

Wilson
J.C.

COPY OF ADDRESS BY DR. J. C. WILSON

AT THE FAREWELL DINNER IN NEW YORK IN RESPONSE TO THE
TOAST - "DR. OSLER IN PHILADELPHIA, TEACHER AND CLINICIAN."

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Gentlemen, Friends of Dr. Osler: Mr. Toastmaster:

In the face of this program I cannot express surprise at being called upon to address you, nor can I indulge in the ancient apologies for lack of preparation for an unexpected honor. I may say to you, however, in confidence that for some weeks I have wondered why I was selected for this purpose and what I am expected to say. During this time I have often thought of the country minister who, finding himself somewhat ahead of his congregation, started to pray in the empty church with much fervor and in a loud voice for force. As he was about concluding one of his deacons, coming in, said to him "Parson, you are praying for the wrong thing; you don't want force, you want ideas".

We cannot think of Dr. Osler in Philadelphia without thinking of him before he came to us and since he left us. His whole previous career was a preparation for his work there; his half decade of work there was, it now seems, a necessary period of training for the great decade and a half at Johns Hopkins, and the rounded half century since he left off knickerbockers a complete and progressive course of development and preparation on this side of the Atlantic for the crowning period of an illustrious life upon the other side. No part of it could have been left out.

Shakespeare's "Home keeping youth are ever dull of wit" has the fault of most sweeping generalizations. It is true, they mostly are. But not always. It depends upon the home. Populations have left New England, but who ever heard of anyone leaving Boston? Yet

the Boston wit retains the old flavor. From most other places the bright spirits migrate. It has been said that the test of the true American is the impulse to move on. If this be true, Dr. Osler is the very type of an American. And the remarkable thing is that the further he moves the more he is missed. There is no authentic record of the state of mind of that settlement of Ontario which he left in early infancy nor of the nature of the repast by which his departure was celebrated. But when he left Toronto there were tears and sorrow and something to eat, and when he left Montreal, the same with singing, and when he took his departure from Philadelphia we had emotions which we could not suppress, together with terrapin and champagne; and now that he is going to leave the country there is universal sorrow and the largest medical dinner ever cooked. Yet there he sits, the embodiment of that imperturbability which he has so charmingly described as a medical accomplishment, but which we know to be essential to the mental make-up of a peripatetic philosopher.

I may be permitted to speak of Dr. Osler in Philadelphia from two points of view. First, the influence of our quiet Quaker life upon him, and second, his influence upon us.

First, then, we at once sought to make a practitioner of him. But of that he would have none. Teacher, clinician, consultant, yes, gladly; but practitioner --no! and that with emphasis. This was partly due to his knowledge of affairs, partly to his temperament. One star differeth from another star in glory. His light was to be bright and guiding and seen of all men. Not for him the dim and shaded light of the sick room, the patient daily service to the weary sufferer,

the tiresome round of daily calls, the vexatious failure of the approved method to accomplish the desired result. He recognized his metier and carried out his plan. And this gave him time and opportunity and of both he made supreme use.

To an institution traditions are what character is to a man. The traditions of the University of Pennsylvania deeply impressed him. Morgan, Shippen, Kuhn, Rush, Caspar Wistar were to him living personalities. His actual associates were such men as Agnew, Stille, Leidy, Pepper and others whom we all know. The lives and characters of these men were not without influence upon the young Canadian, trained in the best way by association with men like Bovell, Howard and Ross and familiar with the best methods and results of British and Continental Medicine.

Not less important was his connection with the College of Physicians, with its cherished traditions and magnificent library. Nor is the part played by the Pathological Society to be overlooked. Here he brought his best work, the result of long and keen study, illustrated by the findings in the post mortem room at Blockley, and always met in large measure the sympathy and admiration of the younger men.

So from point to point during the five years he was with us, at the best period of his life he found the stimulus of tradition, of opportunity and of appreciation.

What did he do for us? He made himself agreeable to the older men and demonstrated to the younger men how medicine should be learned and taught. He broadened our conceptions in regard to the inductive method in medicine. Facts, facts, always the facts. The facts of the ward, of the microscope, of the laboratory, of the post mortem room. He made it clear to some of the younger men who are now

reaping the reward of their work that it is not necessary for every man to be a practitioner in the ordinary sense, but that long years of hospital and laboratory work constitute a better equipment for the teacher and consultant. He inspired his students with enthusiasm for letters and taught them the rare rewards that come of searching the medical scriptures. He showed that in the democracy of our profession any man is free by a principle of self selection to attain the most coveted post of distinction and honor. He pointed out not only to us but to all men how fine and noble the profession of medicine is for those in it who are fine and noble.

He ornamented his discourse with quaint allusions to Holy Writ and The Pilgrim's Progress but did not in those days say much about Montaigne and the Religio Medici and rarely alluded to Plato or Marcus Aurelius. Nevertheless he helped some of us to do a little thinking.

At length after the fashion of the nautilus he builded a more stately mansion and left us. We would have fain kept him. But that could not be. Without him the Department of Clinical Medicine at Johns Hopkins, mother of many teachers, might have been childless.

The Old World has given to the New many and great physicians. But these gifts have been returned not so much in number as in kind. The father of Brown-Sequard was a Philadelphian. Marion Sims passed many years and did much of his best work in London and Paris, and now to the list is added another imperishable name.

I asked a bit ago who ever heard of anyone leaving Boston. There is one famous case -- a Boston boy who became the greatest American. There are points of resemblance between that great philosopher and this great physician. In both are manifest vigor of body

and intellect, untiring energy, unflagging interest in things and men, many-sided knowledge with the wisdom to use it, that quality known as personal magnetism and the gift of leadership. Philadelphia is fortunate to have been the home of Franklin and the abiding place of Osler.

There are many things that I could say of Dr. Osler, were he not here, that I will not say in his presence. What we leave unsaid he must take for granted. When we are deeply moved we do not say the things that is next our heart. We take refuge in commonplaces, in persiflage. It is an Anglo-Saxon, an American trait. I speak not as a Philadelphian but as an American when I say that it is a good thing for us that he came among us. Not only by precept but also by example has he been an uplifting influence in our professional life. How far reaching that influence is this company attests. There are men here who have crossed a continent to break bread with him tonight. The course of that influence is to be sought not merely in his accomplishments as a physician, not in his learning, not in his wisdom, not even in his well-balanced and buoyant temperament, but in that basic principle which all recognize but none can define, which for want of a descriptive name we call character. It is character that tells and to character all things are added.

Now that he is going away we note that he has a trait that so many of us lack -- greatness in little things--method, system, punctuality, order, the economical use of time. These have been the handmaids to his greater gifts. These have enabled him to widen his usefulness to lands beyond the seas.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings".