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HONOR SOCIETIES¹

By Dr. E. P. LYON

DEAN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MEDICAL SCHOOL

THE other day a recent graduate of our school came in to see me. He had just completed his internship and was trying to decide whether to begin practice or to enter upon graduate study. Across his stomach—it was too low for his heart!—I observed a watch chain from which dangled four golden keys. There was Phi Beta Kappa. He was the best scholar in his class in a well-known college, and he hung that key on his chain when he took his A.B. degree. There was Sigma Xi. He gathered that in his second year of medicine by spending his spare time—oh, yes! a good man has spare time!—and his vacations in the bacteriological laboratory and writing a nice original paper. The third was Alpha Omega Alpha. Those present know how he got that. He stood second in his class in medical school, and the Minnesota Chapter took several dollars of his (father's?) money and presented him with the mystic emblem which goes

Revelations one half better, for it says, "I am Alpha and Omega and Alpha over again." Finally there was the key of the licentiate of the National Board of Medical Examiners.

As I talked with this young man I remember thinking that each of those jewels stood for a good job of work. I knew he had earned each one of them. I also thought that each combination of Greek letters represented a motto—a phrase of admonition and guidance. And I thought, "This boy deserves his baubles, but I doubt whether he could tell in a single case what the letters stand for." And I thought, "What storehouses will those keys open for this man? Alas, they will open no locks. He will have to pick the locks. I think he can do it."

Just then one of his old classmates came in, hit my man on the back and scoffed: "O boy! Lamp the decorations! Looks like a row of anchors on the side of a battle-ship! Say, Saint Peter, you ought to get a key ring and carry those things in your hip pocket."

¹Delivered before the Alpha Omega Alpha Society, St. Louis University Medical School.

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