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# Gathering Books and Other Literature for the National Medical Library

### ACQUIRING BOOKS

**B**ILLINGS' appetite for books was always greater than his means, and he tried in every way possible to obtain the most for his money. He purchased European imprints from or through Continental book agents because their prices were cheaper than American dealers charged.<sup>1</sup> He did not buy second or later editions of recent works unless there was an imperative reason for doing so.<sup>2</sup> He bawled booksellers out when, in his opinion, they asked higher prices than he thought publications were worth. On one occasion he wrote to bookseller L. W. Schmidt, New York: "I must remark that I think your prices a little high. From most booksellers I get a discount. . . . If you continue to invoice me at full retail price I shall have to purchase elsewhere."<sup>3</sup> At times he offered less than catalog prices, hoping that if publications were not sold to other buyers the bookseller would be willing to accept Billings' terms.<sup>4</sup>

Billings also bought volumes from physicians, advertising in journals for works that were difficult to obtain.<sup>5</sup> Having a fairly accurate idea of the current market value of secondhand medical works, owing to his constant perusal of catalogs, he sometimes disappointed sellers by low offers. Richard J. Dunglison refused Billings' offer of \$135 for 165 volumes of dictionaries from the estate of his father, Robley, and auctioned them in Philadelphia.<sup>6</sup> F. Peyre Porcher, Charleston, South Carolina, offered to sell eleven 16th century books (Galen, Celsus, Hippocrates, etc.) that he had bought in Florence, Italy, many years earlier for \$250. He sent them to Washington for Billings to examine. Billings replied with a check for \$175, telling Porcher to accept or return the check. Porcher, needing money "in these times of hardship" agreed "with a pang of regret."<sup>7</sup>

Billings browsed through bookstores when he visited Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, Boston, and other cities on official business or to attend meetings of medical societies. While in Philadelphia in early 1871 he stopped at Peter Doyle's shop and purchased a volume which, unknown to him, was wanted by Samuel Gross, a noted surgeon and biographer. When Gross learned

that Billings had beat him to the book his grief was so great that sympathetic Doyle wrote Billings:<sup>8</sup>

Your venerable friend Dr. Gross is in great tribulation about one of the books you bought on Saturday. The book 'Schroder's Dispensatory' he had inquired for some time since. Upon receiving it about two weeks ago, I immediately wrote to the doctor mentioning the fact and the price. Not having heard from him I inferred that he did not want the book, or did not care to pay my price for it. On Monday Dr. Gross called and was very much disappointed to find the book sold. This afternoon the doctor called again, and so lamented the loss of that treasure of Med'l Science that I promised to write and state the facts of the case to you, though I did not think that he could fairly claim the book

Billings felt so sorry for Gross that he surrendered the folio; at least there is no evidence in the Library's invoices and register that it received a copy at this time. A year later Billings managed to obtain another copy of "The Dispensatory of that most famous, &c, chemist, J. Schroder" for \$20, and it now rests in the History of Medicine Division.<sup>9</sup>

Billings wrote interesting, readable, sincere letters, and through his correspondence he became friendly with physicians who lived states away and who never met him. He encouraged them to donate publications to, or exchange with, the National Medical Library by appealing to their patriotism and pride in their profession. One physician who became infected with Billings' love for the Library was Adams Jewett of Dayton, Ohio, who began scouting for books in 1872. Jewett searched through the libraries of dozens of physicians in Dayton and other towns, sent Billings lists of desirable works they owned, and brought about donations and exchanges. He talked with widows of physicians and arranged sales of their books to the Library. Sometimes the widows had already disposed of the books, as Jewett reported:<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Blodgett a very respectable practitioner died a good many years ago having a large number of med. books wh came into the hands of a daughter who kept them for years out of reg<sup>d</sup> to her father, & doubtless dusted them regularly twice a year at housecleaning time, but finding them at last too much in the way she sent them to the papermill this season. I went in pursuit hop'g to find something for you, but too late.

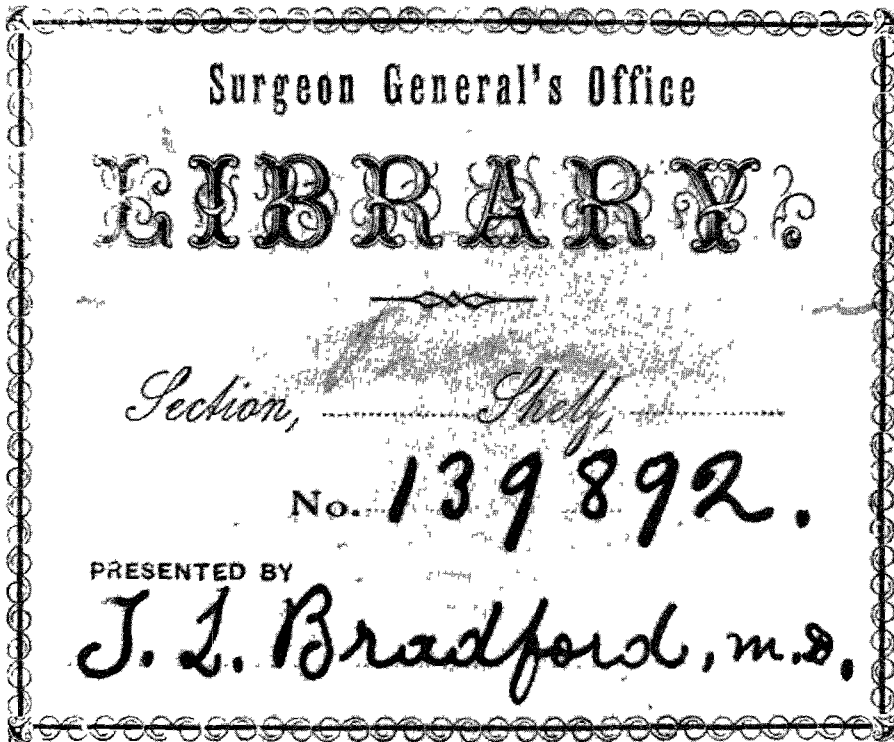
Embarking on a steamboat trip on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers with his wife, Jewett carried along Billings' want-lists and went to book stores when the vessel tied up at St. Louis, Davenport, and Denmark. Traveling to Troy, Ohio, to attend a funeral he also hunted books and he talked with physicians whose names he sent to Billings as potential donors or exchangers. On a visit to Davenport, Iowa, he looked over libraries of physicians, and sent donated pamphlets and lists of the libraries' contents to Billings. He continued to assist until he died in 1874.

A compilation of those persons from whom Billings received books reads like a Who's Who in American Medicine.<sup>11</sup> Among them were:

Edmund Andrews, a founder of Chicago Academy of Sciences and Northwestern University Medical School

GATHERING BOOKS AND OTHER LITERATURE FOR THE N. M. L.

James Armsby, a founder of Albany Medical College  
Richard Arnold, president of Georgia State Medical Association  
John Ashhurst, Jr., president of College of Physicians, Philadelphia  
Robert Battey, president of American Gynecological Society  
Agrippa Bell, editor and leader in the American public health movement  
Henry I. Bowditch, a founder of Boston Medical Library Association and chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Health  
William Brodie, editor and president of American Medical Association  
Francis Brown, compiler of medical directories of New England  
Charles Brown-Séguard, international physiologist then living in New York City  
Gurdon Buck, president of New York Pathological Society  
Charles Burnett, president of American Otolological Society  
Swan Burnett, president of Medical Society of the District of Columbia  
James Chadwick, a founder of American Gynecological Society and Boston Medical Library



An early bookplate designed to display the donor's name. On the bookplate was also recorded the accession number and location of the volume in the stacks.

A HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

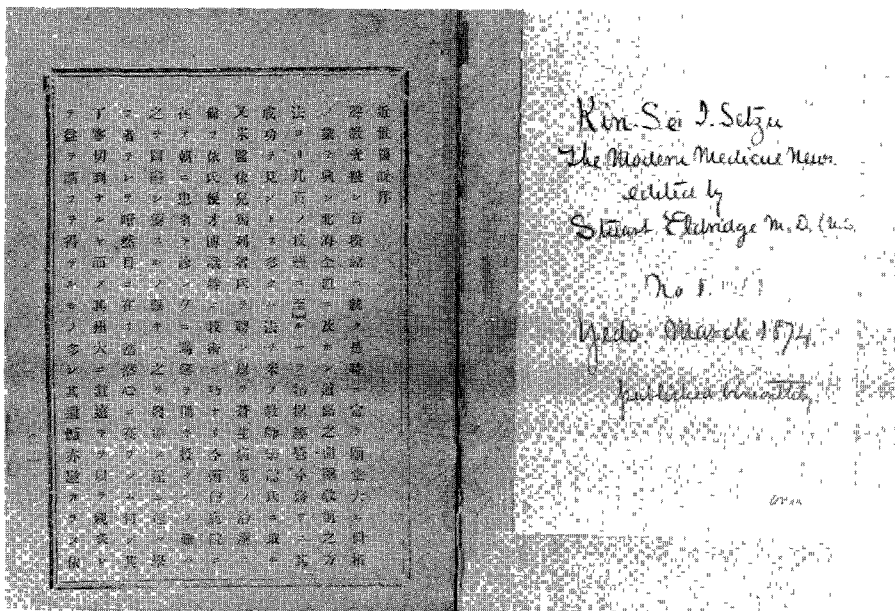
- Stanford Chaillé, member of the National Board of Health and dean of the medical department of Tulane University
- Julian Chisholm, teacher and Confederate Army surgeon
- Meredith Clymer, president of the Neurological Society of New York
- Granville Conn, president of New Hampshire Medical Society
- Elliott Coues, noted ornithologist
- Jacob Da Costa, president of College of Physicians of Philadelphia and Association of American Physicians
- John Dalton, president of College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York
- William Dawson, president of American Medical Association
- Dorothea Dix, reformer in the treatment of the insane
- Pliny Earle, president of American Medico-Psychological Association
- George J. Engelmann, president of Southern Surgical and Gynecological Society and of American Gynecology Society
- John Gray, president, New York State Medical Association
- Samuel Green, notable collector of medical books and medals and president of American Numismatic Society
- Samuel Gross, president of American Surgical Association and of the International Medical Congress of 1876
- Allan Hamilton, alienist and leader in the study of mental disorders
- Isaac Hays, editor and one of the three great medical journal collectors of his day
- Morris Henry, editor and organizer of the New York City Ambulance Service
- John Hodgen, president of American Medical Association
- Edward Holmes, president of Rush Medical College
- James Hutchinson, president of Philadelphia Pathological Society
- John Jackson, vice-president of American Medical Association
- Abraham Jacobi, often referred to as the father of American pediatrics
- Thomas Kirkbride, president of Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane
- William McPheeters, president of the Medical Association of the State of Missouri
- S. Weir Mitchell, neurologist and widely read author of historical novels
- William Mussey, donor of the Mussey Medical and Scientific Library to the city of Cincinnati
- Robert Newton, president of the State Eclectic Medical Society of New York
- William Osler, writer, book collector, one of the original faculty of Johns Hopkins Medical School, and Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford
- Joseph Parrish, president of the American Association for the Cure of Inebriates
- John Peters, president of the Medical Society of the County of New York and of New York Neurological Society
- F. Peyre Porcher, president of the Medical Society of South Carolina
- Samuel Purple, one of the foremost medical book collectors of his day and president of New York Academy of Medicine

GATHERING BOOKS AND OTHER LITERATURE FOR THE N. M. L.

John Rauch, president of the American Public Health Association  
James Reeves, president of the American Public Health Association  
John Riley, teacher and textbook writer of Washington, D.C.  
Thomas Rochester, president of New York State Medical Society  
Lewis Sayre, president of American Medical Association  
Moritz Schuppert, the surgeon who introduced antiseptic surgery into the South  
John Scudder, noted eclectic physician of Ohio  
Nicholas Senn, president of American Medical Association  
George Shrady, prominent medical journalist of New York  
Andrew H. Smith, president of New York Academy of Medicine  
Nathan R. Smith, president of Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland  
Stephen Smith, first president of the American Public Health Association  
Edward R. Squibb, founder of the pharmaceutical firm that bears his name  
Lewis Steiner, president of American Academy of Medicine  
Edward Stevens, editor, teacher, and president of Ohio State Medical Society  
Francis Stribling, a founder of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane  
Joseph Toner  
John Vattier, president of the Academy of Medicine, Cincinnati  
Edward Warren of Baltimore, teacher, editor, and surgeon in the Confederate and Egyptian Armies  
William Henry Welch, famous pathologist  
James P. White, president of Medical Society of the State of New York  
Horatio Wood, editor, and president of Philadelphia Neurological Society  
Thomas F. Wood, editor and a founder of the American Public Health Association  
John Woodworth, Surgeon General of the Marine Hospital Service (later, Public Health Service)  
David Yandell, president of American Medical Association

Billings not only obtained donations through correspondence and scouts, he charmed persons whom he visited into surrendering their treasures. Henry Crècy Yarrow, an Army surgeon, had "occasion to mourn the loss of quite a number of valuable books which, when shown to Doctor Billings as curiosities, nothing would do but they must be presented at once to the Surgeon General's Library."<sup>12</sup> And Oliver Wendell Holmes, recalling a visit by the Librarian, remarked, "Dr. Billings is a bibliophile of such eminence that I regard him as a positive danger to the owner of a library, if he is ever let loose in it alone."<sup>13</sup>

By no means every physician in the country rushed to the Library's aid. When one compares the seemingly large number with whom Billings corresponded to the approximately 64,000 physicians recorded in the census of 1870 (and more in later decades) it is evident that only a small proportion concerned themselves with the Library. Yet, those who contributed publications, and



*First page of Kinsei isetsu (Modern Medicine News), started by Stuart Eldridge in Japan, 1874. Eldridge sent this copy, with his handwritten title page, to Billings.*

their influence when it was needed, included a large proportion of leaders in American medicine.

In addition to attracting gifts from physicians of national prominence, the Library over the years received donations from or made exchanges with physicians of whom we know scarcely more than their names because they published little or nothing and were not active in societies. The Library also received gifts from physicians of other countries, the most generous of whom may have been Thomas Windsor of Manchester, England, who began presenting books in 1874, and continued to do so all his life.<sup>14</sup>

In an effort to obtain publications from countries that did not have a well-developed book trade, Billings sought help from travelers, emigrant physicians, anyone who could serve his purpose. Receiving a request from Reverend Tillman C. Trowbridge, an American missionary, for Medical Department publications to be sent to Central Turkey College, Billings took the opportunity to ask Trowbridge to keep an eye open for Arabic and Turkish works for the Library.<sup>15</sup> Learning of the existence of the American Baptist Mission Press in Rangoon, Burma, Billings asked F. D. Phinney, the superintendent, to obtain native medical writings.<sup>16</sup> When Stuart Eldridge, a former Civil War officer, librarian of the Department of Agriculture, and teacher of anatomy at Georgetown, settled in Japan where he helped establish medical schools, hospitals, a

medical journal, and practiced medicine, Billings corresponded with him and obtained a mannequin, skulls, and other items for the museum, and hundreds of books, journals, and manuscripts for the Library.<sup>17</sup> Getting a plea for a copy of the *Medical and Surgical History* from B. W. Green, a former Confederate naval surgeon who had settled in Argentina after the War, Billings sent one of the few remaining volumes, hoping to induce Green to assist the Library. Because of a revolution and the indolence of shippers in the southern hemisphere it took 2 years for the books to reach Green. As Billings foresaw, Green felt obligated to send South American literature.<sup>18</sup>

#### REPORTS OF HEALTH AGENCIES

Billings desired reports of asylums, hospitals, sanitariums, quarantine stations, boards of health, voluntary sanitary associations, and other bodies concerned with personal and public health, particularly for the statistics and other special information which they contained and which did not find its way into journals, texts, or reference works. Learning that booksellers could not supply him, he wrote to physicians connected with or residing near health organizations. He proceeded blindly at first because there was no bibliography of health reports. He had no way of knowing what institutions issued reports, other than by hearing or reading about certain publications.

One of the first physicians Billings contacted was Horatio C. Wood, Jr., a prominent teacher whom he had met in Philadelphia military hospitals during the war. He mentioned that the Library was "considerably deficient in respect to reports on prisons" and asked Wood to obtain reports of Pennsylvania jails for him.<sup>19</sup> Other correspondents in the early 1870's included Edward H. Van Deusen, superintendent of the Michigan Asylum for the Insane, who sent literature on his institution, and Edwin M. Snow, superintendent of health, Providence, who promised to supply reports.<sup>20</sup>

Billings also turned to his brother officers for help. He wrote to Assistant Surgeon M. J. Asch, Chicago; Surgeon Bernard J. D. Irwin, Fort Wayne, Michigan; Assistant Surgeon J. E. Semple, Fort Porter, Buffalo; Surgeon John F. Randolph, New Orleans; former Surgeon Joshua Simpson, Baltimore, and others asking them to visit nearby health officials and obtain reports for the Library. Asch managed to obtain a single volume containing reports of the Chicago Board of Health for 1867, '68, and '69, with a history of sanitation in Chicago from 1833 to 1870. "This is the only thing in the way of this sort of literature that I can get track of in Chicago," he told Billings. Randolph mailed a volume of pamphlets and stated that the New Orleans Board of Health, Charity Hospital, Howard Association, and medical colleges "have nothing." Irwin sent only a report on the Detroit House of Correction, telling Billings that the city "never had a Board of Health until a month ago, consequently there has been no publication on the sanitary condition of the city." Semple could not obtain anything in Buffalo. Simpson visited the city controller of Baltimore and received promises but apparently no pamphlets.<sup>21</sup>

United States Government Despatch Agency.

*4, Trafalgar Square,  
London.*

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Sir,

*I am instructed by the Librarian of the Surgeon-General's Office, U. S. Army, Washington, D.C., to furnish that Library with as nearly complete sets as I can obtain of the Reports, Catalogues, Announcements, and other Publications of the Medical and Sanitary Societies and Institutions of Great Britain.*

*The Library of the Surgeon-General's Office, comprising nearly 50,000 volumes, is the largest Medical Library in the United States, and as a Government Institution forms a suitable depository for the permanent preservation of such documents as are now asked for.*

*If you will be so good as to send me any of your publications that you can spare, I shall be happy to forward them to the Library, and due acknowledgment will be sent to you from Washington. If the Library can, from its duplicates, or otherwise, furnish any vacancies in your collection in exchange for your publications, I shall be glad to hear from you on the subject.*

*I am, Sir,*

*Your obedient Servant,*

B. F. STEVENS.

*To the Secretary of the*

B. F. Stevens sent 350 copies of this letter to medical institutions in Great Britain.



Obtaining reports of European health agencies was equally difficult. Billings did not yet know European physicians (he would know many later) and he did not have any regular correspondents other than his few book agents. He requested his agents to obtain reports from local institutions, and to advertise for reports issued in other areas. Accordingly Gustave Bossange asked Parisian authorities for reports, and had a circular printed and distributed throughout French provinces.<sup>22</sup> Trübner & Company and B. F. Stevens mailed form letters to institutions in Great Britain.<sup>23</sup>

Another means by which Billings sought to obtain reports issued in foreign countries was through the assistance of United States consular officials. He first attempted to employ a consul as a book scout in March 1871 when he sent Medical Department publications to William Thomson, consul in Southampton, England, and took the opportunity to ask Thomson for assistance:<sup>24</sup>

We desire to obtain for the library of this Office, all pamphlets or reports relating to Insane, Asylums for Blind, Deaf & Dumb, Idiots &c, Quarantine Officers, Board of Health, and reports on Prisons, and of Prison Inspectors, and find some difficulty in procuring such from England as they are not sold and do not come in the way of Book sellers. Any assistance which you may be able to render in this respect will be gladly received and fully appreciated by this office.

Billings did not call on consuls often at first, but later he came to depend on them for assistance in countries, among them Spain, Mexico, Russia, and Venezuela, from which he had difficulty obtaining publications. He also asked consuls to obtain and deliver exchanges, provide information on publishers and publications, and help him find reliable foreign booksellers.

The collecting of pamphlets gained momentum rapidly. Within a few years the existence of the Library was known to most of the medical profession in the United States, Canada, and even Europe, and Billings began to receive reports voluntarily. But during his term in the Library he never stopped prodding officials in charge of health agencies, hospitals, and institutions to send their publications.

#### DISSERTATIONS

Among the nonmonographic, nonperiodical literature that came to Billings, like flotsam and jetsam on the current of books and journals, were health laws and ordinances, hospital plans, diplomas, newspaper clippings, almanacs, and blank forms issued by health departments and other government agencies. Billings accumulated but did not purchase these unless there was need for a specific item. One unusual publication that he did seek was the student dissertation or thesis required of candidates for the medical degree.

Billings felt that dissertations had four uses: they were sources for history of medicine, particularly for the light they shone on schools and teachers; they contained accounts of cases or investigations; they were useful in biography, especially German theses which often contained an account of the student; and

the early programs for theses often contained an introduction, in the nature of an article, by a professor.<sup>25</sup>

It is doubtful that many librarians agreed with Billings' high estimate of the usefulness of dissertations. Billings said that their value was "usually underestimated," which was another way of stating that other librarians and physicians considered them "for the greatest part not very important publications."<sup>26</sup>

Acquiring a complete collection of dissertations was difficult because tens of thousands had already been published, hundreds were printed every year in Europe, only a small edition of each was printed, they were not intended for the book-trade market, and secondhand booksellers generally ignored them.

Billings began to accumulate dissertations at least as early as 1868 when he asked Gustave Bossange to try to obtain for him a large number of volumes of theses of the Medical Faculty of Paris.<sup>27</sup> Thereafter he obtained American and European dissertations by gift, exchange, purchase, and deposit from Library of Congress<sup>28</sup> and Smithsonian Institution—the latter on one occasion deposited 3,000 dissertations it had received through its book agents in Europe and probably was relieved to be rid of them.

Billings accelerated his buying of dissertations in 1872. L. W. Schmidt, a New York bookdealer with transatlantic connections, located several large lots in Europe. He offered one group of 450 dissertations for \$100, or 30¢ each if bought individually; additional groups of 3,600 and 1,000, and a gigantic group of 48,113 at 5¢ each if all were taken.<sup>29</sup>

By mid-1873 Billings had many American theses, all the Paris theses, a large proportion from the schools of Strassburg, Montpellier, and Berlin, and smaller holdings from other European universities.<sup>30</sup> He urged his European agents to search for them. In May 1873 he told Felix Flügel, "from this date on I wish arrangements to be made to secure for this library one copy of each medical dissertation of all the German universities."<sup>31</sup> A short time later he reiterated to Flügel, "I want to get all that appear in [the] future, for I mean to make this library as complete as I can."<sup>32</sup>

On Billings' instructions Flügel corresponded with German universities to try to obtain a copy of every dissertation, but he was unsuccessful because students paid for the printing of their dissertations and therefore owned them. An official of the University of Berlin informed him: "a regular donation of one copy of each medical dissertation can neither be ordered by the faculty nor by the academical senate."<sup>33</sup> Billings even tried to persuade a janitor at the University of Berlin to act as his agent in collecting theses for the Library for the sum of 20 marks a year, but the arrangement failed.<sup>34</sup>

Billings was moderately successful in obtaining dissertations through exchange, including 202 from University of Zurich,<sup>35</sup> 110 from University of Groningen,<sup>36</sup> 79 from University of Greifswald,<sup>37</sup> 917 from University of Munich,<sup>38</sup> 124 from University of Würzburg,<sup>39</sup> and copies from the universities of Rostock, Freiburg, and Halle.<sup>40</sup>

Despite his efforts Billings was not able to obtain all the medical dissertations

LIST OF  
**JOURNALS, TRANSACTIONS, AND BOOKS**

WANTED TO COMPLETE THE FILES OF THE  
**NATIONAL MEDICAL LIBRARY,**

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
**SURGEON-GENERAL, U. S. ARMY,**  
**WASHINGTON, D. C.,**

For which a fair price will be paid, or valuable exchanges furnished

**JOURNALS.**

British-American Medical and Physical Journal Montreal Want No. 10, vol. vi; No. 10, vol. vii. (1850-52)

Canada Lancet Montreal (1863-65) Want Nos 11, 23, and all after No 23 of vol i

Monthly Journal of Medicine. Hartford, Conn. Want vols. x and vi (1825)

Southern Medical and Surgical Journal. Augusta, Ga. Want vol iii (1838-39); No. 1, vol. iii., new series (1847); Nos 1, 2, 3, 4, vol. vi., No 1, vol. viii., Nos 11 and 12, vol. xvii., vol. xxiii.

Western Medical-Chirurgical Journal Keokuk, Iowa Want No. 1, vol. i. (1850-51), Nos 7 and 8, vol. ii.

New Orleans Monthly Medical Register By Association Want Nos 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, vol. I (1841-52), Nos. 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, vol. ii

Union Médicale de la Louisiane New Orleans. Want Nos 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, vol. i. (1852)

Medical Bulletin Baltimore Want No 24, vol. i. (1869), Nos 21, 22, 23 and 24, vol. ii.

Vaccine Inquirer Baltimore Want Nos 2, 3, 6, 7 (1822-24)

Saint Joseph Journal of Medicine and Surgery Bi-monthly St Joseph Missouri Want Nos 1, 2, 3, 6 vol. i (1855-59); Nos 1, 3, 8 vol. ii., and all after No. 3, vol. iii (Jan 1861)

Saint Louis Medical and Surgical Journal Want No 10 vol. i (Jun 1844) vol. ii (1844-4) No 6 vol. iii

Saint Louis Probe Want Nos. 1, 2, 6, 9, 10 vol. i. (1870)

New York Lancet By Houston Want Nos 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000

**JOURNALS.**

American Lancet. By Beattie. Phila Want Nos 5, 6 and all after No 7, vol. i (1833)

Philadelphia Medical and Surgical Journal By Bryan Want vols. i., ii (1852-53), No 3, vol. iii.; No. 2, vol. v

Carolina Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Agriculture Charleston, 1825. Want all of any part

**TRANSACTIONS OF**

Medical Association of the State of Alabama Want 1st (1847?), 2d, 3d, 4th, and all subsequent to reorganization in 1868 and year 1872.

Connecticut State Medical Society. Proceedings of Want all prior to 1818, 27th session, 1820-23 1825-29

Medical Society of the State of Georgia. Want 1st (meeting 1850), 195th and all subsequent to the 19th. (1868), inclusive

Illinois State Medical Society Want 1st (1801), 1853, 1854, 1865-1866, 1873, and 1875

State Medical Society of Indiana Want 1863 (15th session)

Iowa State Medical Society Want 1st (session 1850), 1854, 1855, 1860 to 1866, inclusive, and 1872 to date

Medical Society of State of Kansas Want 1st and 2d (1865-66?) 4th (1868), and subsequent

Kentucky State Medical Society Want 2d (1852), 3d (1853), 4th (1854), 6th (1857?) to 12th

Medical Society of the State of Missouri Want 1803 and all subsequent to 1866, inclusive Also 1870 and 1871

New Hampshire Medical Society Want all prior to 1854, also 1860 (70th session)

Medical Society of the State of North Carolina Want 2d (1801) 6th (1854), 12th (1861?)

*Richard J. Dunglison of Philadelphia assisted Billings by placing this two-page advertisement free in Dunglison's Ready Reference List for Physicians (1876) Note that Billings called the collection the "National Medical Library"*

## TRANSACTIONS OF

- South Carolina Medical Association. Want 1851-52-53, and 1857-58-59.
- Tennessee State Medical Society. Want 1831 (2d), 1833-34-36-37-39, 1841, 1845-47-49, 1852-54-56-57, and all subsequent, excepting 1869.
- Medical Society of Virginia. Proceedings of. Want 1st-28th (1851), 31st (1854), and all subsequent to time of reorganization in 1870.
- Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of the State of Maryland. Want all prior to 1854; 1855, 1857, 1858, 1860 to 1872, inclusive.

## THESIS OF

- Agnew, James. On Perspiration. 1800.
- Baldwin, William. Dis. of Amer. Seaman at Wampoa. 1807.
- Ball, Thomas. Causes and Effects of Sleep. 1796.
- Ballard, B. Phthisis Pulmonalis. 1811.
- Barton, William P. On Nitrous Oxide Gas. 1808.
- Blundell, James. On Dysentery. 1791.
- Butts, E. de. On the Eye, and Vision. 1805.
- Carter, Robert. On Opium. 1803.
- Chiclin, Robert. On Hydrocephalus Internus. 1795.
- Clark, Micajah. On Lithotomy. 1811.
- Colacbury, H. De Epilepsia. 1792.
- Condict, L. On Effects of Contagion, etc. 1794.
- Conover, S. F. On Sleep, Dreams, etc. 1791.
- Dorsey, J. S. Gastric Liquor. 1802.
- Drayton, Charles. De Inversione Uteri, etc. 1809.
- Drysdale, Thomas. Varia de Hepate Proferens. 1794.
- Duval, Grafton. On Mella Avedarach of Linnæus. 1802.
- Foissin, Peter. De Stimulorum. 1802.
- Fort, Tomlinson. On Practice of Medicine. 1849 or 1850?
- Foushee, John H. On Stricture in Urethra. 1799.
- Gibbons, William. On Hypochondriasis. 1805.
- Gray, H. M. On Cynanche Trach. (Croup). 1803.

## THESIS OF

- Handy, H. On Opium. 1791.
- Huger, Francis K. Gangrene and Mort. 1797.
- Jones, Edward. On Pasmusia. 1796.
- Laws, John. On Opium. 1797.
- McDonald, Thompson. On Cynanche Trach. (Croup). 1802.
- Madison, J. C. On Med. Prop. of Iron. 1805.
- Magruder, N. On Smallpox. 1792.
- Meredith, C. On Phthisis Pulm. 1802.
- Miffin, Charles. On Injuries of Head. 1826.
- Moore, David. On Ophthalmia. 1807.
- Otto, John. De Epilepsia. 1797.
- Parrish, Joseph. Influence of Passions, etc. 1805.
- Pendergast, G. E. Top. Sketch of Miss., La., and W. Fla. 1803.
- Perkins, E. On Universal Dropsy. 1791.
- Pleiffer, G. On Gout. 1791.
- Proudt, Jac. De Pleuritis Vera. 1790.
- Ribb, W. W. On Lymphatics. 1811.
- Rogers, R. K. On Liriodendron Tulipifera (Poplar Tree). 1802.
- Rose, Henry. On Effects of Passions. 1794.
- Rosset, A. J. de. De Febris Intermitt. 1790.
- Rowan, Thomas. On Hydro. State of Fever. 1802.
- Ruah, James. On Use of Omentum. 1809.
- Sawyer, M. E. Causes of Animal Life. 1793.
- Stevens, A. H. On Inflammations. 1811.
- Stock, J. E. On Effects of Gold. 1797.
- Stokes, W. Quædam de Asphyxia, etc. 1793.
- Thomas, G. G. On Kalmia Latifolia. 1802.
- Thompson, Hedge. On Spigelia Marilandica. 1802.
- Thornton, Geo. A. On State of Med. Science, etc. 1807.
- Triplett, Thomas. On Apoplexy. 1788.
- Wallace, J. W. On Catamenia. 1793.
- Washington, Wm. On Diabetes. 1802.
- Cases and Observations by the Medical Society of New Haven Co., State of Connecticut. Sto. New Haven. 1788.

Address,

DR. J. S. BILLINGS, U. S. A.,

LIBRARIAN SURGEON-GENERAL'S OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D. C.

that had been published in America and Europe before he began collecting, or those that were published each year thereafter. Nevertheless, during his long tenure as Librarian he accumulated a vast number, increasing from approximately 40,000 theses in 1875, to 40,524 plus 1,385 volumes each containing many theses in 1885, to 57,187 plus 1,762 volumes in 1895. This was the largest such specialized collection of any library in the United States, perhaps in the world.<sup>41</sup>

#### MUTUAL AID THROUGH EXCHANGES

To conserve funds for purchases Billings did his best to obtain books, pamphlets and journals by exchange with organizations and individuals. At first he did not have many commercial publications to exchange (later the storage areas would overflow with duplicates and triplicates) but he did have Medical Department publications. From 1870 onward there were copies of the monumental, multivolume *Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion*, eagerly sought by medical libraries here and abroad, and by thousands of regular army, volunteer, and contract Civil War physicians. There was a supply of authoritative, highly regarded "circulars" or monographs on aspects of military medicine written by Woodward, Otis, Billings, and other officers, among them *A Report on Amputations at the Hip-joint in Military Surgery*, *Report on Epidemic Cholera in the Army of the United States During the Year 1866*, *Plan for a Post Hospital of Twenty-four Beds*, *Report on Barracks and Hospitals with Descriptions of Military Posts*, and *Report of Surgical Cases Treated in the Army of the United States from 1865 to 1871*. There were copies of research pamphlets and articles written by scientists in the museum—in 1872 museum workers published at least 20 pamphlets and articles. He had reproductions of photographs and photomicrographs taken in the museum. After 1872 there was the *Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon General's Office*, and after 1873–74 a three-volume catalog, the largest American medical catalog of its time, greatly desired by American and foreign medical libraries, medical schools, and university libraries.

In proposing an exchange Billings customarily made a favorable impression by offering a gift of the Library's latest catalog and perhaps another recent Medical Department publication. Illustrative of his approach is the letter he sent to Alfred Purdy, president of a medical group named the New York Journal Association:<sup>42</sup>

I send you this day for the Library of the Journal Association a copy of the catalogue of our Library and a paper on cancer. The Library now contains nearly or quite 18,000 vols and may be considered as a good foundation for a National Medical Library. This being the case we are specially desirous of making it complete in American medical literature, and I call your attention to it in the hope that you will assist us to carry out this purpose, the importance of which I need not enlarge upon. What we especially desire is to get old medical pamphlets, addresses, theses, medical college announcements &c and to complete our files of American medical journals. I send a list of Journals showing what

we have. I presume the journal association must have many duplicates, as we have, and hope that an exchange can be arranged with mutual benefit. Any package may be sent to the Chief Med'l Purveyor 126 Wooster St, or to Wm Wood & Co to be sent to us. All duplicates will be returned and proper returns made as soon as the nature of your wants are known.

The demand for the *Medical and Surgical History* and the large catalogs far exceeded the supply, and Billings doled them out in a miserly fashion. To a request from T. Apoleon Cheney for the *History*, Billings replied: ". . . the work will be issued from this office only in exchange for other works for the Lib, and to those who can furnish most of such jours &c required will the most liberal exchanges be made."<sup>43</sup> When Sewell Green asked for a copy of the 1872 catalog, Billings drew up a form letter to be used thereafter in answering all such requests:<sup>44</sup>

Yours of \_\_\_\_\_recd. In reply I have to say that but a limited edition of the C. has been printed & that it is designed only for working purposes, & to procure exchanges from Libs etc, and that none can be spared to individuals unless for the purpose of procuring donations of rare books etc.

It is probable that Billings wrote to every medical and large public, state, and society library in the country in search of exchanges. The remains of his correspondence show he communicated with the libraries of New York Hospital, College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Hospital, Medical College of Ohio, Starling Medical College, Johns Hopkins, Massachusetts Medical Society, Hahnemann Medical College, Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland, American Antiquarian Society, Boston Athenaeum, Boston Public Library, Boston Medical Library, Buffalo's Grosvenor Library, Massachusetts Historical Society, New York Historical Society, Harvard University, Brown University, and the state libraries of New York, Wisconsin, South Carolina, Michigan, and New Hampshire.<sup>45</sup>

Billings arranged exchanges with European organizations, libraries, and persons through correspondence and during his trips abroad. His procedure was to ship a crate of publications, along with a list of names of recipients and packet of letters addressed to the recipients, to one of his agents, who distributed the volumes and letters. Upon sending a case of catalogs and other publications to Gustav Bossange, Paris, Billings instructed him<sup>46</sup>

The catalogues and pamphlets are put up in packages, addressed, and accompanied by letters to parties for whom they are intended. The letters should be sealed by you after having read them. You will observe from the letters referred to that it is my object and desire to procure for the Library such old pamphlets, reports, lectures, etc, as cannot be obtained in any other way, and especially to complete our files of medical journals published in France, Belgium, etc. I have requested that anything of the kind to be forwarded in pursuance to the letter may be sent through you, and in this connection I ask that you will urge the matter and endeavor to procure from the parties addressed everything that you know will be of value to such a Library as this is designed to be.

Sending a case of books to Felix Flügel, Leipzig, Billings admonished him thus:<sup>47</sup>

The Medical and Surgical History of the War of which I have sent you 24 copies for distribution is an expensive book and the number printed being limited I shall be able to send you but few copies. . . . I wish them so employed as to produce the best exchanges for our Library which is now the largest medical collection in this country and which I am trying to make as complete as possible.

Among the medical societies to which Billings sent publications, and which reciprocated, were those of Edinburgh, London, Marseilles, Aachen, Lille, Bologna, Modena, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, and Cracow.<sup>48</sup>

Billings considered exchanges as a means of assisting other libraries. Arranging a trade with Achille Chéreau, librarian of the Faculty of Medicine, Paris, Billings wrote: "This office will be most happy not only to forward its own publications but to render assistance in making the Library of the Faculty complete in American medical literature. . . . personally I shall be glad to be of service to you by collecting and forwarding American medical books and periodicals."<sup>49</sup> Among the libraries that Billings aided were Parkes Hygiene Museum, University College, London, which requested American reports on hygienic subjects;<sup>50</sup> the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, which wanted to fill gaps in its file of journals;<sup>51</sup> the Medico-Legal Society of the City of New York;<sup>52</sup> and the German department of health, which desired reports of U.S. state boards of health.<sup>53</sup> Not having all the publications desired by the library of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons, University of Glasgow, Billings wrote to the Boston Medical Library to see if it had the works among its duplicates.<sup>54</sup>

Billings also helped by giving advice on bibliography, classification,<sup>55</sup> book-sellers,<sup>56</sup> design of libraries,<sup>57</sup> and the content of libraries.<sup>58</sup> To Norman Bridge, librarian of the recently formed Chicago Medical Press Association, he sent instructions for indexing, samples of index cards, names of suppliers of storage boxes for pamphlets, and a list of journals.<sup>59</sup> To the librarian of Worcester, Massachusetts, Medical Society, which had 500 volumes and \$700, Billings suggested additions to the library.<sup>60</sup> To the Waterbury, Connecticut, Medical Association, ready to spend approximately \$1,000 to add a medical section to the local public library, he gave advice.<sup>61</sup> To the Massachusetts Medical-Legal Society, which asked what journals it should subscribe to, Billings sent a list.<sup>62</sup>

Exchanges helped Billings develop every area of the Library's holdings. He received transactions, proceedings, journals, dissertations, books, and reports from American and foreign libraries. He obtained many of the rare 17th century and early 18th century medical pamphlets and theses now in the Library. But he was not always successful; although he obtained 56 pamphlets, 1771–1832, and medical theses of University of Pennsylvania graduates, 1792–1807, plus 9 books, 1773–1838, from Pennsylvania Hospital, he failed to pry loose the hospital's only copy of James Tilton's *Economical Observations of Military Hospitals*, Wilmington, Delaware, 1813, from the cagey trustees.<sup>63</sup>

## BEGINNING THE PORTRAIT COLLECTION

It is not known when the Library acquired its first engraving, etching, lithograph, caricature, drawing, painting, or photograph of a medical subject, but Billings was collecting portraits routinely by the early 1870's.<sup>64</sup> "I am endeavoring to make this library as complete as possible," he wrote Henry March in 1874, "I also wish to collect portraits . . . of American physicians."<sup>65</sup>

Billings obtained photos of many of the prominent physicians of his time by asking for them, sometimes sending his own photograph in exchange.<sup>66</sup> Occasionally the Library received portraits as a gift; Alfred E. M. Purdy, editor of *The Medical Register of New York and Its Vicinity*, contributed a bundle of portraits in 1874.<sup>67</sup> But generally Billings purchased portraits from collectors and booksellers in small or large lots at prices of 10, 15, or 20 cents each. G. W. Foster, Sing Sing, New York, apparently a collector for at least a portion of his career, offered to sell or exchange for duplicate publications a lot of between 800 and 900 portraits.<sup>68</sup> J. H. Pooley, Columbus, Ohio, sent 160 portraits, for whatever price Billings was willing to pay, apparently 20¢ apiece.<sup>69</sup>

The largest collection that Billings bought was that of Cornelius Wilhelm Hendrik van Kaathoven, auctioned in Amsterdam on December 1 and 2, 1879. Billings obtained approximately 6,000 of Kaathoven's portraits for about 15¢ each. But in his eagerness to acquire this splendid collection Billings momentarily forgot that it would wipe out about one-tenth of his year's funds. "This purchase . . . so crippled me in the purchase of books," he recalled, "that I made up my mind I would not spend any more of the library funds in that direction except in a very small way."<sup>70</sup>

But in 1885 the magnificent collection of 12,000 portraits, mainly of physicians and naturalists, gathered by Heinrich Wolff of Bonn, Germany, was placed on the market and Billings forgot his resolution. He sought desperately to acquire the collection. He considered advancing \$1,000 out of his own pocket toward the purchase.<sup>71</sup> He tried, through S. Weir Mitchell, to persuade the College of Physicians in Philadelphia to agree to buy at 25¢ each the 3,000 duplicate portraits the Library would own if it acquired Wolff's collection, thus replenishing part of the Library's expenditure.<sup>72</sup> He attempted to buy only a portion of the collection.<sup>73</sup> But other persons were interested in these portraits, whose artists included Dürer, Holbein, and Rembrandt, and the collection was acquired by the Leavenworth family of Syracuse, New York, by whom it was presented to Syracuse University, in whose Rare Book Collection it now reposes.<sup>74</sup>

A few years later Billings was offered 1,120 portraits of physicians, ancient and modern, American and European, by the firm of G. E. Stechert for \$400, or about 35¢ apiece, but again the Library could not afford it.<sup>75</sup> "It is my purpose to make this collection as complete as the means which are at my disposal will permit,"<sup>76</sup> wrote Billings in 1886 referring to the Library's portraits, but his means were never sufficient.





*The first photograph believed to have been presented to the Library, 1867. Sir William Ferguson, 1808–1877.*

Allied to portraits and pictures on paper were medical scenes and likenesses of physicians on medals. The Library acquired its first medals as gifts. In 1886 when Billings requested permission to buy medals at an auction, the Secretary of War wanted to know why medals should be in a library and asked what appropriation would be used to pay for them. Billings defended medals by pointing out their relationship to medical history, but apparently he decided to forestall any further criticism by transferring the medal collection to the museum.<sup>77</sup>

#### MANUSCRIPTS AND LETTERS

Although there is no evidence that Billings was interested in history of medicine during his early years, either he had a latent feeling for the subject or he acquired a taste for it. One of his initial decisions was to collect source materials of history: "Mss and letters bearing on the history of American medicine and physicians are of course valuable and there is no more appropriate place to file them," he wrote to A. W. Woodhull, a prospective donor in 1872.<sup>78</sup>

Letters of prominent physicians and manuscripts of medical interest, including student lecture notes, texts, speeches, and collections of recipes, did not come Billings' way very often, but he obtained what he could. His friend William Lee of Washington presented manuscript lectures and speeches on medical subjects delivered by Joseph Roby at Dartmouth and University of

Head Q<sup>r</sup> Sep<sup>r</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> 1870

Dear Sir,

I have heard that a new arrangement is about to take place in the Medical Department and that it is likely, will be a good deal curtailed with respect to its present appointments.

Who will be the person generally employed I am unacquainted, nor do I wish to know; - however I can surely mention to you, that I think Dr. Mackintosh & Cochrane even their services, - abilities, & experience - and their close attention, have the strict claim to their Country's service, and to be among the best Officers in the Establishment -

There are many other deserving characters in the Medical line of the Army, but the reasons for my mentioning the above gentlemen are, that I have the highest opinion of them - and have had it hinted to me that the new arrangement might possibly be influenced by a spirit of party out of doors, which would not operate in their favor. - I wish add no more than that I am

With the most perfect respect  
Dear Sir

Y<sup>r</sup> most Obed<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>  
G. Washington

*Letter in the History of Medicine Collection. Addressed to "The Honorable Joseph Jones, Esq. of Congress at Philadelphia," the letter reads:*

*Head Quarters Sep. 9th, 1780*

*Dear Sir:*

*I have heard that a new arrangement is about to take place in the Medical Department, and that it is likely, it will be a good deal curtailed with respect to its present appointments.*

*Who will be the persons generally employed I am not informed, nor do I wish to know; however I will mention to you, that I think Doctors Craik and Cochran from their services, abilities and experience, and their close attention, have the strictest claims to their country's notice, and to be among the first officers in the establishment.*

*There are many other deserving characters in the medical line of the army, but the reasons for my mentioning the above gentlemen are, that I have the highest opinion of them, and have had it hinted to me that the new arrangement might possibly be influenced by a spirit of party out of doors [i.e. partisan politics], which would not operate in their favor. I will add no more than that I am*

*With the most perfect respect*

*Dear Sir*

*Your most obedient servant*

*G. Washington*

Maryland medical schools, 1840 to 1856.<sup>79</sup> The Library received from friends other manuscripts, among them an account of the yellow fever epidemic at Wilmington, North Carolina, 1862, and case-books containing the medical papers of Frank H. Hamilton.<sup>80</sup>

On one occasion Billings tried to obtain some correspondence of John Morgan, founder of the University of Pennsylvania's medical school in 1765, the first medical school in British North America, but he was unsuccessful.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless Billings picked up what he could, as he mentioned to Leon de Fort of Paris: "From time to time as I have met with them, I have secured and placed in this L[ibrary] autograph letters of distinguished physicians and surgeons."<sup>82</sup>

Eighteen seventy-one and seventy-two were exciting years in the Library's childhood. During that brief period Billings developed every method that he and his successors would use for obtaining books, journals, reports, dissertations, and other literary materials. Publications arrived at a rapid rate, and on

one of the days in the early 1870's the Library slipped into first place as the largest medical library in America. The cataloging of publications in 1874 required three large volumes, a decade earlier it had been done in a small pamphlet. The Library had accumulated so many of the ordinary American medical books that Billings was finding it difficult to obtain those he did not have.<sup>83</sup> By 1875 the Library contained approximately 75 percent of all the periodical literature that had ever been published, it possessed by far the most voluminous collection of pamphlets, about 40,000, and was twice the size of the second largest medical library, that of the College of Physicians, Philadelphia.<sup>84</sup> "Nothing is so remarkable in the development of medical libraries as the extraordinarily rapid growth of the Library of the Surgeon General's office," remarked an observer, "like Jonah's gourd it came up in a night."<sup>85</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Letter, Billings to Adams Jewett, July 15, 1872, "I prefer as a rule not to purchase foreign books in this country, because I can get them easily and much more cheaply abroad." MS/C/81

Invoices sent by Billings' agents listed the author, short title, price, and sometimes other information about publications he purchased. The Medical Department's monthly abstracts of disbursements also contained this information. The invoices and abstracts are in NLM. A few examples of his purchases in the 1870's are Paracelsus, *De Cleyne Chirurgie*, 1568, \$7.20, Hippocrates, *Prolegomena*, 1597, \$1.95, Antonius Busennius, *In Cl. Galeni Pergameni Librum De Inaequali Intemperie Commentarii*, 1553, \$9.30, Boyle, *Apparatus ad Historiam Naturalem*, 60¢, Thomas Sydenham, *Opera Medica*, 1735, \$1.15, Thomas Bartholin, *Twee Hondert Getal*, 1657, \$1.50, Johannes Mesue, *Opera Medicinalia*, 1471, \$31.40.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, Billings to Jewett, June 28, 1872, "as I must get all the new books + take all the M J's [medical journals] I do not have a great amt to sp for exa editions." MS/C/81

<sup>3</sup> Letter, Billings to Schmidt, Dec 15, 1871 MS/C/81

Angry at Mackay Brothers, New York, Billings wrote "I regret that it should not have been thought proper to ask a reasonable price for the pamphlets as probably 200 of them are not in this library and it would have saved me some trouble in procuring them. I have no doubt however that I shall be able to procure all of them that I want at not to exceed 25 cents each" letter, Billings to Mackay Bros., Feb 15, 1872 MS/C/81. For another example see letter, Billings to E. P. Boon, Roxbury, Mass., June 23, 1884 MS/C81

<sup>4</sup> Letter, Billings to Bailière, Aug 14, 1882 MS/C/81

<sup>5</sup> Among the periodicals in which he advertised were *New York Medical Record*, 1872, *Canada Lancet* 1873, and *American Practitioner* 1873. Unfortunately advertisements were discarded when old journals were bound in NLM and most other medical libraries, and copies of Billings' ads are difficult to locate. No records were kept of responses to the ads and there is no way of knowing how many publications they brought in, but at least they alerted readers to the existence and needs of the infant library and may have led persons to contribute.

<sup>6</sup> Letters, Dunghison to Billings, Sept 23, Oct 3, 1872 MS/C/81

<sup>7</sup> Letters, Porcher to Billings, July 15, 21, Sept 27, Oct 5, 9, 12. Billings to Porcher, July 23, 1872 MS/C/81. Another example of Billings' offer of low prices was his dealing with H. A. Ford of Leonardtown, Md., letters, Ford to Billings, July 10, Aug 2, 13, 14, Sept 19, Oct 5, Billings to Ford, Aug 7, 1872 MS/C/81

<sup>8</sup> Letter, Dovle to Billings, Jan 3, 1871 MS/C/81

<sup>9</sup> Johann Schroder, *Complete Chymical Dispensatory*. London, 1669. The title in the text above is copied from the invoice. The book was accessioned as no. 14,845, sometime after Feb 15, 1872 (most volumes listed in the old registers do not have a date of acquisition). Voucher no. 10, abstract of disbursements, museum and Library appropriation, shows that the book was sold to the Library on Mar 25, 1872.

<sup>10</sup> Quote is from letter, Jewett to Billings, July 20, 1872. Thus and many other letters Jewett wrote to Billings between 1872 and 1874 are in MS/C/81.

Dorothy M. Schullian, "Adams Jewett and

GATHERING BOOKS AND OTHER LITERATURE FOR THE N. M. L.

John Shaw Billings, Partners in Acquisition," *Bull Med Lib Assoc* 49 443-9 (1961)

<sup>11</sup> Partial lists of donors and exchangers residing in the United States and other countries are in *Index-Catalogue*, 1 series, vol 16, 1895, pp 1v-ix, and *Catalogue of the Library* vol 3, 1874, pp [iii]-vi Names of other donors may be found in Billings correspondence

<sup>12</sup> Yarrow, *Military Surgeon* 60 172 (1927)

<sup>13</sup> Garrison, *Billings*, 217-8

<sup>14</sup> Dorothy M Schullian, "Thomas Windsor, Benefactor of the Army Medical Library," *Bull Med Lib Assoc* 38 135-144 (1950)

<sup>15</sup> Letters, Trowbridge to the Surgeon General, June 23, 28, 1875 Trowbridge to Billings, June 23, 28, 30, July 6, 1875, Jan 29, 1877, Billings to Trowbridge, July 2 1875 MS/C/81

<sup>16</sup> Letter, Phinney to Billings, Nov 28 1884 MS/C/81

<sup>17</sup> Correspondence of Eldridge from 1871 to 1893 is in MS/C/81

<sup>18</sup> Letters, Green to Woodward, May 20, 1873, with attached reply by Billings, Green to Billings Sept 16, 1875, Feb 3, July 23, 1879 MS/C/81

<sup>19</sup> Letter, Billings to Wood, Jan 20, 1871 MS/C/81 This is the earliest letter in Billings' correspondence asking for help obtaining reports Wood obtained several reports, according to letter, Wood to Billings, Jan 30 MS/C/81

<sup>20</sup> Letters Van Deusen to Billings, Mar 1 1871, Snow to Billings, Mar 7, 1871 MS/C/81

<sup>21</sup> Letters, Simpson to Billings, Feb 9, Mar 28, Asch to Billings Feb 21, Irwin to Billings, Feb 26, Semple to Billings, Mar 18, June 13, Randolph to Billings, Mar 11, 1871 MS/C/81

<sup>22</sup> Letters, Bossange to Billings, Oct 31, Dec 12, 1871 NLM

<sup>23</sup> Letters, Billings to Trubner & Co, Sept 1, Trubner to Billings, Sept 23, Oct 5 (with list of institutions circularized), Oct 9 (with copy of form letter), 1871 NLM Letter, B F Stevens to Billings, Sept 24, 1878, with form letter attached MS/C/81

<sup>24</sup> Letter, Billings to Thomson, Mar 3, 1871 MS/C/81

<sup>25</sup> Billings' opinions on dissertations are given in his chapter, "Medical Libraries in the United States," in the Bureau of Education special report, *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, part 1, 1876

<sup>26</sup> The latter quotation was the opinion of physician, philologist bookseller Felix Flugel letter, Flugel to Billings June 22, 1873 NLM

<sup>27</sup> Letter, Billings to Bossange, April 16, 1868 NA

<sup>28</sup> The Library received hundreds, or perhaps a few thousand, from Library of Congress, but it is not possible to ascertain the number

because pamphlets and dissertations were totaled together Letters, T Gill to Billings, Mar (n d ), Billings to Gill, Mar 12, 1872 MS/C/81 In the *Catalogue* of 1872, pamphlets and dissertations from Library of Congress may be identified by the letter C

<sup>29</sup> Letters, Schmidt to Billings, Mar 31, Apr 7, May 8, June 30, Sept 20, 27, Oct 9, Billings to Schmidt, Sept 19, 1872 MS/C/81

<sup>30</sup> At the time Billings published the *Catalogue* of 1872, the Library had 700 bound volumes of Paris, Montpellier, and Strasburg dissertations

<sup>31</sup> Letter, Billings to Flugel, May 2, 1873 NLM

<sup>32</sup> Letter, Billings to Flugel, July 10, 1873 NLM A Treichel, a philatelist of Berlin, Germany, heard of Billings' wants and sent him dissertations and pamphlets, requesting U S stamps in return letters, Treichel to Billings July 29, 1874, June 12, Dec 28, 1875 MS/C/81

<sup>33</sup> Letter, Flugel to Billings, transmitting letter from University of Berlin, Oct 18, 1873, accompanied by translation made in SGO NLM

<sup>34</sup> Letters, Billings to Flugel, June 15, 1878, June 29, Aug 2, 31, 1882 NLM Billings also asked Flugel to have copied from records of principal German universities, at the Library's expense, lists of names of medical graduates so that he would know of gaps in his collection, and be able to arrange and bind his copies Letters, Billings to Flugel, May 2, July 10, 1873 NLM

<sup>35</sup> Letter, Billings to librarian, University of Zurich, Oct 27, 1874 MS/C/81

<sup>36</sup> Letter, University of Groningen to Billings, Nov 30, 1874 MS/C/81

<sup>37</sup> Letter, University of Greifswald to Billings, Jan 25, 1874 MS/C/81

<sup>38</sup> Letter, librarian, University of Munich to Billings, June 20, 1876 MS/C/81

<sup>39</sup> Letter, University of Wurzburg to Billings, Dec 1, 1877 MS/C/81

<sup>40</sup> Letters, University of Rostock to Billings, Oct 3, 1874, University of Freiburg to Billings, Sept 30, 1876, University of Halle to Billings, Dec 31, 1874 MS/C/81

<sup>41</sup> Figures are from the Billings chapter, "Medical libraries in the United States," published in 1876, and the annual reports of the Surgeon General for 1885 and 1895

<sup>42</sup> Letter, Billings to Purdy, May 16, 1872 MS/C/81

<sup>43</sup> Letter, Billings to Cheney, Apr 26, 1872 MS/C/81

<sup>44</sup> Letter, Billings to Green, May 16, 1872 MS/C/81 On this letter Billings wrote "In ans to all letters (official and other) "

## A HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

<sup>45</sup> Names of some of the societies, universities, libraries, and organizations which contributed to the Library by exchanges of gifts are in *Catalogue of the Library*, vol 3, 1873, pp vi-x, and *Index-Catalogue*, first series, vol 16, 1895, pp ix-xiv Joseph E Garland, *The Centennial History of the Boston Medical Library, 1875 to 1975*, pp 30-32

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Billings to Bossange, Apr 11, 1874 NLM

<sup>47</sup> Letter, Billings to Flugel, May 2, 1873 NLM Lists of recipients of catalogues, histories, and other publications are in the correspondence of Billings and Flugel, NLM A careful record was kept of recipients of volumes of the *Index-Catalogue*, 1880 onward

<sup>48</sup> Some letters of acknowledgment from societies are in Billings' correspondence, MS/C/81

<sup>49</sup> Letter, Billings to Chéreau, May 24, 1884 MS/C/81 See also letter, Billings to Hahn of the Paris faculty, April 8, 1885

<sup>50</sup> Letters, G V Poore to Billings, Mar 27 Apr 27, 1877 MS/C/81

<sup>51</sup> Letter, Librarian PCP to Billings, June 1, 1875 MS/C/81

<sup>52</sup> Letters, M Eller to Billings, Feb 24, Mar 29, 1877 MS/C/81

<sup>53</sup> Letter, Struck to Billings, Feb 3, 1882 MS/C/81

<sup>54</sup> Letters, Librarian, Faculty of Physicians, to Billings, Aug 2, 1882, Billings to Bowditch, Boston Medical Library Association, Sept 9 MS/C/81

<sup>55</sup> Letters, Brigham to Billings, July 7, 19, Nov 14, 18, 1882 MS/C/81 John W Farlow, *History of the Boston Medical Library*, pp 204-205

<sup>56</sup> Letter, D W Cathell to Billings, Oct 6, 1887 MS/C/81

<sup>57</sup> Letter, J H Larned, Young Men's Library, Buffalo, to Billings, Feb 4, 1884 MS/C/81

<sup>58</sup> Letters, Billings to Melvil Dewey, Columbia University, Nov 13, 1886, Dewey to Billings, Nov 10 MS/C/81

<sup>59</sup> Letters, Bridge to Billings, May 5, June 12, July 3, 23, Sept 29, 1877 MS/C/81

<sup>60</sup> Letters, L Wheeler to Billings, Feb 3 17, 24, 1880 MS/C/81

<sup>61</sup> Letter, A North and E McDonald to Billings, Mar 19, 1880 MS/C/81

<sup>62</sup> Letter, F W Draper to Billings, Oct 17, 1883 MS/C/273

<sup>63</sup> Letters, J Turnpenny to Billings, Apr 3, 7, 10, 15, Billings to Turnpenny, Apr 4, 11, 1872 MS/C/81

<sup>64</sup> Alex Williamson presented a photo of Sir William Ferguson in 1867 (letter, Billings to

Williamson, Nov 6, 1867 NA), but there seems to be no way of ascertaining whether or not this was the first

<sup>65</sup> Letter Billings to March, Oct 10, 1874 MS/C/81

<sup>66</sup> For example, photos were sent by Baron Felix-Hippolyte Larrey, Paris (letter, to Billings, Dec 28, 1874 NLM), T Lauder Brunton, London (letter, to Billings Jan 25, 1877 NLM) and C Muller, Budapest (letter, to Billings, Nov 3, 1894 NYPL) Billings sent a group of photos of himself to Felix Flugel, his agent in Leipzig, for distribution in 1877 (letter, to Flugel, Feb 24, 1877 NLM)

<sup>67</sup> Letter, Purdv to Billings, Sept 8, 1874 MS/C/81

<sup>68</sup> Letter, Foster to Billings, Nov 4, 1881 MS/C/81

<sup>69</sup> Letters, Pooley to Billings, Nov 4 24, 1881, Billings to Pooley, Nov 22, 1881 MS/C/81

<sup>70</sup> Letter, Billings to J H Pooley, Nov 22, 1881 MS/C/81

<sup>71</sup> Letters, Billings to E Wolff, Germany, Nov 13, Dec 27, 1886 MS/C/81

<sup>72</sup> Letter, Billings to Mitchell, Jan 13, 1887 MS/C/81

<sup>73</sup> Letter, Billings to E W Leavenworth Dec 10 1886 MS/C/81

<sup>74</sup> Lytt I Gardner, L G Wells, "The Wolff-Leavenworth Collection of Engraved Portraits at Syracuse University," *Bull Hist Med* 35 175-7 (1961)

<sup>75</sup> Letters, Stechert to Billings, Aug 18, 1894 Fletcher to Stechert, Aug 20, 1894 MS/C/81

<sup>76</sup> Letter, Billings to E W Leavenworth Dec 10, 1886 MS/C/81

<sup>77</sup> Letter, Billings to Surgeon General Murray, Feb 13, 1886, with endorsement by Secretary of War, letter, Billings to Surgeon General, Feb 26 MS/C/81 It is noteworthy that the military establishment was so small in 1886 that the Secretary of War became involved in such matters

Correspondence between Billings and two of his advisors on medals, William Lee and Horatio Storer, is in MS/C/81

A Allemann, "The Collection of Medical Medals in the Army Medical Museum," *Bull Med Lib Assoc* 7 5-7 (1917-18)

<sup>78</sup> Letter, Billings to Woodhull, May 13 1872 MS/C/81

<sup>79</sup> Letter, Lee to Billings, Dec 5, 1889 MS/C/81

<sup>80</sup> Letters, Harvey E Brown to Billings, June 30, July 25, 1872 MS/C/81 The manuscript on yellow fever is MS/FB/30

Letter, D A Davis to John B Hamilton, with endorsements and reply of Billings to J B

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Hamilton, Apr. 1, 1888 MS/C/81. Hamilton's notes, case reports, correspondence, memoranda, and other documents are filed under MS/B/184.

<sup>81</sup> Letters, Surg. John Campbell to E. Sprague, filed under date Aug. 17, 1877: MS/C/81.

<sup>82</sup> Letter, Billings to de Fort, Apr. 4, 1893: MS/C/81.

<sup>83</sup> Letter, Billings to H. A. Ford Aug. 7, 1874: MS/C/81.

<sup>84</sup> Table of principal medical libraries on p. 182 of Billings' chapter, "Medical libraries in the United States," in Bureau of Education Special Report, *Public Libraries in the United States* . . . , Part 1, 1876.

<sup>85</sup> Archibald Malloch, in *Celebration of the Centennial of the Library of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of the State of Maryland, 1830-1930* (1931), p. 8.