

Remarks Blue Hill Memorial

Hospital

3 pm. Sunday, June 18, 1978

President Goodyear, Members of the Staff, friends
of the Blue Hill Memorial Hospital:

Much as I appreciate this fine hospital, much as I rejoice in its new surgical wing, confident as I am of its surgical staff, I appear here today, reluctantly and with some trepidation. The last time I appeared officially at the dedication of a public facility, I resolved never to do so again. In 1928, there swept through the Scandinavian community where I lived in Minnesota, a wave of enthusiasts for ski jumping. I agreed to become the secretary of the Rock County Ski Club. We ~~raised the money~~ ^{built} ~~we built~~ a slide and ~~constructed it~~ on a high hill near the town of Luverne. The day to dedicate the jump arrived. The Board decided the officers would initiate it. When we reached the site, and I looked up at that tall tower, that long slide, ending in mid-air, I realized at once that my enthusiasm had far outrun my judgment. The treasurer had more enthusiasm. He fortified himself with a half-pint of Old Crow, climbed up the ladder to the platform, strapped on his skis, and started down the slide. He stayed upright until he left the slide and sailed off into space. Thereafter, he landed on the slope. In the words of Josh Billings ^{on} at the skating rink, ~~one~~ ^{one} foot took off southeast, and the other Northwest. Before he reached the foot of the

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slope, I departed the premises.

It has been difficult to get me to participate in the dedication of anything, ever since, *and* I wish to hereby, and herewith, advise President Goodyear, and the staff, that notwithstanding the great respect I have for the Surgical Wing of the Blue Hill Hospital, I do not intend to embrace the *privilege* ~~of~~ of being the first to use it, if I am offered the honor of initiating ^{it} ~~the facility~~.

An occasion such as this presents the opportunity of reminding ourselves of how complacently we accept progress in our society. The services of an excellent institution or profession are utilized as commonplace. I remember dropping into the Blue Hill garage one day when the hangers-on were having their customary philosophical discussions. One asked the other if he had watched the broadcast of the moon-landings the night before. The answer was that he had not done so. "hucks", he said, "they've done that two or three times already". Today's miracle becomes tomorrow's commonplace.

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To Americans, at the time of the nation's birth, this hospital would have seemed a miracle. Its like could not have been found anywhere in the United States, or in the world. Medical care, in that age, as a matter of fact, was ~~not only~~ primitive, but, ~~by today's standards, completely inadequate.~~

One of the foremost doctors of the American Revolution was Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia, who became the first surgeon general of the Revolutionary Army. On February 1, 1788, he wrote to General ~~Ex~~ Nathan ~~ael~~ Green to ~~say~~ ^{say} that he had found ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ a way of ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ annihilating the British

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Army. "I have made a discovery", he wrote, "a sure method of destroying Howe's whole army without powder or ball or without any of the common implements of death. Lead them through any of the villages in Lancaster county wher⁴we have a hospital, and I will ensure you that in 6 weeks there shall not be a man of them alive or ~~xxx~~ fit for duty".

In a letter to General George Washington, on December 26, 1777, he wrote:

"There cannot be a greater calamity for a sick man than to come into our hospital at this season of the year. Old disorders are prolonged, and new ones contracted among us. This last is so much the case that ~~x~~ I am safe when I assert that a great majority of those who die under our hands perish from diseases caught in our hospitals".

John Bach Mc Master, in his ~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{published} History of the United States, in the 1880's, had a remarkable passage on what medical care was like in the 18th century. The education of doctors was limited. He also wrote:

"Remedies now in the medicine box of every farmer were utterly unknown. Water was denied the patient with fever, and, in its stead, he was given small quantities of clam-juice. Mercurial compounds were taken till the lips turned blue and the ^ggums fell away from the ~~teeth~~. The damsel who fained ^t was bled profusely. Cupping and leaching were freely prescribed. The ^aalkloid quinia ~~was~~ unknown until 1820. The only cure for malar^lial disease ~~was~~ powdered cinchona bark; but the amount required was so great, and the supply so small, that the remedy was all but useless. Vaccination was not made known by Jenner until 1798. Small-pox was as prevelent as pneuminia now is.

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The discovery of anaesthesia by the inhalation of ether or chloroform was not given to the world by Morton until 1846. Not one of the many remedies which assuage pain, which destroy disease, which hold in check the most loathsome maladies ~~WERE~~ and most violent epidemics, was in use. Every ^Ifew years during the dog-days the yellow fever raged with more violence in the northern cities than it has ever done in this generation in the cities of the far South. /Whole streets were depopulated. Every night the dead-cart shot its scores of corpses into the pits of the Potters' Field".

This grim picture of ~~life~~ ^{medical resources} in the Eighteenth Century ~~xxxxxx~~ needs to be held before us from time to time to make us put our own times into ~~xxxxxxx~~ perspective. The number of physical complaints has diminished notably; but the amount of complaining, it sometimes ~~xxx~~ seems, has not been noticeably ~~diminished.~~ *reduced* ^D

Vast as has been the change in medical care, we need to note some of the observations of Sir William Osler about the things that do not change. No one ought to speak at any gathering related to hospitals and medical care without adersion to the great healer who had a distinguished career at Me Gill University, Johns Hopkins University, and as Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford. *Doctor*

When saying goodbye to American and Canadian ~~friends~~ to go to England in 1905, he said:

"Almost everything has been renewed in the science and in the art of medicien, but all through the long centuries there has been no variableness or shadow of change in the essential features of the life which is our contemplation

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~~fix~~ an our care.Amid an eternal heritage of sorrow and suffering our work is laid, and this eternal note of sadness would be insupportable if the daily tragedies were not relieved by the spectacle of the heroism and devotion displayed by the actors. Nothing will sustain you more potently than the power to recognize in your humdrum routine, as perhaps it may be thought, the true poetry of life--the poetry of the commonplace, of ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ the ordinary man, of the plain, toil-worn woman, with their loves and their joys, their sorrows and their griefs."

On this same occasion he said: "To many of a sombre and sour disposition it is hard to maintain good spirits amid the trials and tribulations of the day, and yet it is an unpardonable mistake to go about among patients with a long face".

He also had his advice for nurses. They required, he thought, the exercise of seven virtues in a special way: "Tact, tidiness, taciturnity, sympathy, gentleness, cheerfulness, all linked together by charity".

My own ^{personal} experience with the ~~doctors~~ ^{doctors} and nurses of this institution suggest to me that they have read Sir William Osler, on this and other subjects.

It is not only what goes on in the hospital, however, that is a comfort to all of us in this community; it is the very existence of the institution that comforts us when we are not under its immediate care. The knowledge that such a facility is within reach is a matter of solace and comfort to all ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ of us who live in the communities around about it.

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The quality of medical care in a community turns not
and
upon doctors, nurses, administrators~~sxxxx~~ alone, of course.
It depends besides upon the ties that bind doctors, nurses,
administrators, patients, and the generous supporters of the
institution into a whole that exceeds the sum of its parts.
The fact that people of this vicinity contributed more than a
million dollars toward this new surgical wing, and that much
of the money came from small contributors of five to 25
dollars, says something about the community of interest felt
throughout the area. Money might have come solely from
government or from large contributors and the purchase of
structure and equipment would have been the same; but the hospital
would have been different.. Few then could have ~~said~~^{spoken} as people
all over our peninsular area now speak of "our hospital". It
is "our hospital" that has brought all of us ~~xxxxx~~ together here,
today, ~~bound together~~^{united} by our mutual interests as doctors,
administrators, nurses, patients and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ donors..

Thank You.