Isaac Drake and his wife both came from a long line of obscure New Jersey farmers. Poor, pious and uneducated, they fled into each other’s arms from the tyrannies of two stepmothers. Isaac was earning a meager livelihood by tending a grist mill when on October 20, 1785, his son Daniel was born near Plainfield. It is according to the American tradition that this infant, nurtured in ignorance and poverty, should grow up to be the greatest physician of the then Western country. Although almost illiterate at the age of fifteen, he became a scholar of world renown and the inspiration of generations of physicians beyond the Alleghenies. Teacher, founder of universities, writer, scientist, and indefatigable crusader for what he believed was right, he labored side by side with the founders of cities, building medical institutions while they built streets and factories, molding the physicians of the wilderness, who were isolated and illiterate as he himself had once been, into a medical profession that could make the New World with its strange diseases and novel problems as healthy as the old. Every resident of the Mississippi Valley who has been sick and has called in a doctor owes a debt of gratitude to Daniel Drake. A frontiersman of the mind, he was a leader in the second conquest of the West.¹

The medical historian will note the following excerpts from *Life of Sir William Osler* who was forever rousing in people in different localities an interest in their worthies. It was, for example, customary for him to ask persons hailing from Cincinnati when they were going to put up a monument to Daniel Drake, for he had made a vow never to visit there until one was erected. One of Osler’s characteristic notes was sent to a former Johns Hopkins pupil, Paul G. Woolley, at the time dean of the Medical Department of the University of Cincinnati; it concerns chiefly an old grievance harbored against the city:

“March 21, 1912

“Dear Woolley:

“So glad to have your letter, and to hear that the

Pasteur book was appreciated. I am sure you will be able to do splendid work where you are. They have always had a fine set of men there, and they only need a little stimulation and encouragement. I want to see a fine monument to Daniel Drake in Cincinnati, one really worthy of the man. He was a great character, and did a remarkable work for the profession in the West. I hope to see some rich Cincinnatian put up a $25,000 monument to him—he is worth it. He started nearly everything in Cincinnati that is good and has lasted. If anybody will give the amount I will come out and give a regular "Mississippi Valley" oration . . . ."

The Association of Medical Librarians, with sixteen members present and Osler in the chair, met in Saratoga, and Osler read a delightful address on "Some Aspects of American Medical Bibliography." . . . "There are many single volumes for which you will be on the lookout. In many ways Daniel Drake is the most unique figure in the history of American medicine. Get his 'Life' by Mansfield, and his 'Pioneer Life in Kentucky.' He literally made Cincinnati, having 'boomed' it in the early days in his celebrated 'Picture of Cincinnati, 1815.' He founded nearly everything that is old and good in that city. His monumental work on 'The Diseases of the Mississippi Valley' is in every library; pick out from the catalogues every scrap of his writings . . . ."

Dr. M. A. Blankenhorn in his "A Visit to the Grave of Daniel Drake" states, "The full significance of Dr. Daniel Drake's life in early Cincinnati and the details of his conspicuous role in medical education were once well known to Cincinnatians. Now he is thought of mainly by those who see his bronze likeness in the lobby of the Cincinnati General Hospital (and wonder who he was) or by the occasional doctor who is mindful of the early medical history of the United States, especially the pioneer times."^3

Dr. Blankenhorn goes on to describe his visit to Dr. Drake's grave in Spring Grove Cemetery and the plain marble gravestone in a dignified setting, well kept and not notably

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neglected except that erosion had obscured all but the deepest-cut inscription. The caretaker, Mr. C. R. Runyon, knows of no certain way to preserve or protect this monument. He suggests the inscriptions be preserved by putting them into bronze, and the bronze plates be applied to the stone.

It was the object of Dr. Blankenhorn's report to arouse an effort to preserve not only the memory of Dr. Drake, but also to preserve his monument.

Realizing that the year 1952 will be the centennial of Dr. Drake's passing, the Council of the Academy of Medicine has resolved to recognize his contributions to its existence. A committee has been appointed to formulate plans to arrange an exhibit on Drakeana, to renovate the gravestone and to perhaps establish a Daniel Drake Lectureship.