

DR. I. W. HELD

AS I KNOW HIM.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEDICATION
OF THE PATHOLOGICAL LABORATORY OF THE BETH ISRAEL
HOSPITAL TO HIM IN HONOR OF HIS SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY, JUNE 22, 1936

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Colleagues, Members of the Beth Israel Hospital Association, and
Guests:

We have gathered here this evening to pay tribute to Dr. I. W. Held on the occasion of his sixtieth Birthday, and to commemorate this event by the dedication of the pathological laboratory to him. The invitation extended to me to contribute my humble share to this function I consider as a rare privilege.

I wish I could give full and free expression to the sentiments of admiration and esteem that surge within me, but the modesty of the guest of honor bids restraint.

Dedications are honors bestowed by society upon those of its members who have given munificently to their fellow men of what they have or of what they are. Seldom does one individual merit recognition for both these deeds. In most instances too, dedications are posthumous functions.

Tonight's dedication differs from most others in several noteworthy respects. Firstly, those responsible for this noble act have ~~lifted~~ ~~risen~~ themselves above the common level of human decency, by realising that it is far more magnanimous to praise the living instead of the dead. Secondly, this is the first event in the history of the Beth Israel Hospital that a medical man was

was singled out for the award of so befitting an honor. (And thirdly, the recipient of this honor deserves our sincerest praise for both his cultural and material gifts to humanity.)

"It would seem that the direction in which education starts a man will determine his future Life" (Plato, Republic IV.) In what soil did the roots of Held's character strike?

Indubitably Held was reared in an environment of deep religiosity, in which the deed and not the word constituted the test of true devotion. Religion was bred in him, precept upon precept, it was woven into his character, became part of his culture. This intellectual love of God runs through all the phases of his life like the leading motif of a symphony. A close observation of some of the facets of this choice character will disclose their graceful setting.

Held, the physician, did not wait for Hospital appointments to start his development into an outstanding clinician. From the very beginning of his medical career, every patient became the center of his medical thinking and acting. He began "to till his little field well, knowing that much more can come out of it than from a larger one with its surface only scratched" (Osler). *Held's* earnestness and zeal for the acquisition of and perfection in medical knowledge is exemplified by his frequent pilgrimages to European medical centers, beginning with 1907. This urge for medical learning surpassed all his other wants and desires. What an inspiration it was for me to watch Held's enthusiasm and diligence at the European medical schools. With what reverence and awe he would sit at the feet of the masters and admire the different nuances of the same truth interpreted by different teachers.

When Held was asked why he attends lectures on subjects which he already masters, he replied by paraphrasing the aphorism of the ancient Hebrew scholars thus: "The science and art of medicine is like the ~~t~~ Torah, the more you study and repeat it the more it will reveal itself to you, and if you neglect its study for one day, it will neglect you for two days". In all of the thirty two years that I have known Held intimately he has not deviated from this rule.

Returning from his European pilgrimages surcharged with scientific élan he would yearn for expression. To fulfill this mission Held did not wait for stated occasions or academic platforms, but like the peripatetic aristotelians he would preach the Gospel of medicine in his automobile on the way to calls; on vacation trips; during and after meals; in fact during most of his waking hours. The size of the audience never mattered. At times when lacking in medical listeners he would be on the verge of expounding a medical thought or theory to his trustworthy factotum, Rudy, with whom he frequently settles all international complications. The place where Held rises to his full stature as clinician, teacher and man is in the wards on rounds.

Held brings to the bedside knowledge, thoroughness, the gift of a splendid memory, a profound humor, and an inimitable and unequalled geniality. In listening to his analyses and discussions of medical problems you feel and perceive that his thoughts form at a much quicker pace than the words with which he seeks to clothe them. He overwhelms his audience with the wealth of his systematised and coordinated medical knowledge which flows as freely and as gently as

the lapping waters of a clear and crystal spring. There is no trace of ostentation in Held's teaching. He considers his audience as an aggregate of his intellectual equals if not superiors, and hence takes his teaching seriously and is always prepared.

Like all great teachers Held gives heed to the remarks or suggestions of others regardless of medical rank. He is ready to praise but hesitant in censuring. He never ridicules the statement of a colleague no matter how irrelevant or unfounded it may be. When a discussion at the bedside is suddenly veered from its proper course by a lugubrious member of the staff or an outside physician Held brings the discussion to a stop by turning to the next bed pretending to have missed the medical palaver.

No matter how great Held's zeal for medical truth is, he never forgets the patient. "To him the patient is everything, the disease a convenient clinical summation in short hand, to check upon his condition and chances of recovery". (Sir Clifford Albut). Held "Treats the patient and not the disease". He frequently stays the hand of an earnest interne from overexamining a seriously ill pulmonary or cardiac case; dispenses and discourages unnecessary experiments and tests that may add to patients' discomfort and instead makes the clinician use more of his latent natural diagnostic faculties.

By these examples Held raises the student and the practitioner to higher ideals and standards of medical education and instills into them a desire to search for the truth.

Besides the word of mouth Held has also spread the results of his medical observations and experience through the pen, which has brought him mind to mind with larger numbers and has extended the sphere of his helpfulness in spreading and promoting sound knowledge, which is the greatest reward of teachers.

Held the man and friend towers as highly if not higher than Held the physician. His extramural interests are many and varied. His love for people is boundless. There is hardly a social cause to which he does not give generously. His home and his table are graced almost daily and particularly on Friday evenings with guests from all walks of life, writers, educators, artists, poets, philosophers, Rabbis and agnostics, capitalists and communists, physicians almost invariably and the younger set quite frequently. Recently German refugees, Jewish and non Jewish, medical and non medical have added considerably to these colorful gatherings at his fireside. Everybody entering this temple of humaneness is met by Dr. and Mrs. Held, the true "Esheth Chail" (The woman of valor) with open arms, a genuine hospitality, and a warmth and glow of human kinship the like of which is seldom found.

The discussions and exchange of thoughts that accompany these prandial and intellectual feasts are most refreshing and inspiring. I have had the pleasure of attending many of them and I have repeatedly carried away this great lesson, that the only true aristocracy is the aristocracy of the mind.

To these discussions Held adds from time to time his viewpoints and deductions in a manner indicating a deep insight into life, the humor of which he feels.

Dr. Held, this bronze tablet will adorn the portals of the pathological laboratory for many generations to come; it will serve as a reminder of one of nature's noblemen whose exemplary life is worthy of emulation; but enduring as this metal may be you may truly say with Horace" I have built for myself more enduring monuments, for I have enscribed my deeds upon the hearts of men".

May we be blessed by your useful presence among us for many years to come.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. P. Robin", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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