CHRISTIAN A. HERTER, M.D.

Christian Archibald Herter died in New York City on December 5, 1910, in the forty-sixth year of his age. In recording this fact on this occasion, it is our desire not to dwell on our grief and sense of loss, nor shall we essay a biographical sketch. We wish, rather, to express in some degree the lasting encouragement and inspiration evoked by his life and example. For it is our belief that in this we are attempting that which his own spirit and sympathies would have led him to do in contemplating the lives and efforts of others.

The facts of prime significance in any life, and no one felt this more keenly than he, are the ideals which guide its activities; the steadfast striving after the realization of these ideals, and the sympathetic understanding of others. We are permitted to touch upon such aspects of his character only in their relations to his chosen profession.

Of the ideals cherished by Dr. Herter, none was more potent in determining the direction of his professional activities than the conviction dating from his early student days that the practice of medicine was destined to become based upon exact science, and that it was a great privilege as well as a duty for those able to do so to contribute in such measure as was possible to the attainment of this consummation. This conception was not merely a vision of the remote future, but an ever-present incentive, the power of which can be traced through his whole career, finding expression in a variety of ways. The establishment of a laboratory for the prosecution of researches suggested by the problems arising in his own practice when such aids to the enlightened care of the sick were among the novelties of medical practice in this country was an early manifestation of his efforts to contribute to the realization of this ideal. This laboratory, at first modest in dimensions and scope, developed into a center of much activity in medical research by those working under Dr. Herter's immediate direction, and by many others who, through his generous courtesy,
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enjoyed its facilities in pursuing their individual problems and who found in him a sympathetic, experienced and ready counsellor.

He was impelled not merely toward the acquisition and accumulation of knowledge for its own sake, but also toward its utilization and diffusion. He constantly pondered the deductions justified by experimental results and the ways in which they might become useful to mankind. Open and eminently practical expressions of this attitude are the creation of the Herter lectureships at the University and Bellevue Hospital Medical College and at the Johns Hopkins University, and the foundation of the Journal of Biological Chemistry, which owes its existence to his initiative and confident foresight.

In these provisions for promoting the advancement of scientific medicine, Dr. Herter considered not merely their present value. He had a vision of the usefulness they should attain in years to come.

We must be pardoned if we dwell for a moment on the foresight shown by him in founding the Journal of Biological Chemistry. Before deciding upon the undertaking, Dr. Herter conferred with others, notably Professor Abel of the Johns Hopkins Medical School, as to the wisdom of providing at that time an American medium for the publication of chemical researches in the field of Biology, and the scope which a journal started with this object should assume. A result of these conferences was that he and Professor Abel became joint editors. The scope of the Journal was to include researches of a purely scientific character, but, having in mind the needs of clinical medicine, an effort was also to be made to encourage contributions to the knowledge of the chemical aspects of disease.

The way in which the undertaking should be organized also received careful consideration; for Dr. Herter felt that a journal destined to become the repository of original work in a branch of science should possess indefinite stability. It should not be dependent for its existence upon a too limited number of individuals. He therefore took the necessary steps to incorporate the Journal under the laws of the State of New York; providing a Board of Directors which should have as their sole function the conduct and perpetuation of the publication. These arrangements, so wisely wrought by him, have precluded all question of the future of the Journal.
No enterprise could have possessed a greater appeal to Dr. Herter than that which led to the development of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, and no task could have been more congenial to him than to participate with his personal friends in its organization and growth. From its early inception he could not but perceive the necessity of a hospital which should be an integral part of the undertaking; for the whole conception was an expansion of the work which he had done on a necessarily limited scale on his own initiative. He was happy in being able to see this great institution successfully started. It is tragic that he could not have lived to enjoy the full fruits of the laborious years of preparation.

Among the many charming qualities in Dr. Herter's character was his ready appreciation of others. He took personal pleasure in their achievements and was eager in his efforts to encourage those younger than himself to develop their abilities. He was profoundly interested in the study of the lives of men who had accomplished much for the benefit of mankind and loved to trace the thread of continuity that led them step by step to the culmination of their careers. This philosophical bent lent a peculiar wisdom to his counsels which was quickened by the altruistic quality of his ideals.