A SUGGESTION TO THE MEDICAL LIBRARIANS.

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It is a popular notion that librarians lead a very easy life, exempt from much of the care, labor and trouble that attend most pursuits of the rest of mankind, and often it is questioned if they are required to spend much study and preparation for the practice of their profession. Even the sophisticated have been heard to declare the lot of the librarian to be that of the favored in a world where it is a privilege as well as profit to be in the ranks of the "laboring man." Of course, what constitutes a liberal education is largely a matter of opinion, but the librarian is a specialist, and specialism in any department of the world's work presupposes laborious preparation, and it is no castle of indolence the student enters when he commences the study and handling of medical bibliography.

Having enjoyed the benefits attendant upon service for a quarter of a century in one of the most useful and favored of libraries, I am going to take a few minutes of your time to make a suggestion that has impressed itself on my consciousness, as a result of my ex-

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perience. Our library schools have a very efficient method of preparing graduates for the practice of their profession in the field of general literature to which the majority are called, and given the natural gifts of grouchlessness and tact, they deliver to their clients the best of service. But in the special branches of scientific study, medicine holds a unique place, and in the education for this field of library work, the library school has not gone very far. The eminent English lawyer, Sir William Blackstone, has aptly said, "The medical profession stands pre-eminent for general and extensive knowledge." For the attainment of this exalted position, the doctor has studied and travelled the wide world over. He has gathered seeds, stems, leaves, roots, stones, waters—and experimented with these elementary bases and classified a mass of instructions, observations and results, that are marvelous to contemplate. The doctor is the great wizard, at the wave of whose wand his drug imps work the wonders of the modern world. Here a disordered heart beats wildly and lo! a little elf from a leaf of fox-glove holds its stroke. Here writhes a victim of remorseless pain, and behold! a foggy little elf floats from a bottle and breathes a mist which melts the rack of pain. Here swells a loathsome wave of small-pox, of which the tiny drop from the pock of a cow stems the tide. With a cosmopolitan spirit every genuine physician views the general advancement of medical science. Limited by no boundaries of geographical range and confined within no dogmas of sect, he holds communion of thought with every true cultivator of the healing art wherever he may be found, under whatever clime he breathes his native air, and by whatever social institutions he may be surrounded. To minister to and assist this wonderful wizard is, then, the privilege of the medical librarian. He must be able to furnish a large part of the ammunition in the warfare against disease. Since the father of modern medicine, our great Hippocrates, established his school at Cos, the world of literature has been collecting the recorded results of learned observers, forming what might be broadly considered a collective cyclopaedia of the practice of medicine. With the roll of time it became necessary to differentiate for research along certain lines for experiment, so that now, even the stripes of tulips and the colors of butterflies' wings are become subjects of scientific classification. In the early history of the world, the doctor was a very poorly equipped workman, but by various evolutions in the domain of thought and action, the present may be characterized as the epoch of rational teaching in medicine. And one of the elements that has contributed to raise medicine to the high position it now enjoys is the medical library, with the opportunity it affords for the investigation of various phenomena in the descriptions of recorded cases of diseases, as well as the essential rules laid down for the effects of remedies through experimental and clinical methods. Therefore, as we are living in an age when time-

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saving is the great necessity in the helping of our wizard—the doctor, it is the privilege of the librarian to be his leader in what often proves to be his "Court of last resort." The range of information demanded travels from a description of the interposition operation, all the way down to how many minims in a teaspoonful. However, one does not need to know the difference between a Centigrade and Fahrenheit thermometer, but to be able to place the recorded description at once, before the reader. In the investigations our wizard makes in his various experiments, he is frequently impressed with what seems an entirely new method of procedure. It is one of the almost daily occurrences of the medical library to—alas for the hopes of the investigator—discover prior description of his identical idea. Only a few weeks ago I was able to show one of our Western Army Majors, who had come to the Library to read, the first dissertation on appendicitis, by James Parkinson, in 1812, the wonderful Bibliography on that subject, collected by the late Dr. Edebohls, in which was a reference antedating Parkinson by seventy-three years,—Lieberkuhn, J. N., De valvula coli et usa processus vermiculaus. Lugdini Bat., 1739. This was in Latin, however, and on referring to Dr. Garrison's masterpiece, on medical history, we discovered his reference to read, "the first dissertation in English." Now the suggestion I have to make to this body, is that of giving to the library students in this country the privilege of a certain number of days or weeks of observation and study in our large medical libraries, with a series of lectures by some member of the medical library staff, to the graduating class of the library school. The demands made for information of every kind, make it necessary that librarians be made familiar with the sort of books to consult for specific kinds of material. Of course it will be argued that a library is only as good as its catalogue. But I think every librarian here had a request from Dr. Jayne, of Denver, for a picture of that elusive little god in medicine, known as Dhanwantari. And no catalogue produced the whereabout of his anatomy. It was reserved for the humble, much-dispised pamphlet in the form of a quasi advertisement for tabloids, that had in its historical preface (the reason for its preservation) a picture of Dhanwantari. We have tried in our library the study period for library students and find it very satisfactory, using in addition to the regular prescribed methods, which we all know and follow, certain experiences that have been met in our library. For instance, a man one day came in, in a rather perturbed state of mind, having been dubbed by his fellow clerks a candidate for the funny house, as he expressed himself. Said he, "Now I have read somewhere that it is possible to accustom the soles of the feet to great heat, and that a certain baker in Edinburgh had an oven in which the men were wont to walk in their bare feet to deposit the bread for baking. I have got to find that statement." After producing a treatise on the effect of

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heat for his edification, I started for the stack room to think. My mental processes produced only one possibility out of what seemed the whole army corps of possible references, and that you doubtless all have heard—"When in doubt, consult Carpenter." And behold, in Carpenter's physiology was a description of that very feat of feet. After being in the library for about twenty-five minutes, the erstwhile candidate for the funny house departed with a sardonic grin, and the profusion of his thanks was a direct ratio of the spleen to be vented on the ridiculing confreres, now however, quite on the wrong side of the fence.

Besides, the medical librarian has the opportunity frequently of rectifying mistakes in priority, and placing the credit for an operation or a disease with the one entitled to it. As, for instance, in the subject known as "Perthes' disease." In cataloguing recently a reprint on "Legg's disease," by Dr. Ely, from Annals of Surgery for January, 1919, I read his description of Dr. Legg's reference to the clinical symptoms of this disease, with the observation by Dr. Ely that half-hearted efforts had been made to give Dr. Legg due credit, but without success. In our catalogue at the present time, all the references on this topic are listed under Legg's disease with a cross reference—"Perthes' disease" see: "Legg's disease."

The Library students acquire in their periodic study in our libraries, points of administration that result in useful application in every field of research, and the war has taught the American doctor that he is quite as capable of producing Jahrbücher, Centralblätter and Referate, as our enemies across the Atlantic, and we shall soon begin doing it too. The American Medical Association is the pioneer, and we hope soon to see all the specialities follow. Now it is perfectly obvious that the medical library will be a very decided element in this rehabilitation of our bibliographical industry, and therefore there must be more of us. Owing to the multitude of authors who have written upon medicine, in every age which has possessed a literature, the number of cardinal ideas, distinctive methods or principles has not been great, making it a vital problem with the medical librarian to aid in the search for literature, since no investigation should be made that ignores the work others have already recorded.

It is said that the science of medicine is amenable to four distinct yet mutually related and closely united means for its progress: The first is, preliminary education; the second, medical colleges; the third, clinical instruction, and the fourth, medical literature. The last means it is our privilege, as librarians to foster, and we must not neglect to prepare to "Carry on."

"Be then our thrilling war cry for the human race
Not for ourselves alone, our friends, our homes,
But for our fellow men beneath Heaven's wide spread dome."

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