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THE BOSTON MEDICAL
LIBRARY.

BY
JAMES R. CHADWICK, M.D.,
Librarian, Boston, Mass.

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The Boston Medical Library.

THE BOSTON MEDICAL LIBRARY.

BY JAMES R. CHADWICK, M.D.,

Librarian, Boston, Mass.

In 1875, when this Library was founded, the books which a doctor needed to consult were scattered all over the city. The Society for Medical Observation had 1,000 volumes of periodicals, the Society for Medical Improvement had 500 volumes of periodicals, both kept in inaccessible places; the Treadwell Library at the Massachusetts General Hospital had 4,000 or 5,000 volumes; the Public Library 10,000 volumes. The use of the last two libraries was attended with restrictions, proper enough considering all things, but giving rise to much loss of time on the part of readers.

A number of us young men decided that the time was ripe for the formation of a medical library as an independent institution, under the control of the profession as a whole, which should bring under one roof the libraries of these two Societies and such other collections of books as could be secured. Accordingly an organization was effected, including 133 members. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes was chosen President, the writer Librarian, and Dr. E. H. Brigham, Assistant-Librarian, at a salary sufficient to command all his time. Two rooms on Hamilton Place were hired, in which were installed the libraries of the two Societies as loans.

A catalog of these was prepared, and the Librarian authorized to make a series of raids upon all the private medical libraries of Boston, the result being that at the end of three years the associates had a library of 5,000 volumes, and several thousand volumes offered, for which there was no shelf room.

Our success in bringing together a library and establishing a reading-room of current periodicals having been made evident, the Association appealed to the profession and the public for means to secure larger and permanent quarters. Our returns were so liberal that we felt warranted in purchasing the house of the late Dr. Samuel G. Howe, 19 Boylston Place; remodeling it, so as to construct a hall for the meetings of all the medical societies of the city, the books being shelved around the walls of the hall. On the second story were reading rooms, and on the third, apartments for the Assistant Librarian and his family. In this building we remained for twenty-two years with ever increasing membership and rapidly increasing number of books, especially sets of periodicals, until our accumulations of volumes and

pamphlets so far exceeded our accommodations that finally we had 10,000 volumes stored in various places where they were absolutely inaccessible to students.

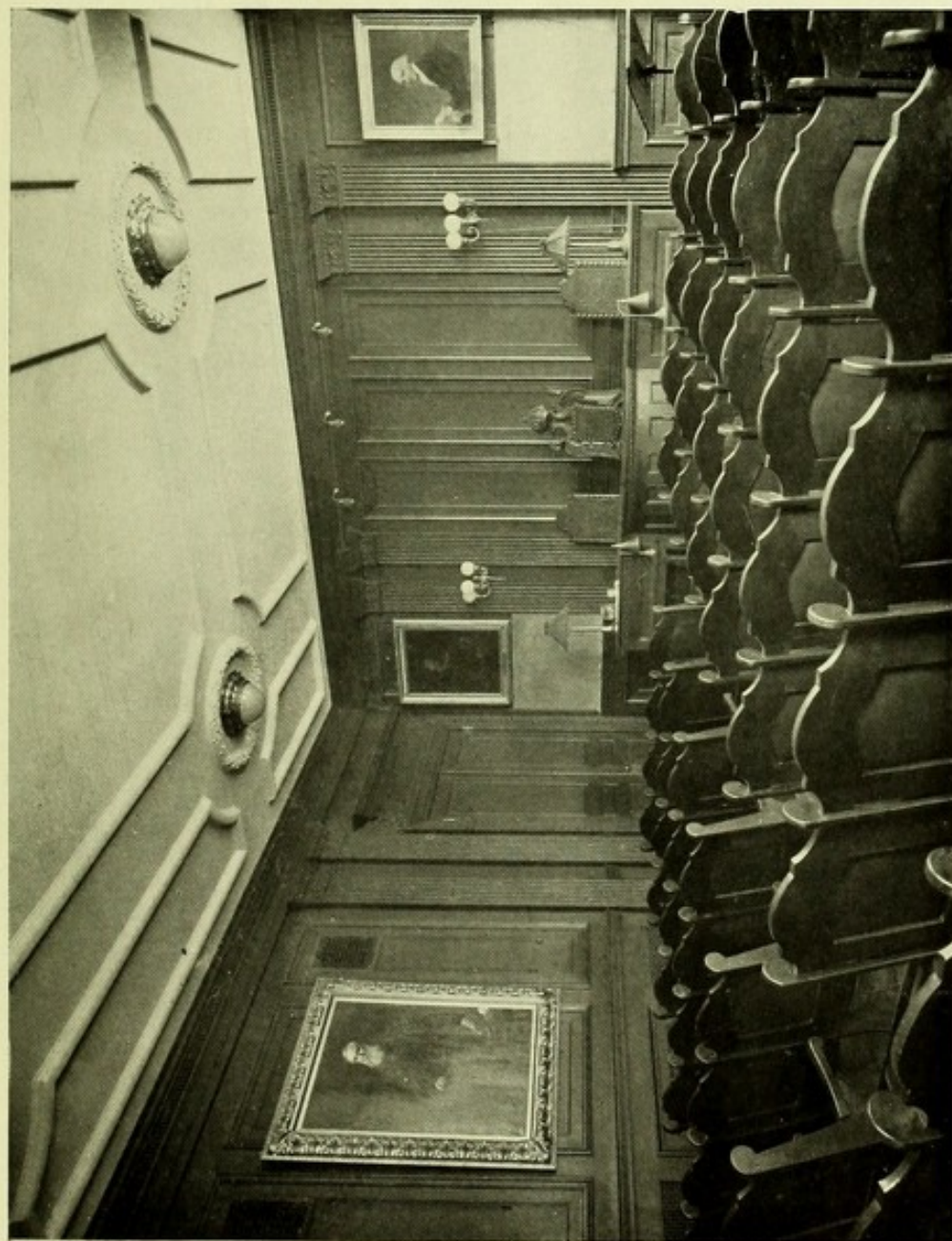
In the early nineties the inadequacy of our quarters began to be apparent and there was a movement set on foot by the officers of the Association to secure funds for better accommodations, but the panic of 1893 caused an indefinite postponement of any action.

In 1898 a band of the younger men, who felt strongly the hindrance to their studies and researches by the fact that the resources of the Library were not available, started an agitation which the governing body of the Library welcomed and fostered. At that time the Library consisted of 30,000 volumes and 26,000 pamphlets.

The result of the agitation was the uprising of the whole medical profession of Boston and its suburbs. Committees were appointed to canvass the profession and its friends for money with such good effect that within a year the sum of \$70,000 was raised by subscription which, added to the sum realized by the sale of our old building, and to other accumulated funds, gave us \$110,000 with which to secure new quarters.

With this sum in hand we purchased a lot of land, with a beautiful outlook on the city's park, The Fens, 75 feet wide by 100 feet deep at an expense of \$42,000, and put up a fireproof building which, furnished, cost \$110,000. (*See Plate 6.*) Within the last week (February 27, 1903) the Association has voted to purchase the adjoining vacant lot of 3,000 square feet to provide for future extension. The contract has been signed and the deeds will pass during the present month.

But few words are needed to elucidate the illustrations of this building. On the ground floor we have the usual cellars, furnaces, janitor's room, fireproof vault, a room in which to unpack and arrange the books and put them on a dumb-waiter which will carry them to the stacks. On the next story, entrance on the front is into an octagonal hall, with a separate entrance from the vestibule into the directory for nurses, in connection with which is a suite of rooms for the registrar for nurses. Across the hallway is a small cloak-room, a lecturer's room opening into the hall for meetings, which is 32 by 28 feet and will accommodate sixty to seventy people, a hall large enough for ordinary meetings of the medical societies. (*See Plate 7.*) We had a donation of \$5,000 from Congressman C. F. Sprague and his mother to dedi-

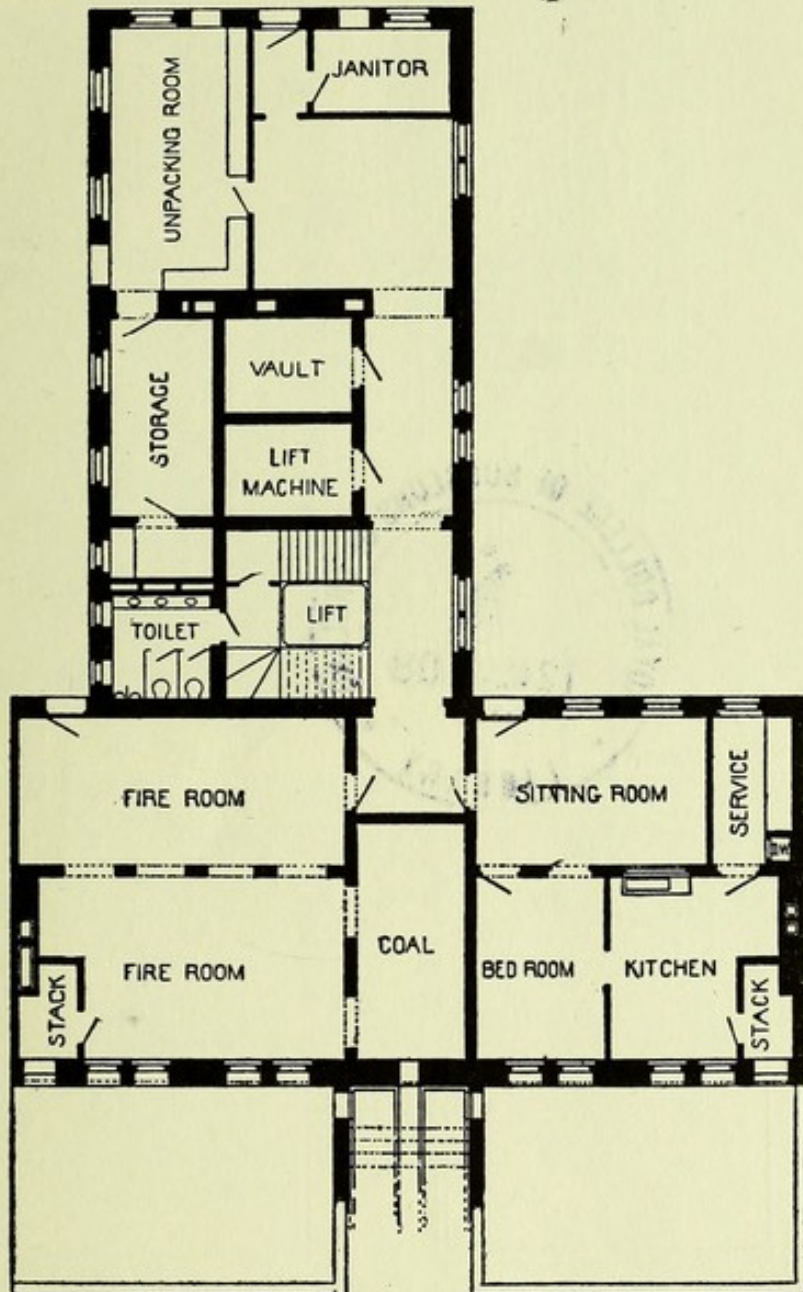


Boston Medical Library—Sprague Hall.



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cate this hall to the memory of Dr. Richard Sprague, who died in 1892. On the right of the entrance is a supper-room, with pantry and dumb-waiter from the kitchen below. There is provision for an elevator.

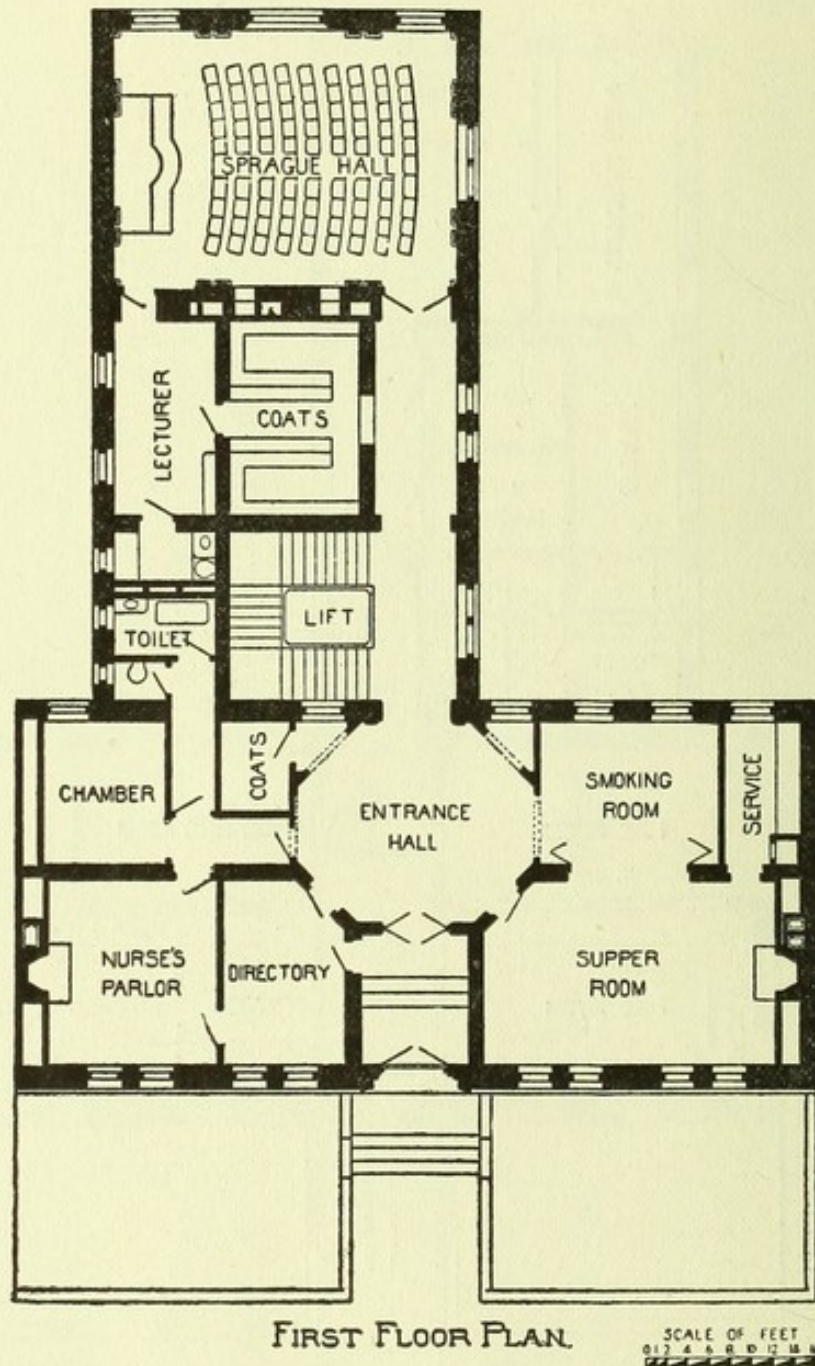


BASEMENT PLAN

SCALE OF FEET.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

On mounting the stairs you enter Holmes Hall, the principal reading-room, a portrait of Dr. O. W. Holmes over the mantel-piece at one end, and a bronze bust of him at the other end. (*See*

Plate 8.) There are alcoves of books, in each of which is a small table, where a man is partially secluded while doing his work. On the shelves are the books most in demand. The room



is 72 feet long by 32 feet deep, beautifully lighted with big windows overlooking the Fenway. Its book shelves accommodate about 6,000 volumes. To the rear is the librarian's room. The stack-room has five stories of stacks, each accommodating

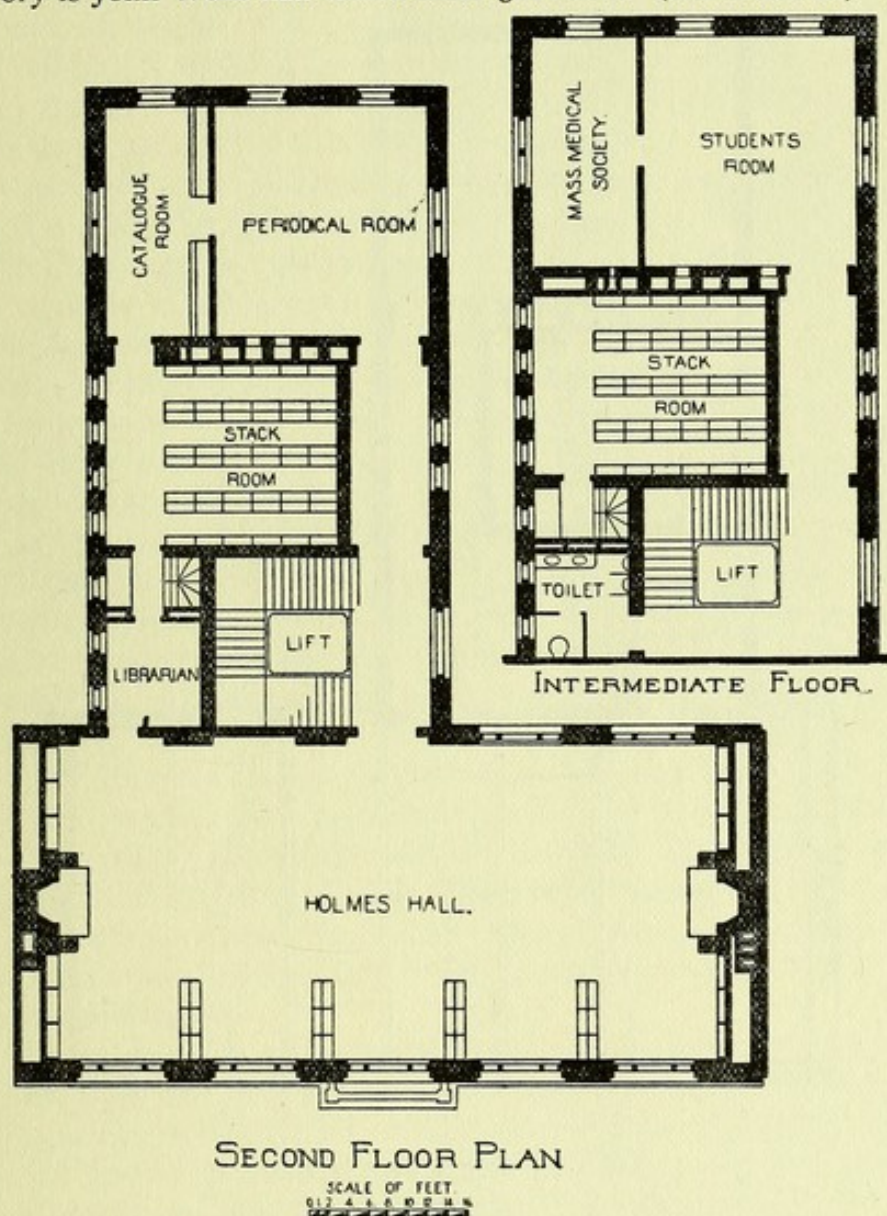


Boston Medical Library—John Ware Hall.



Boston Medical Library—Holmes Hall.

about 10,000 volumes. In the rear are the cataloger's room and a room in which the current periodicals are exposed. Half a story up are toilet-rooms, a room for medical students, and another, the Fifield Room, for committee meetings. On the next story is John Ware hall which seats 300 men. (*See Plate 8.*) In

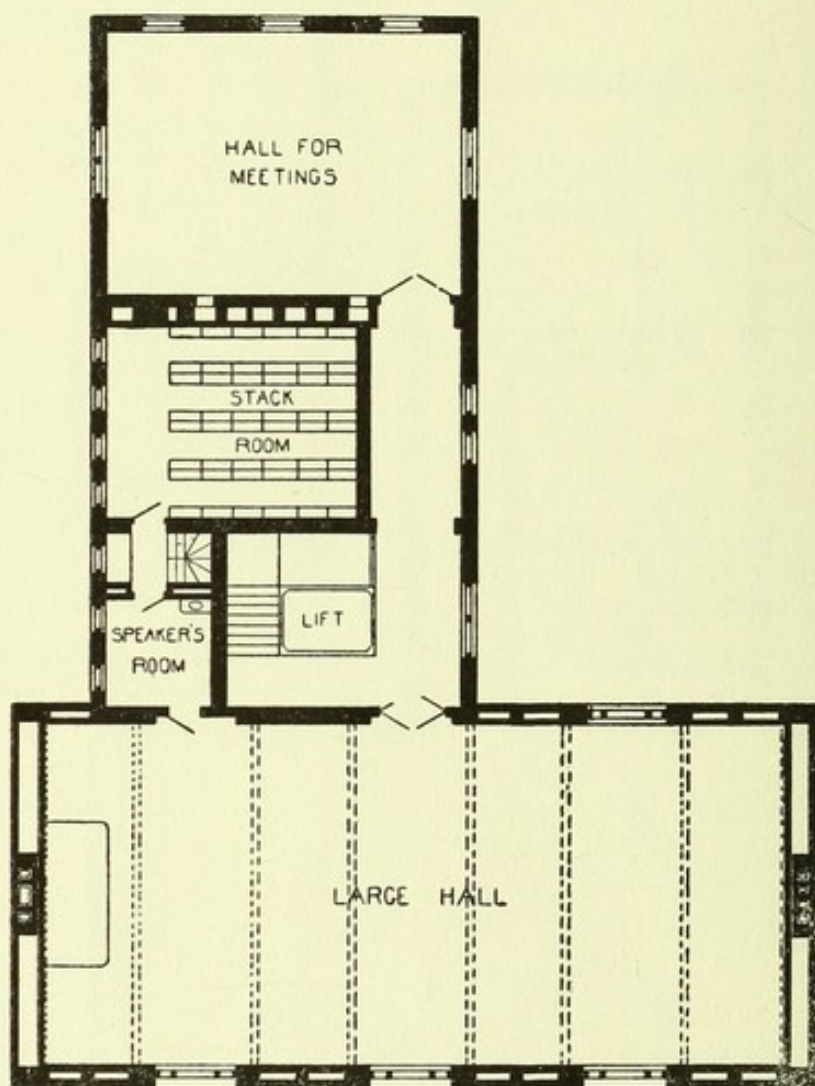


the rear is another hall of the same size as Sprague Hall, for smaller meetings.

We have a great many portraits of medical worthies by some of the best portrait painters of this day, including one of Dr. Samuel Danforth by Gilbert Stuart.

Just prior to the inauguration of this building, on January 12,

1901, the Association received from Dr. H. R. Storer of Newport, R. I., the gift of a remarkable collection of medical medals, numbering 2,300 pieces, than which there are only two larger collections in the world, that of Dr. Joseph Brettauer of Trieste, and that of the Army Medical Library in Washington. Our collec-



THIRD FLOOR PLAN

SCALE OF FEET
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tion is to be known as the Storer Collection of Medical Medals in honor of the late Dr. D. H. Storer, the father of the donor. It is exhibited on leaves, hung on hinges, round Holmes hall, by which arrangement the reverse of the medals may be freely studied. The portrait of Dr. D. H. Storer by Vinton, hangs above the card catalog case, in close proximity to the medals. Several

hundred new specimens are added to the collection annually by the original donor. Besides our library, now consisting of about 35,000 volumes (of which more than 20,000 are periodicals) and 30,000 pamphlets, we have a collection of medical autographs, numbering several thousand, and are beginning a collection of medical book-plates.

Having thus sketched in the briefest possible words the early history and present condition of the Boston Medical Library I would dwell upon a few features of our career in order to guide and stimulate other corporations who are less far advanced toward the goal for which we are all striving.

First, as regards our collection of books and periodicals, I am frequently asked how they have been procured with little if any expenditure of money. The ways were numerous, but all natural. We started with about 1,500 volumes loaned to us by the two Societies above mentioned; with a list of these I personally visited every physician in town who was known to have a considerable library, and from these I solicited, and usually obtained, such as I wanted. From these sources I increased the library so that, at the end of the second year it numbered 6,000 volumes. The editors of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* have given us for twenty-seven years the journals received by them in exchange, by which liberal succor we have been able to lay before our readers an abundance of current literature without expense to us. Of course a limited number of journals had to be secured by subscription to insure prompt delivery. The same course has been followed by the editors of the *Annals of Gynecology and Pediatrics* since its foundation in 1887. From instrument-makers and drug firms we have from time to time received the accumulations of journals which they received gratuitously because of their advertisements.

As soon as we had made it evident that we were meeting a long-felt want and were to be a permanency, we began to receive, as gifts or on deposit, the libraries of other associations, the Gynecological Society of Boston, the Boston Dispensary, the Roxbury Athenæum; more recently the library of the Harvard Medical School, exclusive of such volumes as were reserved for use in connection with its several laboratories; the medical department of the Harvard College Library in Cambridge, etc.

All the medical journal clubs, which subscribe for and circulate current periodicals among their members turn them over to us when they have made the circuit.

Very soon we began to receive, as bequests or gifts of surviving relatives, the libraries of all deceased physicians, among the most important of which I would mention those of Dr. Edward H. Clarke, Dr. John E. Tyler, Dr. George C. Shattuck, Dr. Edward Jarvis, Dr. Calvin Ellis, Dr. R. W. Hooper, Dr. Samuel Cabot, Dr. John O. Greene, Dr. F. H. Hooper, Dr. T. B. Curtis, Dr. Edward Wigglesworth, Dr. O. W. Holmes, Dr. A. M. Sumner, Dr. W. C. B. Fifield, Dr. Edward Jacob Forster and many others.

The completeness of our files of journals and transactions is largely due to a "want book," which has gone through three editions in manuscript, wherein, upon the left hand page, is entered the title of every periodical of which we have any part, while on the opposite page is entered every volume or number needed to complete the file. By invariably carrying this with me upon my travels in this country and Europe, I have been able gradually, at a trifling expenditure of money, or by exchange with other libraries, to complete the files of all the leading periodicals of the world.

Our aim has been to devote all our energy, and such small sums of money as could be spared from current expenses, to the department of periodicals as being the class of literature most in demand, especially since the publication of the *Index Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon General's Office*, the *Index Medicus* and the *Bibliographia Medica*. We have over 20,000 volumes of periodicals as contrasted with 15,000 books, not including our duplicate library for home circulation, which numbers 3,000 to 4,000 volumes of the principal periodicals.

Finally, as to finances. For the first three years we depended upon the annual dues of 133 members at the outset and gradually increasing. In 1878 we raised by subscription over \$10,000 with which we bought the house, 19 Boylston Place, remodeled it and found ourselves with a mortgage of \$8,000, which was paid off three years later. In 1879 we established a Directory for Nurses from which there has been an annual profit of from \$2,000 to \$4,000. Since our removal to Boylston Place we have leased our halls to various medical societies for their meetings from which the revenue has been from \$1,000 to \$1,200 a year. Finally, in 1898-1899 we raised by subscription \$70,000 with which we built, and moved into the present building, finding ourselves with a mortgage of \$25,000 on which the interest is to be met for five years by seventy of the younger members, and a second mortgage of

\$22,000. This year we have assumed another mortgage of \$24,000 for the purpose of purchasing the adjoining lot of 3,000 square feet and holding it for future development. A few funds, varying from \$300 to \$1,500 in memory of deceased members, the interest of which is devoted to the purchase of books, complete the list of our assets.

Our membership now consists of 6 life members compounding the annual dues by a single payment of \$150, 410 active members paying \$10 yearly and 159 associate members paying \$5 yearly.

We have the utmost faith in the future, based on reasonable expectations, of being able to meet the obligations which we have assumed, in the near future. Last year's income from all sources amounted to over \$10,000 and our expenses exceeded that sum by only \$200.

P. S.—Our faith is shown to have been well founded, by the official announcement made, while these pages have been going through the press, that our Library is a beneficiary, under the will of the late Robert C. Billings, to the extent of \$50,000.—Boston, March 21, 1903.

