

OUR HOSPITALS.*

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The evolution of the hospital—including the growth and development of hospital work—has, in recent years, been so rapid and so far-reaching that comparatively few people in or out of the profession realize that these institutions have already become one of the most potential factors in progressive medicine, and that the time is not far distant when they may exercise an influence over the destiny of medicine greater than all others combined.

Originally intended by their benevolent founders simply as temporary homes where the sick poor might secure proper medical care and nursing, the peculiar advantages of hospital appliances, methods and nursing soon became favorably known to all classes; good men early became identified with the enterprise; medical students sought these places for clinical instruction; people of means contributed to their support and the hospital enterprise continued to grow in prosperity and usefulness.

Hospital boards and the general public, who have been content to measure this prosperity and usefulness by the number of patients treated, the lives saved, and suf-

* Read before the Western Surgical and Gynecological Association, Chicago, Dec. 17 and 18, 1901.

ferings mitigated in a given period, are well satisfied with the results and see no occasion for changes in methods or purpose. Such an estimate is manifestly inadequate, since the largest and best part of a hospital's good work can not be thus computed or even comprehended by the non-professional mind.

Even the profession as a whole, each member of which employs in his daily practice, methods of diagnosis, means of treatment, operative procedures, bacteriologic and microscopic data, and statistical information derived directly from the hospital, is prone to underestimate the power the hospital possesses as a promoter of medical progress or the good it accomplishes in the cultivation of a spirit of scientific investigation and in furthering the efforts of good men to advance medicine. It has been said, and I think truly, that if we as physicians should forget all the knowledge gained by the past fifty years of hospital achievements, medicine would be set back at least a quarter of a century, while to eliminate the hospital's influence upon progressive medicine for the next fifty years and depend upon individual work alone would mean the return of empiricism.

The general practitioner who is, has been, and I trust always will be, regarded the highest type of physician, and who comes into contact with the largest proportion of human sickness and suffering, must now confess his dependence upon his hospital colleagues, or fail in doing his full duty to his patients. It is preposterous for any one individual to claim to be able to attend to a large practice, keep himself in touch with the best thoughts in general medicine, surgery, and the several specialties, and perfect himself in bacteriology, microscopy, hematology, x-ray work, pathology, and certain unusual operative procedures, and at the same time conduct the laboratory work incidental to such a practice.

He might, if quite frank, confess further that it is from his association with these workers in their special fields, his acquaintance with their methods and lines of thought, and the original researches and discoveries made in their laboratories, that he receives a large part of his practical knowledge and skill and his greatest inspiration to advance in his professional studies and work.

This is distinctly an age when great combinations of special forces rule the world, control all its enterprises, and govern the destinies of every undertaking of any magnitude. In medicine there is to-day a greater need for an exhibition of this same progressive spirit of the times than ever before. We must combine our special forces if we are to meet the necessities of the new existing conditions. For now as never before, it is apparent that our next great advances are to come from and will be dependent upon those researches, experiments, investigations and studies that can be prosecuted only where an abundance of clinical material and painstaking laboratory work are associated; where the clinician and operator can be in the closest touch with the bacteriologist, microscopist and pathologist; where the practical conclusions of the experienced man may be fairly compared with the theoretical deductions of the recent graduate; where the views of the skilled specialist and the general physician and surgeon are broadened by frequent consultations; where trained assistants and needed equipments are provided and it is possible to have accurate records kept and reliable statistics compiled. This combination is essential to our future progress as well as to our present efficiency, and can be pro-

vided only in our hospitals and through the labors of such hospital workers as are willing to concentrate their thoughts and limit their efforts to a narrow part of the great field of medicine, and leave to the general practitioner and family physician the wider and more practical application of the sum of their united labors.

It is very evident to the minds of medical men familiar with the situation that the methods and management that have served our hospitals so well when their purpose was limited to the care of the sick within their walls will not suffice if our hospitals are to meet our present needs and fulfill their possibilities as a great system of scientific institutions distributed throughout this country, where not only the favored few but the whole profession with all the sick intrusted to their care may feel the results and participate in the benefits. It is not enough that our hospital authorities provide and equip rooms where a promiscuous assemblage of physicians may be permitted to occupy their leisure moments trying to sustain the scientific reputation of their institution by unsystematic and irregular work.

We need to be as methodic, discriminating and earnest in our efforts to establish and maintain a truly scientific institution as those who control and direct our other institutions of learning. Our needs are somewhat similar and quite as great; and it is fair to presume that if much the same methods were applied with equal judgment the results would be as satisfactory.

Viewed from this standpoint, the staff would also be the faculty; the departments would be transformed into definite and distinct realities, each presided over by a member of the staff, who would be a specialist. The positions would be filled by men selected less on account of their personal popularity and more because of their proficiency in particular lines and devotion to certain branches. The size of the hospital staff would be reduced to conform to its actual needs as a scientific institution, for upon its standing as such, more than the bulky size of its staff, the hospital would depend for a following. The staff perfectly adjusted to the hospital's requirements would bring a harmony of action, a unity of purpose, and a general effectiveness not conspicuous in the large unwieldy staffs of to-day.

So long as a hospital measures its own usefulness by the number of patients treated, the standing of each member of the staff will be estimated largely by the size of his personal following; and the commercial spirit will rule both the institution and the individual to the exclusion or great detriment of scientific work. It so happens that many hospital men are engaged in special lines of study and investigation that prevent their attracting or attending many patients; yet the immediate and remote results of their work may be of the utmost importance to progressive medicine. These men deserve and should receive every encouragement; and it is manifestly unfair that their positions, income or professional standing should be dependent upon the number of patients they bring to the hospital. One of the effects of introducing the educational feature into our hospitals would be a more equitable adjustment of credit and remuneration, so that the laboratory worker as well as the operator would be fairly appreciated and compensated.

Our hospital statistics are already quite an important factor in medical literature, but with the scientific spirit prevailing over the commercial, the records of the work and achievements of these institutions might, and I

believe would, exercise an influence upon medical thought greater than all others combined.

But the fixing of a new purpose upon an old institution under the control of kind and well-meaning friends, who are content with the old aims and distrustful of the new, will require something more than college methods or college training. The medical profession can not reasonably expect to have much of a voice in this or any other reform measure until they revolutionize their present business policy and methods.

The prevailing ideas deprive them of not only the proper recognition and the adequate pecuniary recompense, but of the legitimate influence that justly belongs to the faithful and effective work of a learned profession. For this unfortunate state of affairs we can blame only our own defective business foresight and tact, since for years we have been educating and drilling the people to think lightly of our work, our comfort and our aspirations.

In the most prosperous country in the world, where the public is abundantly able to bear all its burdens, even to caring for its sick poor, the members of the medical profession, in and out of the hospital, have at all times, with and without provocation, held themselves up as shining targets for the impecunious, the mean-spirited and the unscrupulous to practice their impositions upon. They have sought out and assumed unnecessary responsibilities and cares without pay or reward. When in need of public or legislative aid they have intuitively and invariably attached themselves to the side of the minority. Individually and collectively they have rarely missed an opportunity to demonstrate their business incapacity. For many years the business methods of the profession have apparently served but one useful purpose, viz., as an example for the youth of our country to shun; and it is a significant fact that the only organization to-day that has thought well enough of these methods to adopt them is the Salvation Army.

Is not the physician who gives \$25,000 worth of his services to the hospital entitled to the same consideration as the rich benevolent layman who donates his \$25,000 in cash? Should not the ten physicians who thus contribute \$250,000 receive the same recognition that is accorded the multi-millionaire whose gift of a quarter of a million costs him no real sacrifice of time or enjoyment? Fairly estimated, do not our services justly entitle us to a voice in all professional questions in and out of the hospital, second to none, even to that of those benevolent individuals, charitable organizations or religious societies that founded these institutions?

If we are ever to secure this voice—and we need it now—we must formulate and adopt a business code that shall not only meet the highest requirements of the ethics of the profession but at the same time command the respect and win the confidence and support of this twentieth century public.

It must be admitted that a very considerable majority of the profession is not in close sympathy with our hospitals at present, and not a few are disposed to regard these institutions as the abiding place of a favored few where the outside physician may contribute much and get little in return. Awaiting a fair and amicable adjustment of these differences, imaginary and real, and the securing of the cordial coöperation of the united profession, all these physicians and their patients are deprived of available hospital advantages, of which they are in the greatest need, and our hospi-

tals are denied the very support most essential to their greatest success. In deciding such cases—and they should be decided—the common interests of the many should outweigh the individual interest of the few, and each of us should be willing to make any reasonable sacrifice or concession in the interests of our profession, our patients and our institutions.

Time will not permit our dwelling upon the many obstacles that threaten to retard the advance of our hospitals to the exalted position they can and should occupy, but among the most important questions that call for solution may be mentioned:

1. How shall the financial and professional relations between our hospital men and our general practitioners be adjusted so that all may be interested in the welfare and participate in the benefits of specialized hospital work?

2. Is there any good reason why our hospital men and hospital authorities—sheltered as they are behind a strong combination—should be exempt from the application of the same "Code of Medical Ethics" that governs the conduct of the profession generally?

3. Is the general practitioner to have any place in the hospital of the future?

4. Is the specialist of the future to have any place out of the hospital?

5. Do we not need more hospitals and fewer colleges; better doctors and fewer graduates?

6. In the present state of our knowledge, when the life and health of our patients so often depend upon special knowledge and skill or nursing, is any physician justified in assuming the responsibilities of a general practice except he be in touch with some hospital or hospital worker?

7. In view of the important relations our hospitals are destined to hold with progressive medicine, is it not about time the professional mind began to dominate in the control of these institutions?

These are a few of the many questions that are suggested to the minds of all who thoughtfully consider the hospital work of the past and present and are led to appreciate the marvelous possibilities of the future.

The object of this paper is not to volunteer instruction, but to arouse, if possible, a more active interest in an institution that promises with our aid to become one of the most influential elements in the medical world—its labors, its literature, its thought, its discoveries and its advances.

"How are our hospitals to meet the needs of modern medicine?" is, to my mind, the most important question before the profession to-day. I am quite aware that its satisfactory solution will not be the work of a day, nor of a single individual, nor of any clique or society of physicians; but I do believe that the medical profession as a whole, if united and determined, can decide upon and dictate an answer that should render the achievements of this twentieth century the most memorable in the history of medicine.