Treasures from the Browsing Collection of Henry S. Plummer, M.D.

Curated by Hilary J. Lane
Instructor in the History of Medicine
Henry S. Plummer at age 30, taken in 1904.
Dr. Henry S. Plummer, Mayo’s very own Renaissance man, harbored a dream for the Mayo Clinic Library. He believed physicians who had completed their medical training were in danger of thinking there was nothing in the world but medicine. His passion was to establish a special collection of fine editions in art, literature, history, travel and philosophy for Mayo physicians to enjoy at their leisure. Sadly, Dr. Plummer did not live long enough to see his dream fulfilled but his devotion to this idea, and his discriminating taste, live on in what is affectionately called the “Browsing Collection”.

Comprising 865 volumes and originally housed on the 12th floor of the Plummer Building. This special collection was opened in April, 1937. Many of these beautiful leather bound books were purchased by Dr. Plummer or were gifts from Doctor Plummer’s personal library.

From the day the Browsing Collection was made available it was a favorite spot with physicians. There were frequent winter afternoons when all chairs in the room were occupied. The Browsing Collection was later moved into the 14th floor of the Plummer Building to allow more space for study and reflection.

“The lifetime of Henry S. Plummer was devoted to the welfare of mankind, a great life, worthily lived, an example to us all.”

– W. J. Mayo, M.D.
The Plummer House, Rochester, Minnesota
These titles illustrate the scope of the Browsing Collection:


**Catlin, George.** Illustrations of the manners, customs & condition of the North American Indians with letters and notes written during eight years of travel and adventure among the wildest ... tribes now existing. With three hundred and sixty coloured engravings from the author’s original paintings. London, Chattp & Windus, 1876. 2 vols.

**Cook, James.** A voyage to the Pacific ocean. Undertaken, by the command of His Majesty, for making discoveries in the northern hemisphere. Performed under the direction of Captains Cook, Clerke, and Gore, in His Majesty’s ships the Resolution and Discovery; in the years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780 ... Vol. I. and II. written by Captain James Cook ... Vol. III. by Captain James King ... published by order of the lords commissioners of the Admiralty. London, G. Nicol and T. Cadell, 1785. 3 vols.

**Darwin, Charles.** Geological observations on the volcanic islands and parts of South America visited during the voyage of H.M.S. ‘Beagle’, with maps and illustrations. New York, D. Appleton and company, 1897.


**Johnson, Samuel.** A dictionary of the English language in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers to which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar. London, printed by W. Strahan, for J. and P. Knapton, [and 4 others], 1755. 2 vols.
Library at Dr. Plummer’s residence
Black-Throated Diver (Loon)
Drawn from Nature by J. J. Audubon, FRSFLS.
The Birds of America. Vol. VIII. New York:
George R. Lockwood, 1839.