

E. A. Stead, Jr.
What This Patient Needs Is a Doctor

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FOREWORD

"If I may use a figure, [Nature] has established the general intellectual level of the race at say, six feet. Take any billion men and stand them in a mass, and their headtops will make a floor—a floor as level as a table. That floor represents the intellectual altitude of the masses—and it never changes. Here and there, miles apart, a head will project above it a matter of one intellectual inch, so to speak—men of mark in science, law, war, commerce, etc.; in a spread of 5,000 miles you will find three heads that project still an inch higher, men of national fame—and one that is higher than those by two inches, maybe three—a man of (temporarily) world-renown; and finally, somewhere around the circumference of the globe, you will find once in five centuries of waiting, one majestic head which overtops the highest of all the others. . . . Now in that view you have the ordinary man of all nations; you have the here-and-there man that is larger-brained and becomes distinguished; you have the still rarer man of still wider and more lasting distinction; and in that final head rising solitary out of the stretch of the ages, you have the limit of Nature's output.

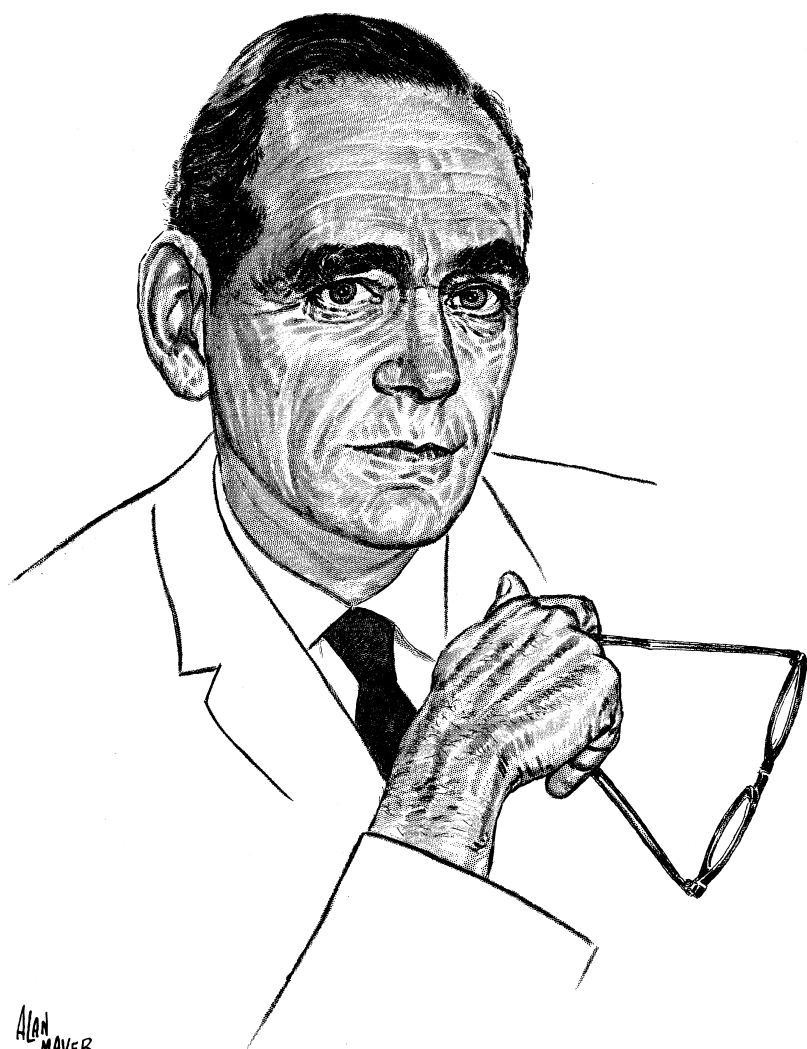
From Mark Twain, *Letters From the Earth*

"People respect, admire and love Dr. Stead because within the turmoil of his life he seems to have a simplicity, directness and detachment which makes him able to be calm and helpful. Furthermore, his character is virtuous. In times when most men are so selfish, his qualities of selflessness and dedication loom large.

"When speaking with him, I was struck with his existential state. He seemed to be deeply concentrated within himself and able to be fully in the moment. As we spoke about the nature of human suffering, he pointed out that most people live their lives in the past, or in the future, both of which don't actually exist at the moment. He shared his experience that if one is totally and selflessly aware of the present, life is magnificent. He experienced a continual 'flow of exciting, meaningful moment'. He felt that suffering is due to people's preoccupation with the past or the future without attention to the moment. He felt that human beings have a deep rational capacity for reason, clarity, virtue and love; but that we are rarely aware of it."

John Horton, M.D.

Duke Alumni Register; Vol. 60, October 1974



PREFACE

The idea for this book originated in discussions in the summer of 1976 between two of us (GSW and MPR). We attended Duke University School of Medicine in the early 1960s and later served as house officers in the Department of Medicine. We knew Dr. Stead in the years before his retirement as chairman of that department in the time (we have been *told*, anyway) of his mellowing. We heard the stories of the other years. We walked the halls and worked the hours of those “iron men” of the ’40s and ’50s. Although we did not run into Dr. Stead at 2:00 A.M. on Osler or Long wards, nevertheless he was there.

Dr. Wyngaarden came in 1967 and it became his department. Yet Dr. Stead’s tremendous influence remained. His colleagues have felt the need to keep the Stead tradition alive, to capture the essence of his wisdom. Perspicacity of Dr. Stead’s thoughts is striking because of his ability to state complicated concepts in the simplest and often wittiest language. He is eminently quotable. Fred Schoonmaker and Earl Metz gathered 368 “Steadisms” into *Just Say For Me*, published in 1967. A further tribute was provided when Henry McIntosh, chief of the Duke cardiology division at that time, chaired a special committee which organized a symposium to honor Dr. Stead in 1968. The proceedings were published in the *Annals*, Volume 69, November 1968.

Dr. Stead appreciated the problems the new chairman would face. This was especially so since Dr. Stead was retiring from the chairmanship at the vigorous age of 59. His 20 years (1947–67) as a guiding force behind medical education at Duke had left its mark. An interruption was needed. So Dr. Stead accepted a Commonwealth Foundation fellowship and spent 12 months in New York City. He then returned to an office in a far corner of Duke Hospital. We were glad to have him back.

We were now better able to learn from him than before and have been changed by this experience. He has devoted himself to teaching and has performed an invaluable service as a sounding board for the young staff. We could not resist the urge to portray him in the total context in which we have known him.

There was yet another context, unique, developed during the 26 years in which Bess Cebe had worked for Dr. Stead. Together, they had administered a program which otherwise would have required a large support staff. With the addition of Bess, our editing group was complete.

We asked Dr. Stead's permission to use his writings, and his reaction went something like, "Well, that's not how I'd spend *my* time . . .," but he had no real objection. Later, as he saw the project shape up, he warmed to the idea. We hope that some day he will admit that he rather likes it.

Our illustrator is Alan Maver. GSW is a sports picture addict and had spent years searching for the Alan Maver who drew the sports cartoons which GSW had saved from his local newspaper as a boy. Alan worked from his home in Connecticut, using as source only the photographs from department files and from Dr. Stead's walls. We are fortunate to have found Alan Maver.

We have arranged our material into sections representing certain themes: the student years, the house staff years, the shaping of faculty, the business of being a doctor, et cetera. Within each section we have tried to preserve chronology, to illustrate the way Dr. Stead's philosophy about a certain issue evolved. To tell the truth, we haven't been able to discover a lot of evolution. Apparently Dr. Stead felt the same in 1947 about internship in community hospitals as in 1977. Through the years, he maintained that "what this patient needs is a doctor."

Mrs. Evelyn Stead is recognized as an essential factor in the E.A. Stead, Jr. equation. Annual gatherings of house staff and fellows at the Stead backyard 4th of July picnic, dinner parties for third-year students, picnics at the Lake for physical diagnosis students, and countless other amenities throughout the years were marked with her singular touch and graciousness. The children are Nancy, Lucy and Bill. At this writing, Nancy is on the Duke staff in hematology; Lucy is an excellent mother of two fine children; Bill is on the Duke staff in nephrology.

The reader is given a purview of Dr. Stead through his own words in Part I, "The Stead Philosophy." For those who would prefer first to find a review of his career, they may turn to Part II, "Biography." Part III places Stead in the context of the Duke Medical Center. The essays in this part, written by colleagues, are invaluable elements in the history of the medical school and hospital.

Like the Philosophy, the Biography is entirely in the words of Dr. Stead. Most material has been lifted from his various writings but in a few instances we asked him to write specifically to fill a gap in the story.

Throughout these chapters, we have attempted to place the quotations into sequences which relate to common concepts. Often, however, our task became complicated because a single comment provided insight into multiple concepts. Related ideas are separated by one bullet (•). When a complete change in direction occurs, we have used four asterisks (* * * *). Only those quotations which have been taken from published material

have been footnoted. The remainder have been selected from his personal correspondence and addresses. Fred Schoonmaker, Bob Whalen, and Jay Skylar have kindly given us their own collections of Steadisms. The editors express their gratitude to many individuals who played important roles in the development of this book. O. William Jones, Noble David and Myrl Spivey have sent recollections of their days at Duke. John Furlow, Theodore Saros and Joe Sigler, of the Duke University staff, and Keith Sipe have provided sound advice on the preparation of the manuscript. Peggy Leggett, with the help of Dorothy Ellis, searched through the medical records to find the Osler ward rounding notes. Sidney Fortney, J.C. Gunnells, Ladd Hamrick, Douglas Kelling, Walter Kempner, O. William Jones, Robert McWhorter, Edward S. Orgain, Herbert O. Sieker, Myrl Spivey, Robert G. Sumner, and Robert Whalen have given us financial support for publication. Virginia Utley has assisted Bess Cebe in preparation of the manuscript. We especially appreciate the careful review and critique of the manuscript by Professor Irving B. Holley, professor of history, Duke University.

Preparation of *E.A. Stead, Jr.: What This Patient Needs Is a Doctor* has been an important and enjoyable experience for us. We express our final appreciation to Dr. Stead for being "the doctor."

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