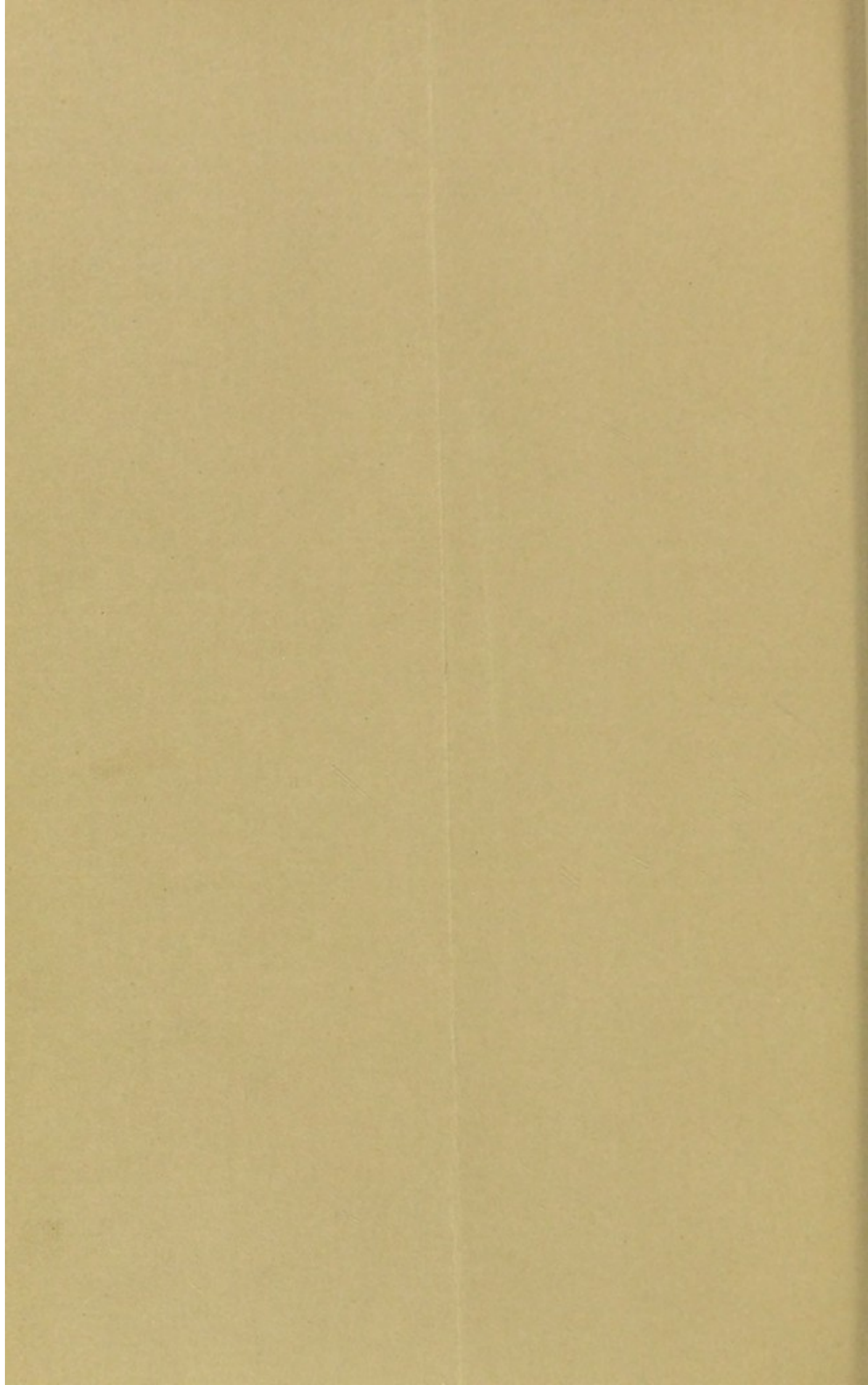
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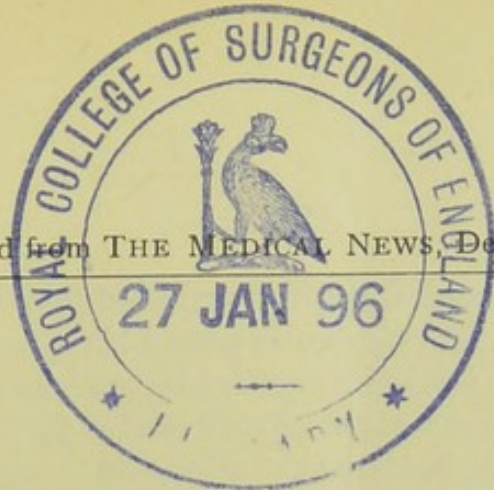
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BANQUET AND PRESENTATION IN HONOR OF
JOHN S. BILLINGS, M.D., LL.D.



FROM
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**BANQUET AND PRESENTATION IN HONOR
OF JOHN S. BILLINGS, M.D., LL.D.**

The American subscribers to the Billings Testimonial met at the Hotel Bellevue, Philadelphia, November 30, 1895, at 7.30 P.M.

Following the discussion of the menu, DR. S. WEIR MITCHELL, Chairman, after a few pleasant introductory words, called upon PROFESSOR J. M. DACOSTA, of Philadelphia, who said that he felt keenly the responsibility of speaking on behalf of the Committee, and of representing so many distinguished men, both in America and in England. He was, he further said, gratified that henceforth Dr. Billings was to be connected with one of our greatest institutions, and that hereafter he could be greeted, not only as a most distinguished member of our profession, but as a most distinguished Philadelphian. Dr. Billings, he continued, has many claims to distinction: he is well known in hygiene, he is a hospital-constructor, he has written a dictionary; but above all he is the author of the greatest index-catalog of our day, which has now reached sixteen volumes, with over 300,000 books and articles catalogued, and cross-references to over 800,000.

Commenting upon the enormous labor of such a task, the speaker referred to what Scaliger said of the bibliographer, the dictionary-maker, and the index-maker: that it was worse than toiling in the mines or at the anvil; and that a French author, in this connection, had said: "If there be an odious crime on earth; if any

one has blasphemed the gods or killed his father, let him make a dictionary as punishment ! ”

Dr. Billings has made a dictionary, and has made an index, and yet he does not regard either of these tasks as a punishment, but speaks of one in his preface as “ a labor of love. ” This seems the most extraordinary pathologic development of the amorous instinct on record ! For a man to love so constantly for sixteen years, embracing in that love eight-hundred-thousand persons at least, is certainly something almost beyond belief !

Dr. Billings has done the whole of literature, the whole of science, a great good by this unselfish work, which has been of the kind that builds up literature and science indirectly by removing obstructions and saving time. Let us give thanks also to his able coadjutors, to Fletcher, his learned colleague, to another friend who is with us to-night and who helped to read proof, to the indefatigable Chadwick, who, whenever any work is to be done of a public kind, is sure to be in the midst of it. This work will continue for generations and generations to be a benefit. It is a great national credit ; an illustration of what a powerful and rich government can do ; an illustration of the tact and sagacity of the men successively in charge of the Surgeon-General’s office. It is a credit alike to the nation, to the corps to which Dr. Billings belongs, and to the medical profession.

Dr. Billings has been justly honored all over the world, having been made an Honorary Member of the University of Munich ; a Doctor of Laws of Dublin and of the University of Edinburgh ; a Doctor of our own Harvard, and a Doctor of Civil Laws of Oxford. It cannot be said that he has not received just recognition ; indeed, with reference to Oxford, it is reported that he was recognized there in more than one way ; that when he went up to Oxford to receive his degree, clad in red robe and purple gloves, the students, recognizing that there were some

other qualities in him lurking under the solemnities, broke out in loud cries of "Josh Billings!"

The great lexicographer, Dr. Samuel Johnson, said that the life of the bibliographer was one of constant work without the least thought of possible reward; to escape censure was all that could possibly be hoped for. But if Dr. Samuel Johnson were here in this goodly company to-night—in his brown coat and brass buttons, after having swallowed enormous quantities of fluid, and eaten, as was his wont, like a tiger—he would think that, at the end of the Nineteenth Century, things were very much better, and that, in a new country, talent and ability and industry were duly honored. And if Dr. Billings were to choose one occasion of all his life that he would like best and most constantly remembered, I believe fully it would be this—to-night here among his friends, among men who have come from long distances, among his associates, who are all only too glad to do him honor. The memory of this meeting must, indeed, remain with him to the end of his days, and his children's children will tell each other of to-night.

DR. S. WEIR MITCHELL then said that after hearing how good a speech a man could make who was altogether unprepared, they would hear how bad a speech a man can make who is entirely prepared. He alluded to Dr. Da Costa's reference to the great power of a government to assist a noble project, such as Dr. Billings has brought to a satisfactory conclusion, and remarked that it was a pity that our republican form of institution lacked all methods of systematic remuneration for any man except the soldier and the lawyer, to both of whom it can give promotion, high place and reward, though they may have done little in comparison to that which has been done for mankind by two score men at this table to-night.

He spoke of a dinner attended in London as far back as 1853, when he dined with "several reasonably obscure people"—a Mr. Jenner, a Mr. Paget, a Dr. Quain,

also a Mr. Carpenter, who was then rising into note and was older than the others. The speaker commented upon the fact that all of the men named are to-day, or have been, baronets; that all of them have been attendants upon members of the Royal family—all on the Queen, he thought; that all were decorated in some way, Knights of the Bath, etc. This he contrasted with the practice in our own country, where there are no fitting marks of distinction to point out to the mass of mankind who are the best, and to indicate this in some formal way. In this connection he said: "When I think of the work that has been done by men like Flint, Da Costa, Osler, or of lives like those of Atlee or Sims, or of what my friend Welch has done in pathology, or the brilliant achievements in surgery of a man like Henry Bigelow, or of the recent distinguished addition to the despairing surgery of the prostate—I mention no name—and know how small are any but the commercial rewards, which are surely the smallest for this sort of thing, it makes one feel that there is nothing for us to do except occasionally to meet together as we are now doing, to say what we think about men like the honored friend of many years, whom we have here to-night as guest."

He referred to a recent meeting of the National Academy of Sciences, at which, for the first time in the history of that association, it took courage to say to two of its members: "You have done noble and great things, and we wish to congratulate you upon them." It turned on this occasion to Professor Lesley, of this city, and congratulated him warmly upon having finished the 124th volume of the Geology of the State of Pennsylvania; it turned to Dr. Billings, getting a little ahead of us, and congratulated him on the noble library which he created, and the catalog which he has just brought to satisfactory completeness. Neither has the profession of medicine shown any tendency in its societies or in its central asso-

ciation to point to its greatest men and thank them in any manner or in any way. This should have been done long ago for more than one who has gone unthanked to the world where all accounts are settled.

Dr. Mitchell read extracts from a number of letters received from Great Britain and the United States, speaking in the highest terms of praise of Dr. Billings' work.

"There was but one hitch in all this," he said. "My friend, Dr. Lauder Brunton, having collected a very considerable sum in and about London, sent me a draft which was drawn to the order of Samuel Weir Mitchell. Now the bank refused to pay the draft, because that is not my name, and when I came to inquire as to how it was that my old friend had made this mistake it turned out that in this great catalog of Billings, where there are no mistakes, my name is written Samuel Weir Mitchell!

"I am not going to say anything about the character of the work done which brings us here thankfully to-night to represent about 250 of the members of the profession in America and Great Britain. You have been told in language better than I can use what is the reason of our meeting. It becomes now my pleasant duty to place in Dr. Billings' hands the gift of a silver box which contains a check for \$10,000, and which has engraved upon it, 'To John S. Billings, from 259 physicians of the United States and Great Britain in grateful recognition of his services to medical scholars.' On the side of the box there is, in Latin, a statement to the effect that he who has made a catalog of a great library has created a memory of the wisdom and learning of the past.

"In offering this box to my old friend, and the gentleman you desire to honor to-night, I would say that while the silver box contains this practical recognition of his services it also contains something more, as my imagination figures it. You all remember that phrase of Dr.

Johnson's, 'Wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.' There is, as I think of it, within this box, for an imaginative man, that wealth which represents the good feeling, the friendly opinions, the thankfulness, of the scholarship of two continents. Also I may say that this wealth represents a noble avarice, of that kind which my friend has shown all his life—a desire to be loved and respected by those in our profession whom men most rightly honor."

DR. JOHN S. BILLINGS said: "I think that not the most eloquent speaker among you would feel himself at all able to make a fitting reply to the addresses to which you have just listened. It is impossible for me to do so, and I can only say that I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. To judge from my own sensations, that is not going very deep, because to me my heart seems at present to be in the neighborhood of my larynx.

"Of course, in this honor I am, in a way, but a representative, a large part of it being due to individual personal friendship and good will. The work has been rendered possible by the cooperation of many men working for many years, and a very large number of those men I see around this table. Besides, a very large part of this has not been due to individual merit, but, as you know, to opportunity."

Dr. Billings referred particularly to the cooperation of Dr. Chadwick and Dr. Fletcher. He explained that early in his medical experience he had occasion to look up the literature on the subject of the surgical treatment of epilepsy, and he was unable to obtain French journals to verify references. A canvass of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, only resulted in obtaining one-half the journals, and Dr. Billings conceived the desirability of a library where all information of this character could be obtained. After the war, being placed on temporary duty in the Surgeon-General's Office, it seemed to him a very judicious time to get together some books for the

library. At that time there were only two bookcases in the office which constituted the library. The long and arduous difficulties and labors attendant upon the enterprise before it reached assured success, as also in establishing the catalog, were briefly recapitulated by the speaker.

"As to this gift, I accept it in the spirit in which it is given ; I cannot yet say how it shall be used. It represents power ; it represents the power of getting knowledge ; the power, perhaps, of developing knowledge and increasing it. I will endeavor to use it in a way that will perhaps be satisfactory to those who have contributed it.

"In conclusion, gentlemen, I beg of you to accept my warmest and heartfelt thanks, and the assurance of my appreciation of your kindness."

The Chair then called upon DR. J. R. CHADWICK, of Boston, who said :

"Before fulfilling the role which you have assigned to me of alluding to the merits of Dr. Billings' able collaborators in carrying out the stupendous work of which we meet to celebrate the completing, I want to testify to the gratification that we New Englanders always have in gathering to do honor to your distinguished men. I am here reminded of the words of a famous orator, Rufus Choate, of Boston, in addressing a similar audience in this city many years ago. 'It gives me great satisfaction,' he said, 'to honor, by my presence here to-night, the two most distinguished sons of Pennsylvania—Benjamin Franklin, of Massachusetts, and Robert Morris, of New York.' May I not add another to the galaxy in naming Dr. Billings, of Washington? This phrase may be interpreted in more than one way, but I prefer to assume that the orator meant to imply that you had the discernment to recognize the merits of genius wherever found, and the ability to offer them such inducements as would lead them to become citizens of this metropolis.

"As Librarian of the Medical Library of Boston, and

a warm personal friend of Dr. Billings, I have had many opportunities of appreciating the rare combination of qualities in Dr. Billings which has fitted him to conceive the task of creating from a very small nucleus the immense library over which he till recently presided, and then making an index-catalog of it more comprehensive in scope and more perfect in detail than any catalog hitherto made in any special branch of science. In proof that this praise is none too great, I would call your attention to the reasons emblazoned in letters of gold upon the honorary degree conferred upon him by the University of Munich (the translation from the Latin is mine):

“ ‘ A man who deserves of his country and of literature the highest praise, not only for his numerous important writings on the relations of physicians, on the proper construction and administration of hospitals, on the public health in the United States according to the precepts of the science and art of hygiene, on the preservation and improvement in the health of the army, but also for the great collections thereto relating, which he has established and extended ; a man, who in the *Index Medicus*, of which he is editor, includes, by indefatigable industry, all the branches of medicine that are being advanced throughout the whole world, who, also, as author of the book that is entitled the *Index-Catalog* of the Library of the Surgeon-General's Office, United States Army, which, by the remarkable munificence of those who control the Government of the United States, has been laid before an immense number of learned men, has entitled himself to the gratitude of physicians and students of history throughout the whole world, and has built for himself a monument more lasting than brass.’

“All who consult this catalog can perceive its merits ; but few can appreciate the incessant labor bestowed upon it by Dr. Billings ; no one, in fact, who has not, as I have, had the privilege of being his frequent guest

during the past sixteen years and seen him sit down night after night at eleven o'clock with a pencil in his hand and a huge basket of current journals in all languages by his side, and, taking up one after another, run his eye over every outside and check those that were worth cataloging—about four out of every five. This is but one of the many stages in the work to which he gave his personal attention.

“ It is not for me to be his panegyrist on this occasion ; but there is one direction in which his influence has been felt throughout the length and breadth of the land which others might fail to note. I allude to the extent to which the formation of the Library of the Surgeon-General's Office and the publication of its catalog have stimulated the formation of medical libraries in every large center of population. This in itself entitles him to the gratitude of this and future generations of medical men.

“ One of the most valuable of his many qualities has been his common-sense. ‘ He is like a pin,’ to use a Frenchman's simile, ‘ in that his head prevents his going too far.’ His knowledge of men and his ability to secure their enthusiastic cooperation form the secret of much of his power. For instance, he not only despoiled my private library of many of its treasures in the early days of our acquaintance, but persuaded me to listen with equanimity, when, as at the dedication of the medical library in Boston, he boasted of the fact publicly, and intimated that the experience had doubtless proved a valuable object-lesson for me as a librarian. Mr. Thomas Windsor, formerly Librarian of the Manchester Medical Library, in England, is another who has succumbed to his wiles, and from the beginning has sent box after box of medical rarities culled from his extensive private library, and this, despite the fact that he is the most inveterate collector and reader of books, and has a more intimate knowledge of their value than any living man. We are but types of his many victims.

“The effect upon the *Catalog* of this quality in Dr. Billings is made manifest by the ability and indefatigable labors of his subordinates. No one familiar with the workings of the library can help being impressed with the exactitude and unfailing courtesy of Mr. F. W. Stone, who keeps the books and carries on the multifarious correspondence; with the energy and executive ability of Mr. C. P. Clarke, who has general supervision of the clerical work; of the genial, cultivated persistence of Mr. Edward Shaw, who, despite his many years and independent fortune, labors early and late to complete the files of periodicals. I cannot repent my weakness in sending him from my private collection last year, after many years of solicitation, the number of the *Gazette de Jardine* lacking to complete the file of that journal, when I realize that it is to him chiefly, owing to such persistence, that the periodicals in the library now number 29,000 volumes, and is the largest collection of medical periodicals in the world. I have no personal acquaintance with the other employés, such as Mr. W. T. W. Moritz, who, as chief cataloguer, writes and revises the cards and compares them with the titles of the books; the late Mr. F. L. Apel, who was in charge of the library in 1865, then numbering 800 volumes, and who kept the library in order in the two little bookcases, and sent patients to the Providence Hospital; he subsequently became clerk and was specially useful in revising proof, owing to his knowledge of eight of ten languages; Mr. Hardy who, as successor to the late Dr. Wise, is curator of the books; and Mr. Watson, keeper of the unbound books.

“I have reserved to the last, in order to give it deserved prominence, mention of the name of Dr. Robert Fletcher as the most distinguished collaborator with Dr. Billings on the *Index-Catalog*, and the actual editor of the *Index Medicus*. As his qualification for this work is only exceeded by his modesty, I may be pardoned for giving a few brief biographic data.

“ Dr. Fletcher is of English birth, received his medical education in Bristol and London, was married at the age of twenty-one years, and brought his bride at once to America, establishing himself in practice in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1861 he was appointed Surgeon of Volunteers, served throughout the War of the Rebellion in the Armies of the West as Medical Purveyor. At the end of the war he became an acting Assistant Surgeon, and was assigned to assist Dr. J. H. Baxter in compiling the Statistics of the Provost-Marshal General's Office relating to drafted men, a work of great value for reference for anthropometric data, much of which value is due to the accuracy and general attainments of Dr. Fletcher. In 1877, after the publication of this work, he was assigned for duty in the medical library, where he at once became the chief assistant and received the title of Principal Assistant Librarian by Act of Congress in 1891. His mental equipment to fill the important functions of this position has been continuously augmented by the fact of his private studies, which have covered a wide field, ranging from the old English poets and dramatists to modern anthropology. As proof of his attainments he has given us desirable papers “ On the Vigor and Expressiveness of Older English ; ” “ The Poet, is he Born, Not Made ? ” “ Medical Lore in the Older English Dramatists of the Elizabethan Era, excluding Shakespeare ; ” and in another field, “ The New School of Criminal Anthropology. ” He has been President, successively, of the Anthropological Society of Washington, the Philosophical Society of Washington, and the Literary Society of Washington.

“ In preparing the *Index-Catalog* his assistance has been of the utmost importance, the accuracy and typographic excellence of the volumes being entirely due to his careful and skilful supervision

“ It is fortunate for the medical profession that Dr. Fletcher will remain, in the future as in the past, the editor of the *Index Medicus*. When this important pub-

lication was started he took entire charge of the editorial work, and the excellence of this record of current medical literature is wholly due to his skill and ability. We know that its revival is assured. I trust that he will tell us fully of its present status.

"One word and I am done. When Dr. Fletcher was five years old, his father, who was a lawyer, had as a client a man possessed of a large landed estate, whose exigencies required that an insurance should be effected upon a young life. Dr. Fletcher then had the only necessary qualification, and his life was insured for a large sum. The premiums have been paid regularly ever since. During the time of Dr. Fletcher's active service in the field the premiums were doubled. When it became known in England that Dr. Fletcher was assigned to duty in Nashville, the premium was reduced to the former rate, on the ground that he was stationed 'in a walled and garrisoned town.' It seemed to me that this insurance must not be allowed to lapse, and I think that part of the funds in your hands, Mr. Chairman, should be employed to prevent the loss of this mascot. I propose a toast to Dr. Robert Fletcher of Washington."

DR. FLETCHER then said :

"I am somewhat in the position of a friend of mine, who, being in Alaska in the early days of that territory, was supposed to have been killed there. He returned, fortunately, to San Francisco, and, being a member of the San Francisco Academy of Sciences, he went to a meeting of that society, and listened with great interest to a most pathetic account of his career and untimely death. I feel somewhat in his position after having heard this very untimely obituary.

"I need not say with what pleasure I have listened to the various tributes paid to Dr. Billings. It is needless for me to add anything as to the merits of the particular work which he has been engaged in; but I can speak of it from a different standpoint from any of you—that of twenty years' daily intercourse with Dr. Billings, an

intercourse characterized always by the gracious readiness he has ever shown to contribute to my insufficient knowledge.

“While the thought of a great index-catalog might have occurred to thousands of persons, there have been more than once attempts made to deprive Dr. Billings of the credit of the first conception, and, indeed, of some of the carrying out of the work connected with that index-catalog. I take the opportunity to say—and there is no man living who can speak more positively on that subject than I can—that I know positively that the first conception of this stupendous work, the planning of it, the arrangement, the classification—in short, the whole merit of it, are all due to Dr. Billings exclusively.

“My friend, Dr. Chadwick, has kindly associated my name with the *Index Medicus*, that fascinating romance of which you have all heard. It is right that I should say something on this subject. Some sixteen years ago this was commenced at the suggestion of a New York publisher. Later Mr. Davis, of Detroit, asked permission to carry it on, and it certainly has been a great credit to him and his generosity, for it was every year with a certain definite loss of money that he continued the publication; at length he tired even of that, and the journal ceased to be published last April. I think, on the whole, I was rather pleased, for I could go to the seashore without thinking whether appendicitis should be classed under diseases of the digestive system or under the surgical treatment of the abdomen. We all know that when a man dies it is astonishing how many men find out how much they thought of him, and how much they really valued him in his lifetime, although they may have done nothing to help him. So it was with the *Index Medicus*. In the pathetic language of Erin they said: ‘Arrah, then, why did you die?’ The result was that those who really wanted the journal continued were asked to subscribe for it on terms heretofore unheard of in the history of medical publishing. In-

stead of the minimum number of subscribers we have received so many that we have begun to decline additional subscriptions, so that I have the pleasure of stating that in January next the first current monthly number will be published, and another number, as soon as the material will allow of its being printed, will cover the entire space since the cessation of the publication last spring."

DR. A. JACOBI, of New York, being introduced, rather took issue with Dr. Mitchell's views as to the better position of the profession on the other side, and thought there was not much to complain of; that everyone in actual practice in this country attends sovereigns every day. Continuing he said:

"When you, Mr. Chairman, in your irresistible and pleasant dictatorial way, told me a few days ago that I should be one of those who would speak here, I meekly submitted to what I prefer to call *your* fate. Originally I had expected to be on what you have seen mentioned in the books as a Weir Mitchell treatment, with ample rest, good feeding, and the most pleasing silence. But you willed differently, and I, 'cedo majori,' speaking for New York last, least, and briefest.

"I look upon to-night's gathering as a manifestation of great moment. As a rule, a professional man's reward for long-continued work and meritorious services consists in the universal but silent recognition of his labors. We do not, as they do in monarchical states, attach long-winded titles to his honored name; nor do we ornament his coat with insignia and decorations; nor are there many instances in which his distinction and the veneration felt for him are substantiated by a calligraphically written and embossed address or other documentary evidence. To-night, however, many of us have assembled for the purpose of proving both to the profession and the public some proof that his colleagues love to publicly honor a great and good man, whose efficient work medical men all over the world have long learned to appreciate. I trust

the notoriety of this occasion (I wish there were many of the kind) will prove to the community at large the existence of the public spirit which prevails in the bulk of the medical profession and of good will toward a deserving colleague. The jealous and mercenary spirit of a commercial era must not and does not enter into the ranks of a scientific and ethical brotherhood. That spirit may be natural and congenial to the stock-exchange, the labor-market, and industrial enterprises; but—'quod licet bovi non licet Jovi'—it does not govern the motives of the most humane of all the professions. Nor is this exhibition of the spirit of the profession without its reward, for the esteem the medical fraternity is commanding among the lay world stands in due proportion to the regard we evince for ourselves, for each other, and for our achievements, rights, and duties.

"The last take the first rank in the minds of whomever looks on himself as one of the cells constituting the living organism of science and of society. Therefore, appreciating my own duties, I try to read in the soul of our guest; unless modest to a fault, that he has the right to claim that there is no man who has been more active in the service of the profession, and through the profession to all countries. Not a year of his life but has been filled with the results of the labors of an always seething brain. Fortunately it was warmed by a generous heart and sustained by great physical powers. Thus only was it possible to know and amass books, old and new, to gather and systematize specimens, to write history, prepare censuses, exhibit statistics of the greatest value, organize the *Index-Catalog* and the *Index Medicus*, and the Medical Museum, and always to combine the powers of a savant and of an administrator. . . .

"All of the latter are wanted in his present position. Hygienic institutes will henceforth require the best talent of the land. Modern and future medicine must rest on biology and hygiene, including as these do bacteriology. Thus far practical surgery has reaped the most

beneficent harvest from their labors. Internal medicine has just begun to participate in their blessings. Antitoxins are to take equal rank with antiseptics and aseptics. Thus laboratories are the most efficient agents, both curative and immunizing, that is preventive. And the best minds should be placed at the head of the institutions destined to render experimental research subservient to suffering mankind. From that point of view I was not sorry to learn that Billings gave up his unique position in Washington to charge himself with the direction of his laboratory of hygiene. He is more than eminently qualified; for not only the best minds are required for such places, but the stoutest hearts also. A position like his is no longer a mere office; it becomes a mission. Modern medicine shares both in its objects and in its methods the dangers of a gospel. It is our present exact experimental methods that are constantly assailed by the obscurists of all countries and all stations in life. They have succeeded in almost crippling English physiology and pathology by depriving the most objective and brightest observers of any nation of the means of systematic experimentation. In our country we have had to exercise constant watchfulness over legislatures and wary lobbyists to ward off contemplated blows against the liberty of scientific research; and the last reports carry the news of a new onslaught along the whole line. Strong conviction, eternal watchfulness, and stout resistance of closed ranks will be required to fight and defeat the sickly sentimentalists who shed tears over a rabbit while staring in stupefaction at the epidemics of preventable diseases, which slay humankind by the hundreds of thousands, and call it a dispensation of Providence. In the imminent combat against misled ignorance and semi-instructed and opinionated fanaticism, we shall require not only universal cooperation, but also the strongest voices fit to be heard in the uproar of the battle. Such a Diomede you have secured for Philadelphia. Show us many more, so as to at least convince the mil-

lions that the world of the future should belong to man and not to rabbits, guinea-pigs, and horses.

“ We should not imagine that victory will be easy ; even an attack once repulsed affords no security. It is a pity that this should be so, but this uncertainty must be borne along with the blessings of our political and social habits, of which it is the direct result. Individual, political, and social life cannot be at rest and settled forever in a progressive community. We are used to unceasing agitation. Constant motion clears the atmosphere ; perpetual turmoil the stagnating waters of the ocean ; and it takes a restless and never-pausing circulation in protoplasm and cells to preserve the health of organic life. Thus, if we must fight, let us do so with the conviction that through fighting only in accord with what we forever see in living matter can we work out our salvation and that of mankind. It is certainly true, as the great German proclaimed, that he only earns both liberty and life who conquers them on every one of his living days.

“ I came near forgetting, however, that I am speaking before my betters, recognized masters in modern medicine, and, I trust, just as conscientious citizens of the political republic as they are leaders in that of science. There is no use carrying owls to Athens, or to speak of the duties of the medical profession to the successors of Rush and Physick. The mention of these illustrious names carries me back to where I started, to Philadelphia.

“ What shall I say of and to Philadelphia and of this grand demonstration of hers, for hers it is ? From what I know we should not be here without her having taken the initiative. It is but just that she should have done so, for indeed she is equally interested with all of us, and the gainer by far for gobbling up the guest of the evening as her own immediate property. She reminds me in part of what William Sterling in his life of Charles V says of Austria : “ *Bella gerant alii tu felix Austria nube*—let others fight, Austria makes her fortune by

marrying." So Philadelphia enriched herself by having Billings wedded to her. Still let us be just and admit that she never was a mere receiver and that he made no contract with a mean spouse. From the time of Benjamin Rush to the present, American medicine found a home and fertile cultivation in Philadelphia, and not a few of her medical citizens have been Rush's successful rivals in all his exertions and achievements. That is no mean praise if you refer to what is said of him in *A Century of American Medicine*, by Edward N. Clarke, Henry I. Bigelow, Samuel D. Gross, T. Gaillard Thomas, and J. S. Billings. In the article on 'Practical Medicine,' written by Clarke and R. H. Fitz, Benjamin Rush is called 'a devoted enthusiast in his profession, an ardent patriot, a lover of liberty, eminent as a physician, distinguished as a philosopher and a scholar, who, holding a high social position in the community, contributed largely to raise the profession of medicine in the estimation of the community in which he lived, and of the whole country.' I am anxious to add that this very day the ranks of Philadelphia's great physicians contain more than one man to whom that eulogy bestowed on Rush would be but a just tribute. Thus, while she may be envied because of her securing Billings, she offers no mean gift to the newcomer.

"And now a word about this newcomer and old friend. At the close of my remarks I mean to become quite personal and tell a story. Those who know me well are aware of my not committing many sins of that kind. I am even suspected of knowing no stories at all. But there are a few in my repertory, and their beauty consists in their being true—some of them. Now, there was a letter written fifty years ago, somewhere in South America. It bore the address, 'Alexander Humboldt, Europe.' That letter was not slow in finding the little great man in his side street in Berlin. In the same way the honored guest of the evening is called by me and all of us 'Billings,' not even Dr. Billings. Not in my

most melancholic dreams did it ever occur to me that he would condescend to descend to our level. I say our level, for I am afraid there are but few here so distinguished as not to be professors. Most of us, I fear, *are* professors, more or less. And Billings is one of us now, I am told. But I need not be told that he will remain big enough to require no title additional to that which he carried in Washington. That title was 'Billings.' And I also know that when in Europe—which, after all, is also a part of the world—and the rest of the continents, men whom we all know and revere count the very best names of all countries, one of the few will be 'Billings, of America.' ”

DR. WILLIAM OSLER, of Baltimore, being called upon, said :

“I have to make the very pleasant announcement that though Dr. Billings has left Washington, and the Army Medical Museum and that the Army Library will know him no more as we have known him there, yet his counterfeit presentment is to appear on the walls of the library. A sufficient fund has been raised to have Dr. Billings' portrait painted, and it will be presented to the Army Medical Museum.”

Dr. Osler read a letter from U. S. Surgeon-General George M. Sternberg, expressing pleasure at the fact that such a handsome sum had been raised for Dr. Billings, and that his portrait was to be painted by an artist of ability, adding that the portrait, when completed, would be gladly received.

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The Billings Testimonial and Presentation, an account of which is given in another column, was a unique and epoch-making event. To have conceived and to have carried it out will always be held by the profession as of the greatest credit on the part of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell. The heartiness of response in England and America testifies to a distinct

advance in clearness of the professional consciousness, and to a feeling most worthy of congratulation. By it all there comes to light the fact that the heroism thus celebrated and rewarded is, as we have intimated, of a unique variety, and that this is its first clear recognition. The medical literary hero has never before been known, or at least not pointed out. But in very truth is there in all the world more genuine heroism than that in which one thus toils for many years with daily persistence and against ever-recurring difficulties to lessen the labors of thousands born and unborn, and to place medical literature and medical science on a vantage-ground whence we may all better carry on the long warfare against ignorance and disease? There is just as much genius, there is often more, required and expended in collating, classifying, and fittingly presenting the work of others, than in original research or in other work called, or miscalled, "original." Assuredly our gratitude to such lonely and tireless workers should be unstinted, and on this occasion it was so. One enjoyed the delightful generosity with which Dr. Billings honored his assistants as equally worthy with himself, and that with which the principal of these assistants, Dr. Fletcher, gave back all the honor to the friend and chief. Above all was the glad and affectionate pride the goodly company had in the new hero, and the common enjoyment of the noble emotion of unselfishness and delight in professional progress. Dr. Fletcher's explicit concession to Dr. Billings of the entire honor of the conception of the *Index-Catalog* effectually disposes of any claim of the kind by another.

In view of the large number of contributors to the testimonial, rendering it difficult to make proper acknowledgment to each without much delay, Dr. Billings has asked us to assure each and all of his friends of his profound appreciation of the fact that this is the highest honor that could be given him, and to return his heartfelt thanks.—[*Ed. Comment*, MEDICAL NEWS, December 7, 1895.]