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## THE BINDING INFLUENCE OF A LIBRARY ON A SUBDIVIDING PROFESSION<sup>1</sup>

By Dr. HARVEY CUSHING

Learning as with water is never more fair,  
pure and simple than at its source.—*Naudé.*

THE dedication of a library is usually a commonplace event which calls for certain platitudes, perhaps even a prayer. The generosity of the donor is praised, the genius of the architect; the educational needs of the people (other than those present) are recalled and assurance given that they will be met so far as a meagre endowment permits. Attention is next drawn to the novel features of the building and then, with some relief, all adjourn for lunch.

This, ordinarily, is the culminating feature of the programme, for Nature, while providing all alike with a ready impulse to consume food, omitted to equip most of us with an intellectual hunger whose recurrent pangs can be assuaged only by the consumption of books, the invention of which she could scarcely have foreseen.

<sup>1</sup> Address at the dedication of the William H. Welch Medical Library, Baltimore, October 17, 1929.

Meanwhile, no reference has been made to that important official, the librarian, who modestly sits in the background with napkin on knee cogitating over possible ways of developing, on the part of those within the radius of his activity, such conditioned reflexes as would salivate them, no less promptly, at the mere sight of the printed page. A cafeteria system perhaps with appetizing books on view rather than distant and uncertain books ordered *à la carte*.

Too often libraries are but the graveyard of forgotten books whose oblivion is disturbed only by the exigencies of the time which has necessitated their transfer, for lack of space, from a smaller cemetery to a larger, where provision, usually inadequate, is made for books still alive and books yet unborn. There, according to age, family, place of origin or circumstance, their epitaphs renewed and coverings repaired, they are redeposited in burial vaults, soon to be once more as forgotten as were the tablets of Sardanapalus, except by the stray seeker for the curious or the



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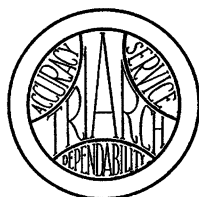
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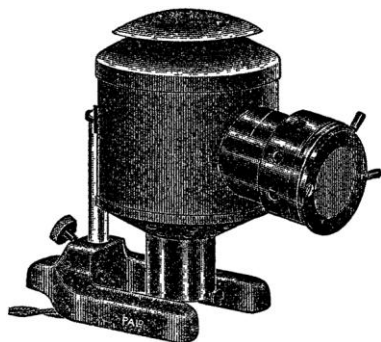
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