A plea of humanity in behalf of medical education : the annual address delivered before the New-York State Medical Society and members of the legislature at the capitol, February 6, 1849 / by Alexander H. Stevens.

A Plea of Humanity in behalf of Medical Education;

THE

ANNUAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW-YORK STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY,

AND

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE,

AT

THE CAPITOL, FEBRUARY 6, 1849.

BY

ALEXANDER H. STEVENS, M. D., LL. D.,
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

FOURTH EDITION.

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ALSO, PRESIDENT OF AND EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF SURGERY IN THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF NEW-YORK; CONSULTING SURGEON OF THE NEW-YORK HOSPITAL, AND OF THE BELLEVUE HOSPITAL, AND OF THE LUNATIC AND NURSERY HOSPITALS ON BLACKWELL'S ISLAND; HONORARY MEMBER OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF MASSACHUSETTS AND NEW JERSEY, MEXICO, &c.

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ALBANY, FEB. 8., 1849.

DR. ALEX. H. STEVENS,

Dear Sir:—The undersigned members of the legal profession having listened with deep interest and instruction to your eloquent address delivered last evening in behalf of the State Medical Society, respectfully request that a copy be furnished for publication in such manner as to secure its perusal by the public at large. Without disparagement to the able addresses heretofore delivered upon similar occasions, we believe yours to be pre-eminently fitted to awaken public attention to the bold, widespread, and pernicious frauds of empiricism, and to a just sense of the importance to the community of cherishing an educated medical profession, and that it abounds in interesting facts and statistics, relating to the invaluable blessing of health and the preservation of human life.

Very respectfully and truly
Your obedient servants,

A. TABOR.
D. D. BARNARD.
J. C. SPENCER.
A. L. JORDAN.
CHRISTOPHER MORGAN.

The editions of this Address published severally by the State Medical Society, the Senate, and the Assembly of New-York, were printed when I was unable to revise the press, for which it had not been duly prepared; as I did not anticipate that the immediate publication of it would have been deemed important. In complying with the very flattering request of distinguished members of the bar, the writer has endeavoured to render this edition less unworthy of the interest the subject has excited.

New-York, March 23d, 1849.

ADDRESS.

AN act passed at this Capitol in the year 1806, provided for the organization of a Medical Society in each county in the State; and also of a State Medical Society, to be composed of permanent members and delegates from the county societies. The by-laws of the State Society require the President to deliver an annual address. That duty having devolved upon me, I am here present to discharge it.

In the history of New-York, the early years of the present century will ever be memorable: Great conceptions were formed, and illustrious men guided her counsels. At this period she entered upon that course of policy which has since made her pre-eminent among her sister States. Then too, the leading men appreciated the importance to the public weal of a body of learned and skilful physicians, and the State fostered medical education.

Among the most prominent political men on the stage, was William W. Van Ness, to whose exertions on this floor we are in a great measure indebted f o our corporate existence. The pride of his own profession, he became, at a critical moment, the friend and patron of ours. At a later epoch, he did honour

to his seat in the Supreme Court during the most illustrious period of its history.

Still more prominent was another statesman; in political sagacity unrivalled; in judicial wisdom not excelled; the elder Spencer, whose eulogy, yet echoing from these walls, has added to our literature an enduring memorial. Then, too, flourished Clinton. His monument, less a memorial of him than of the well-merited gratitude of its founders, and which I trust will soon adorn your capitol, is of another kind. As was his wont of old, he will stand here overlooking his work; his eyes directed towards his canal at its terminus; the end of his labour, the beginning of his immortality. The monument of Clinton is material, palpable, fitted to excite the admiration of the multitude; but scholars and jurists alone can appreciate the memorial of Spencer. His praise will come from grave, sententious judges, whose words, like his own, are law.

The last whom I shall name is James Kent. His elaborate legal decisions, while associated with illustrious colleagues in the Supreme Court, will ever be read by lawyers with delight. But after he became Chancellor, his career was still more brilliant. His equity decisions are a boon to humanity. The kindliness of his nature peculiarly fitted him to soften the sometimes harsh traits of law by the milder tints of equity; to temper justice with mercy. Thus his moral feelings came in aid of his powerful intellect to guide him in his course. His Commentaries, completed by

his own hands, are *his* monument. But he left another in the hearts of all who knew him.

These great statesmen fostered medical education. The design of the present discourse is to vindicate their policy.

The medical profession is less known, its anxieties, its labours, and the inconsiderable amount of its pecuniary rewards, are less understood than those of the other professions. Our avocations are chiefly amid scenes of sickness and misery, and from these we rarely emerge to mingle with the masses of our fellow citizens, unless to unite with them for objects of general education and philanthropy. An occasion like the present, in which, as a body, we are permitted to commune with our fellow citizens, and especially with the members of the other learned professions, and of the legislature, is therefore peculiarly grateful.

The vocation of the physician is the spirit of true Christianity in action. It consists not alone in healing the sick, in soothing the afflicted, and recalling the wandering intellect, but also in cherishing a love of peace and moderation amongst all men, and in promoting moral and intellectual improvement. The practice of the healing art is an occupation intrinsically dignified. It cannot be divested of this quality by the humble condition of the practitioner, or by the repulsive nature of many of his duties; still less by the lowly condition of his patient. In the most abject human being, the true physician recog-

nises a fellow man; in the most exalted, nothing more. The offspring of the highest and the lowest, in the first moments of their existence, come under his care, alike naked and helpless. The screen which in after life conceals many of their weaknesses and some of their virtues, ever open more or less to the medical observer, is for him removed by sickness and by misfortune. Before the man of healing, the trappings of greatness are laid aside and the cloak of deformity is dropped; beauty puts off her ornaments, and without a blush, modesty raises her veil. And when, at last, man is about to take his plunge into the abyss of eternity, he strips off all disguise and stands revealed in his primitive nakedness and helplessness. Surely they who hold such relations to society should be learned, discreet and wise; trained by liberal studies and by illustrious examples, to be ever true to the cause of humanity; elevated by education, as by education alone they can be elevated, to rise above all that is sensual and sordid.

We claim to be the exclusive depositories of sound medical learning, because we alone seek it at the only true and legitimate sources.

Beginning with epochs coeval with the latter historical times of the Old Testament, the science of medicine and the art of healing are the accumulated experience and the wisdom of ages. Everything connected with the cure of disease has been laboriously examined. The smallest vessel, nerve, fibre, has been minutely described, and changes induced

by disease, have been investigated by the aid of chemistry and of the microscope. In no other science has description advanced so far. All the facts relating to the nature and cure of disease are made available to the student by careful arrangement.

The experience of any single individual, in comparison with the knowledge to be derived from a study of the experience of others, is exceedingly small, and can never render a person competent to practise medicine. The experience of a long life would not equal the amount of useful knowledge that might be imparted by a competent instructor, in a single year. The self-taught physicians are scarcely taught at all; and would be still more ignorant, if they did not obtain information in casual intercourse with men of superior education and attainments. Self-taught men are they who have had the world's training, which, for some occupations, is often a better foundation for the acquisition of knowledge than school instruction without training. A youth with an ill-trained, undisciplined mind, can scarcely emerge from the shadowy mistiness and confusion of ideas in which he has been brought up. Instruction may be acquired in after life: but in medicine the difficulty is, that the various technical and absolutely essential knowledge it requires is not susceptible of being received and impressed on the mind except in early life.

No one can be qualified to take care of the sick who does not add to his reading and oral instruction,

a practical knowledge of the structure of the human body, and bedside teaching. Experience alone is not sufficient; reading and oral instruction alone, are not sufficient. An uneducated sailor may pass his life at sea; yet it is well known he never learns to navigate a vessel. On the other hand, a young man fresh from his studies, however well educated in the theory of navigation, is not competent to take charge of a ship until he has added experience to learning.

I would speak with no unkind feeling, for I entertain none, of ignorant and deluded men, who, without previous instruction and due course of study, conceive themselves to be fitted, by their own natural talents and personal experience, to assume the responsibility of the health and lives of others; yet I cannot regard their acts as anything else than a reckless sacrifice of human life. Of that class who pretend to have received new light from other sources than observation, experience and the study of anatomy, or to possess specifics of marvellous power, no terms would be too harsh to characterize their base traffic in human life. The remedy for these evils, however, is not vituperation, but an enlightenment of public opinion. Without meaning at all to undertake this task, I cannot forbear to advert to one very prevalent error. It is often assumed that the parties interested in the discussion which the subject provokes, are the medical profession on the one hand, and the empirics on the other; and that it is a conflict of interests between them, in

which the public have little concern. Such notions are not confined to the ignorant and vulgar, but are entertained by men of the learned professions, and even by legislators. Medical brothers, you well know —fellow-citizens, you ought to know better! The real parties are the public and the regular physicians on the one side, and the charlatans and their abettors on the other. Is it credible that, without a good motive, high object, or the hope of useful result, we devote ourselves, day and night, to the care of the sick, to study and to anxious conferences with each other? that we form associations; that leaving, as in this case, our business and families at our own individual expense, we do not look for mutual improvement and to an increase of the amount of good we may be enabled to do, rather than to the increase of pecuniary gains? We claim to represent a liberal profession; and the very idea and essence of a liberal profession, as distinguished from a trade, is, that the acquisition of money is not its primary object.

Now the spirit of trade is the making of money within the limits of what the law permits, which is often far beyond the bounds of morality among professional men. Thus, in affairs of trade, a conventional morality has become established, adapted to the frail condition of our nature. If the same spirit shall ever become the general and avowed rule of conduct among medical men, then indeed will society have sunk to its lowest depths of degradation; it

will be corrupted to its very core. The evil would be greater than any political disaster.

Look at the matter for one moment: You are stricken down by sickness, as all must be, sooner or later; the physician arrives, he examines your case, and you may regard him perhaps as examining it to see how much money he can make out of it; you will fancy, and perchance truly, that he is even meditating whether prolonging your life may or may not be for his interest,—but the picture is too horrible to contemplate. Sad indeed will be the day, when the medical profession shall have become a trade, and its votaries mere speculators in the value of human life. Such a catastrophe is not impossible; for in the mere name and title of Physician, there is nothing except the influence of his associates to restrain him from acts unworthy of his high vocation. Ignorance and its concomitant pretence and falsehood, with poverty and despair of succeeding by honest conduct, goad men on in the career of crime which the misplaced confidence of others opens to them. Thus the outcasts of our profession become the worst of empirics.

Although the spirit of trade will necessarily diffuse itself throughout our profession if poorly educated men continue to be crowded into it, there is yet a sound conservative principle amongst us. I have witnessed examples of self-denial, of steady holding fast on integrity, by scores of medical men; who, amid the pinchings of poverty, have refused to

embark in schemes which would have given them wealth, had they chosen to seek it in the walks of quackery. When will the world do justice to such self-denying philanthropy?

Was the introduction of inoculation for the small-pox a speculation? Was the discovery of the preventive power of vaccination, (the labour of close, unremitting and careful research during a period of several years,) was that made or conducted with a view to personal emolument? As a matter of course, Dr. Jenner, as soon as he had completed his discovery, published it—made it free to all mankind.

When quinine was first discovered, the mode of preparing it was immediately made known. Recently, when some feeble attempts were made to obtain a patent for the use of ether, and to conceal the process of etherization, the indignation of the profession was aroused from one end of our country to the other. The money changers were driven from the temple of Humanity.

Medicine a money-making profession! Why, one-third or more of the whole practice of medical men in the city of New-York, is without remuneration! The hospitals, the alms-houses, the dispensaries, the medical and surgical cliniques, the eye infirmary, the orphan and lying-in asylums, the coloured home, the institution for the blind; in fine, all institutions of a charitable kind, so far as I know, are attended gratuitously; and many of them, by some of the oldest and most eminent medical men. Nor are

the out-door poor neglected. When they appeal to physicians, not for advice only, but even for services which keep us from our beds, they rarely ask in vain.

A money-making profession! Why the number of destitute widows and orphans of medical men became so great, that, a few years since, an association was formed, and is now in progress and successful operation, with a fund raised by their own contributions in New-York, to secure from destitution after their death, their wives and children. It would have broken our hearts to have encountered them, in our daily visits to the alms-house or asylums.

If the pecuniary rewards of physicians are so small, compared with the expenses of their education and the severity of their labours, why are so many ready to enter the medical profession? I answer, because the study of it is so delightful; and because the practice brings with it higher rewards than money can bestow. Who that feels that life is saved or prolonged by his skill, does not receive a reward? Who that has felt the warm tear of gratitude for rescuing from death a husband, a wife or child, would wish to be other than a physician?

It has been charged against us, that, wedded to old ideas and modes of treatment, we resist the progress of improvement and reject successful modes of practice, either because they involve the use of secret remedies, or of prescriptions devised by men not in the profession. Now the composition of most patent medicines is known to those of the

profession who think it worth while to seek such information; and they are not used, because they are of uncertain strength and of no peculiar value. The medical profession does receive, and with eagerness, all information likely to advance the healing art. It had adopted from popular use, burnt sponge and cod liver oil, long before chemistry discovered that they owed their efficacy to Iodine. At the present time, the knowledge of a new and valuable remedy is, in six months, spread over the civilized world. The case of ether and chloroform are examples fresh in the minds of all.

In contrast with this picture of the medical profession, let us now look at the course of pretenders. It is well-known that illiterate patients have taken the prescriptions of their own physicians, and made large fortunes with them, as patent medicines. The proprietors of patent medicines are, almost without exception, ignorant and reckless men, who have taken to quackery as a last resource—determined to make money, and without regard to the means.* Concealment, deceit, and false pretence, in some cases avowed, and extending even to miraculous clairvoyance, characterize their whole proceedings.

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* One of the three most prominent patent medicine proprietors in the city of New-York was not long since an insolvent dry goods storekeeper, another was a book-binder, and the third a clerk in a lamp-store in Fulton-street. The advertising outlay of these men is reckoned by its fifty and hundred thousand dollars per annum.

No worse character can be given of them than that which they give themselves: Each disclaims his own calling, is ashamed of his companions, and leaves to all the others the burden of its infamy. Their business is pursued as a *trade*, and its operations regarded as fair business transactions. A trade in human life! Would you have *us* traders? Think of it. One of you may be threatened with apoplexy: as a tradesman, it might injure the business of your Physician to prevent the attack by proffered advice.

But I have taken, says some one, this or that secret medicine, and am the better for it. This in some cases may be true, although not in all the cases in which it is supposed to be so. The statement is an opinion, an inference from a fact which may have had other causes. But for the sake of argument, let it be admitted as a fact. Suppose further, what has been taken is a bilious pill: might it not have been still better for you to have taken some other prescription, or similar materials in a different way—in a larger or a smaller dose, or at different intervals, or with different dietetic preparation? It would be very improbable that you had by chance adjusted all these points to your case as well as a medical man would have done it for you. But I have tried a regular physician, says another, and he did me no good. This is a reason why you should educate us better: for who will seriously contend that there is no art or science of medicine; that mankind have not

learned any thing valuable respecting the preservation and restoration of health?

I have given the most favourable case I could imagine, for the use of secret medicines. In a very large proportion of cases they contain drugs of great power, and often do irreparable injury, little of which ever comes to light.

But it may be urged, every man is competent to judge of the effects of medicine upon himself, and the community will not take medicines which do them no good. This is not altogether true: The mechanic, who in former years took his stated allowance, (half a pint of rum per day,) never dreamed that he was not the better for it. And Solomon's Balm of Gilead, which was fifth proof French brandy, enjoyed a univeral reputation for steadying the trembling hand, raising the spirits, and procuring sleep. It was once indispensable to a fashionable toilet. Sq Godfrey's Cordial, which is merely a weak opiate, enjoys a great reputation for quieting peevish children; hundreds of whom are dosed with it even unto death.

No discoveries of value have ever resulted from charlatanism. The whole history of quackery is the history of men who have gained notoriety and riches; and then, with their medicines, have soon sunk into oblivion. Humanity owes them nothing, but abhorrent recollections of their vile deceptions.

Reverend friends, permit me to commend this matter to your attention. We are disciples of the one

Great Physician; your mission is to explain and enforce his teachings, ours to follow with humility his humane employment. How important is it that we should co-operate in our great duties! We are pained to see how thoughtlessly influential names are given to a class of men whom we look upon with abhorrence; even as you would regard the introduction of an infidel into your pulpits, or as a virtuous matron would regard an outcast of her own sex introduced into her family, so do we regard the introduction of empirics among our patients. We entreat you to remove this source of irritation between us. Learned gentlemen of the legal profession, and you who through the periodical and other writings so powerfully impress the public mind, one and all, we of the medical profession tender you the right hand of fellowship—let us co-operate in the discharge of the great duties of our peculiar position. Our political and social structure rests not on Kings, Lords, and Commons, nor on the Noblesse and Tiers Etat, nor on written constitutions, but much more upon the learned professions, Divinity, Law and Physic. Let us act in unison in strengthening the foundation of our social and political institutions.

It can scarcely be doubted that our continent is destined to exhibit man in a higher development than he has yet attained. It would seem as if it had been kept back, occupied only ad interim by a savage people, until a race of men in the old world had become fitted to make it the seat of a higher civilization.

This idea is alike analogous to the gradation of the successive developments of creation, revealed by geology, and to the unmistakable indications of events now in progress. The duties of American legislators in relation to the social, in which will also depend the political condition of our country, are therefore to be regarded as of incalculable importance to mankind.

I proceed now to show what is doing and what has been done by medical men towards meliorating the condition of society. Much of the influence of physicians is silently exercised upon the matrons of our country, often more enlightened than their husbands. By his conversation, parents are often led to give their children a GOOD EDUCATION; a taste for literature and science is fostered; the fireside joys are increased; the domestic hearth is gladdened; the grosser vices are excluded, and the general tone of society becomes elevated. This view of the subject presents even financial advantages; for vice is unprofitable, and crime, its legitimate offspring, is expensive to the State.

In looking at the actual condition of our country in the scale of civilization, and the means by which she has attained her elevated rank, and conceding all that we owe to our pilgrim fathers, those far-seeing, highly educated men, who when filled with noble aspirations, separated from their native England in her brightest days because she was unworthy of them, the medical profession may

justly claim for itself a degree of influence second to none of the learned professions, in elevating our country to its present high position. Peculiarly free from bigotry, fanaticism and intolerance; mixing on terms of intimacy with all classes, it forms one of the strongest bonds by which society is held together. Accompanying the pioneers in their most remote settlements, physicians have ever taken an active and leading part in measures of public utility. Is a school-house to be built, a library to be formed, or a course of lectures to be delivered, the medical man is most commonly the individual who commences, or most efficiently promotes the undertaking.

The most untutored savage bows almost in worship before the MEDICAL MISSIONARY, who holding in his hands the issues of life, practically illustrates by healing the sick both the superior power and the more enlarged philanthropy of civilized and Christian people. Hence the unequalled success of Dr. Parker, in China, and Dr. Grant, in Persia. Religion to be taught successfully must like medicine be taught practically.*

Dr. Rush paved the way to the great TEMPERANCE reform, and that cause, at a later period, had no advocates more powerful than Dr. Sewell, of Washington, and Dr. Watts, of New-York, formerly President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Among the living it now reckons Dr. Warren, of Boston, and

* Whatever may have been asserted about the skill of our aborigines, nothing is more certain than that they prize most highly the services of our educated physicians.

Dr. Muzzy, of Cincinnati, and a host of other medical men.

The elder Dr. Bard was the founder of the NEW-YORK HOSPITAL—an institution of which the State may be so justly proud, and from which has emanated no small portion of those discoveries and improvements in the healing art, for which our country has been distinguished.

For the first establishment of an ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS in our State, humanity is indebted to the late Thomas Eddy, a former governor of that institution; but from medical men he received all the aid their influence could give. Formerly, even within my own personal knowledge, that unhappy class of persons were left, sometimes, to wander abroad, the terror of school-boys; living in the woods, without shelter, and subsisting on what they could collect in the fields and amongst the rejected offals of slaughter-houses.

Persons in a condition of temporary insanity, or harmlessly eccentric, may, like dogs, be goaded to confirmed madness. In past times, even without other pretence than an outbreak of passion, purposely provoked by the arts of impatient avarice, or other passions, men were arrested as lunatics, chained in solitary cells, or crowded in dungeons, cold and dreary; excluded alike from the light of heaven and the beams of human sympathy; where

"No light, but rather darkness visible,
"Served only to discover sights of wo;

"Regions of sorrow, doleful shades where peace
"And rest can never dwell; hope never comes,
"That comes to all." * * * *

"The key of this infernal pit *we* keep."

Some among you may be our prisoners. Decide what sort of men you will have for your jailors. Shall they be educated men, with the intelligence, and humanity, and refined feelings, which education alone can bestow? Or shall they not?

To the medical profession society owes an exemption from a great portion of these terrible abuses; and on a well-educated profession it may ever rely with entire security. History does not offer a single notable instance in which a physician has conspired against the welfare of his patient. The successful exercise of the art brings with it joys that make humanity not an instinct merely, but a ruling passion. Philip had not poisoned the cup of Alexander, and Alexander's trust in him was well deserved. Desgenettes did not accede to the proposal of Napoleon, to give opium to the plague patients at Jaffa. No physician would have done so. The refusal did not honour Desgenettes; the proposal was an insult, and as such he felt it, when he said in reply, "My business is to prolong life, not to shorten it." Which of the two, the indignant physician, or the abashed chief, showed true heroism on that occasion? The soldier of an hundred battles may be, after all, mean, selfish and cowardly. The highest and most noble character-

istics of our nature, the nearest approach to its only perfect type, consists in the tenderest regard for the welfare of others. Military success and skill pale before the brighter glories of humanity. In the declaration of the commander of our army at Buena Vista: "I will never leave behind me my sick and wounded," we recognise the true hero. Washington himself, had he uttered such a sentiment, could have had no more honourable epitaph.*

It was my happiness to know, as a humble student might be supposed to know, and to visit, an illustrious professor, the great Pinel; he who first freed the insane from their manacles. Long afterwards, Esquirol, his successor, pointed out to me the very hall where Pinel, having first ordered the keepers to unbind the infuriated demoniacs, boldly went in among them and said in effect, "Peace, be still," and they obeyed the voice of kindness and intrepidity. Thus began a new era in the treatment of the insane.

It was this same Pinel, who, when the people of Paris were worshipping the Goddess of Reason, was accosted by a celebrated literary man, who said to him, "I am writing an Encyclopedia of Atheists, and intend to give you a place that shall be worthy of you." "I thank you," replied Pinel, "for the honour you design for me, and in return, let me say,

* Another declaration of a far different kind has been imputed to the commander of our army at Buena Vista; the tendency of which is rather to encourage what much less needs encouragement among the rising generation; and this sublime sentiment, of which so happy a use might be made, has been comparatively overlooked.

that in the second edition of my work on lunatics and idiots, which will soon be published, I shall not fail to insert *your* case."

Not lunatics only, real or pretended, are under the power of physicians; the whole community is under their power; a power for evil no less than a power for good; and it cannot be otherwise. Much then does it behoove Legislators to provide for the liberal education of medical men. It is the best, the only security society can have for the rightful exercise of their power. A liberal education in medicine, a consciousness of the capacity of doing good, renders all false pretence unnecessary; begets high aims and lofty purposes, and a habit of relying on integrity and truth.

Institutions for the instruction of the DEAF AND DUMB, were established almost simultaneously in New-York and Hartford; in the one case by Dr. Samuel L. Mitchill and Dr. Samuel Ackerly; in the other by Dr. Cogswell. The Institution for the INSTRUCTION OF THE BLIND owes its origin to Dr. Howe, of Massachusetts. An effort has been made by Dr. Backus, late Senator from Rochester, to establish a school for the education of IDIOTS. It is earnestly hoped that, during the present session, time will be found to carry out the plan of that benevolent legislator.

It will not, I trust, be unfitting in me to say a few words in regard to this matter, which the State Medical Society recommended to the favourable con-

sideration of the Legislature two years since. Children of weak intellect cannot receive instruction in our common schools, which are adapted only to those of a higher capacity; but it does not follow that they are incapable of receiving any education; a dog, a monkey, a pig, a bird, and even a fish, are capable of some degree of education; still more so are weak minded children.

We call them all idiots:—few or none of them are absolute idiots; and even the most feeble minds may be strengthened by a culture adapted to their condition; without such culture they gradually become hopelessly weak. The experiment has been tried abroad, and it has completely succeeded. In Massachusetts a medical man is now conducting a private school of this kind.

Almost all ASSOCIATIONS FOR THE PROMOTION OF LITERATURE AND SCIENCE have been formed by medical men. The medical schools have, until recently, been almost the sole means of advancing and diffusing a knowledge of the natural sciences. The connection between medicine and general science is intimate; a very large proportion of all the discoveries in chemistry, and that part of natural philosophy which is applicable to the USEFUL ARTS, have been made by men who were educated as physicians.

Of the value of science to the well-being of society, it is scarcely necessary for me to speak before such an audience. The labourer in science digs and delves into the recesses of nature, and brings up the

precious ore of truth. The man of invention picks it up and makes with it a fortune.

Whence came the Quadrant and the Nautical Tables, without which it would be difficult and dangerous to make a voyage to Europe, but from the science of astronomy? or the steam engine, but from the profound researches of philosophers into the qualities of steam? or the magnetic telegraph, fresh from the science of electro-magnetism, perfected chiefly by Ampêre and our Henry? From the hands of science came the daguerreotype and the electrotype art, by which one may do the labours of an hundred.

England formerly sent her linen to be bleached in Holland; there grass and sunshine were cheap. Bleaching is now done by a chemical process, almost for nothing. Every yard of linen or cotton is afforded one penny cheaper by means of this discovery.

At Lowell, Massachusetts, for the purpose of fixing colours in calico prints, it had become necessary to keep two hundred cows. Dr. Dana, at the request of the manufacturers, made a chemical substitute, and saved that great expense.

Agriculture, the noblest of all arts, excepting the art of healing, has been improved more by medical men than by any other class, except the farmers themselves. Among other of our medical men who have improved agriculture, Dr. Harris and Dr. Fitch, by their entomological discoveries, have added greatly to the productiveness of this country.

But the relations of medicine to civilization, education, social happiness, morality, temperance, philanthropy, science and the useful arts, however important, are of far less value than its legitimate object, the restoration to and the preservation of HEALTH.

From the cradle to the grave, aye, even from a period antecedent to birth, every individual is enjoying the advantages of medical science. Almost every child receives the blessing of vaccination, and is thereby protected from a loathsome and often fatal pestilence. A very large portion of the community are placed by disease or injury in a condition in which their usefulness or their lives are preserved solely by medical skill.

Throughout the civilized world the duration of human life has increased, and is steadily increasing with the advancement and diffusion of medical science and medical art.

In the city of Geneva, in the 16th century, 1 individual in 25 died annually. For the 18th century, 1 in 34; at the present time, 1 in 46.* With us the mortality is greater. I estimate it at 1 in 40, the proportion of children being larger, and childhood being the period of the greatest mortality. In the British navy, among adults, none of whom are very aged, the mortality is only 1.3 in a 100. Seventy years ago, the mortality in the British navy was 1

* Annales d'Hygeine Publique.—Tom. xvii.

in every 10. In 1808, 1 in 30; 1836, 13.8 among one thousand—a diminution to less than a seventh of the rate in 1770. In the American army, with a corps of medical officers not excelled by that of any other country, the mortality at the posts on various points of our extensive frontier, during the period embraced between Sept. 30th, 1842, and Sept. 30th, 1845, when alone during the last thirteen years, the army was quiet and in garrison, the mortality was 1.23 per cent.; and amongst 70,298 cases treated, there were 334 deaths including accidents and suicides;* less than 1 in 200.† In London, the mortality in the middle of the last century was 1 in 32. In the year 1838, the mortality was 1 in 36. I quote from the annual report of the Register General. Within the last twenty years the mortality of Russia has been 1 in 27. Prussia, 1 in 36; France, 1 in

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* Dr. Witherspoon, in his letter to Dr. T. G. Mower, politely communicated to me, says: "In drawing up the table, we have been struck with the remarkable averages in many of the diseases year after year; and not in the diseases only, but the injuries—for instance, fractures in 1843, 55; in 1844, 34; in 1845, 51. Punctured wounds, 88—85—70, &c." An exemplification among innumerable others that might be offered of the value of statistical information "At the Naval Hospital at Chelsea, Mass., during the last five years, the average number of deaths has been 1 in 22; at Brooklyn, 1 in 28; Naval Asylum Hospital near Philadelphia, 1 in 14; Portsmouth, 1 in 23; Pensacola, 1 in 27; General average, 1 in 25.22." In comparing the mortality of the Naval with the Civil Hospitals, it should be borne in mind that many of the patients in the former are suffering from chronic diseases, and are merely invalids.

† The Surgeon General, in furnishing this information, adds in a postscript, "you will be gratified to find that these tables are made out by two of your own pupils, Dr. Coolidge and Dr. Witherspoon;" they were trained in the New-York Hospital.

39.07; Holland, 1 in 39; Belgium, 1 in 43.01; England, 1 in 43,07; Sicily, 1 in 22; Greece, 1 in 30; Philadelphia, 1 in 42.03; Boston, 1 in 45; Brooklyn, 1 in 43; New-York, 1 in 37.83; the immigrants have made our mortality greater than that of our sister cities; in other respects it has diminished with the advance of medical science. These statistical statements might be multiplied at great length; but enough have been given to show conclusively the prodigious extent to which human life has been lengthened with the advance and diffusion of medical science, beyond its duration in former periods, and beyond its present duration in the less enlightened countries of Europe.

As respects the condition of medical practice in this State, my own personal observations, and the opinion of well educated foreign physicians, lead to the belief that the American practitioners living in the country, are zealous in seeking knowledge, quick in their perceptions, practical in their habits, and eminently successful in their treatment of the ordinary maladies that come under their care. But for the very large class of more rare cases of a different description, and for the management of injuries and operations requiring a knowledge of anatomy, their medical education, in many instances, entirely unfits them. It cannot be doubted, that the average period of human life might be lengthened by the greater diffusion of medical science among them.

In general, the errors of our practice revealed to us

by time, by our brothers whom we consult, or by the examination of bodies after death, are little known to the world; although we confide them to one another for mutual improvement. But although fatal error must always occur, it is right that the public should know that they would be less frequent if the profession were better educated. In that case many limbs and lives would be saved that are now lost.

When I was a student of medicine, I saw a boy who had been wounded by a scythe in the leg, and who died after a lapse of some weeks in consequence of repeated bleedings from a divided artery; and no medical man in the neighbourhood was competent to take it up: not one nearer than the city of New-York, sixty miles distant; and the boy died, solely because there was not one to do that which would most certainly have saved his life. Similar cases are not rare. I have gone by steam a distance of 200 miles to operate for hernia, an operation rarely admitting of much delay, and found upon inquiry, that there was no one within sixty miles competent to perform the operation. Indeed, I have seen many fatal cases where the existence of the disease had not even been suspected.

During a long series of years I have been extensively employed as consulting physician and surgeon, and of course have had opportunities of knowing much of the actual condition of a wide circle of city and country practice. It has often happened that for many successive days I could note at least one un-

necessary death occurring within my own observation or knowledge.

Until the last two years, the New-York Almshouse, with its hospital, has been under political management. The profession had no part in directing or advising in regard to the choice of its physicians. The mortality during a period of 20 years was more than 20 per cent. per annum.

Two years since, a new organization was made, and the whole establishment was placed under the control of one resident physician and an efficient corps of unpaid physicians and surgeons. During these two years the mortality has been reduced to about 12 per cent. per annum, which is about 1 per cent. above that of Pennsylvania Hospital, the Massachusetts General Hospital, and the New-York Hospital; all which institutions have long been managed well.

In the Nursery Hospital on Blackwell's Island, during the year 1847, the whole number treated was 1321, of whom 307 died, being a per centage of 23¼. In the year 1848, in the same hospital, under another organization, the number treated was 1077, of which 143 died, being a per centage of 13.27; rather more than half of the former mortality.

There is another branch of medical science, the knowledge of which is still less diffused among the profession than the strictly curative part. I allude to that which consists in the prevention of disease by what is called Hygeine. Of the effects of what is termed general Hygeine in rendering salubrious unhealthy localities, we have a striking example in our

own State in the Onondaga valley: Once it was exceedingly unhealthy, owing to the prevalence of bilious fevers; now it is quite the reverse. The selection of high and dry situations for dwellings, the draining of the ground around and about them, sleeping in the upper story in preference to the lower, avoiding to go into the fields before breakfast; or remaining in low lands after nightfall, and especially resting there after severe labour during the summer and early autumnal months, are examples of Hygeinic rules, which would tend greatly to diminish mortality if properly attended to. But the application of Hygeine to particular cases, is of equal importance: Every person has a physical and moral constitution peculiar to himself, and different from that of all others. The complicated machine, the human body, has in every one, weak points, where even in apparent good health, the sagacious physician knows disease will be most likely to fix itself. A particular climate or locality, and with it a particular regimen as respects eating, sleeping, exercise mental and bodily, clothing, bathing, the air of rooms, &c., is adapted to each and every individual; and he may reasonably calculate on a longer continuance of health and life, by informing himself on these points and governing himself accordingly. A well educated physician is alone competent to advise in these cases.

I cannot better illustrate this matter in a popular way, than by adverting to what all now understand

of the baneful effects of the use of ardent spirits: Twenty years ago the public mind was totally uninformed on that subject. So even in the present day, a very large portion of the adult population are, unknown to themselves, pursuing some course that is gradually undermining their health. The use of strong coffee, or tobacco, confinement in rooms heated by anthracite coal or by furnaces, without water and due ventilation, are a few of the many causes of disease, which the more general diffusion of sound medical knowledge, alone can remove. I believe life may be prolonged to a greater extent in this way than even by the better treatment of injuries and diseases.

Nothing can be more vague and uncertain than an attempt to settle the proportion of deaths for the want of medical skill in the State of New-York. Some members of the medical profession estimate it as much higher than others, and physicians vary in their own estimates. The experience of every individual must have brought to his knowledge instances of death resulting from the want of good medical treatment.

To what extent might the mortality of this State be diminished? From a very careful and extensive inquiry among medical men; some of whom have estimated as high as ten per cent., the majority of them over five and the lowest two per cent.; I adopt the last estimate, that being sufficient for my argument, although I believe it is less than half of the true proportion of unnecessary deaths among us.

Governor Fish estimates our population at 3,000,000; the annual mortality I suppose is one in forty. This would make the annual deaths 75,000. Two per cent. of which, is 1,500 unnecessary deaths; probably not one-half, perhaps not one-quarter of the real amount, yet quite enough to startle a philanthropist and make him look to the means of arresting this loss of human life. These means must be sought in the improvement of the medical profession, by fostering medical education.

I might here close the argument; but "there is a lion in the way;" a Cerberus guards the treasury. He may be deaf to the voice of humanity, and insensible to every thing but the golden bough: let us seek it.

How much are the bones, sinews and muscles of a hired labourer worth to you, who look after the finances of the State? how much does his toil add yearly to the treasury or canal fund?

A common labourer is worth $120 a year and his subsistence. Allow for his clothing and luxuries $40, the balance goes to enrich the State. His employer pays him the $120 and boards him; but the dollars only change hands, and the value of his labour is the equivalent both of his wages and his subsistence, whatever that may be. Suppose it to be $80, this he consumes, and it is lost to the State; but on the other hand, his labour has enriched the State to the full amount of wages and subsistence. He has converted a marsh or a woodland into a meadow or arable field;

or he has assisted in building a house; or in raising corn or wheat or cattle. Your tax collector notes in his book the increase of arable land, or the new house, and your canal collector forgets not to take the toll on his produce on its way to market.

But all are not farm labourers, and the labour of women and children is not so profitable as that of men. On the other hand, a farmer working with his heart, his head, and his hands, on his own soil, does the work of two common labourers. A mechanic or an artisan often does still more, even to the extent of five-fold as much as a common labourer. They who point out the path of duty and indicate the sources of true happiness; who wisely legislate, expound or faithfully execute the laws; capitalists and commercial men who prosecute useful enterprises, engineers, and not least they who promote the public health; among all these classes are many whose labours are worth over an hundred fold more than the work of an ordinary pair of hands. There is, indeed, a small per contra account into which I will not enter, it being sufficient for my argument to assume the very low estimate of $50 as the average annual value of every person in the State. The Hon. Horace Mann, of Massachusetts, (whose authority needs no confirmation from any thing I can say,) estimates the cost of every child before he attains mature age, at $500. An adult should be worth more than the cost of rearing a child; for otherwise the rearing children would impoverish the State, which evidently is not

the fact; certainly not in this country, where, as we think, human life is worth more than in any other, and where it behooves the State to look to the preservation of it with proportionate care. At the South, a collection of slaves is worth $400 per head.

If we estimate the value of every individual in the State at $750, the loss of 1500 individuals would be $1,125,000 per annum. A diminution of the mortality to the extent of two per cent. would add to the average life of every individual of this State, 9 months and 22 days; of only one per cent., 4 months and 26 days. If every labourer or inhabitant enrich the State $50 a year, or $1 per week, then 9 months and 22 days of life are worth $33.37½, while they would cost 2½ cents. This saving could be accomplished by an annual expenditure of 2½ cents assessed on every individual.

At Mr. Kemble's iron works, at Cold Spring, the workman pay Dr. Sands, a well educated young physician, 6¼ cents a week, $3.50 per year. Slaves at the South are attended for $1 a year.

Let us suppose that the good people of this State, one with another, pay their physicians only one dollar a year. If 2½ cents be added to this dollar, ample provision would be made for supplying every part of the State with learned and skilful physicians, and to support your agricultural professors.

But, gentlemen, I fear I have insisted too long on this branch of the argument. Human life has a value beyond that of money. A wise legislature, in

looking after the interests of its constituents, will not fail to consider human health and life as the foundation of all interests.*

Who can adequately realize the terrible condition of a human being, whom death is staring in the face; while he is yet persuaded that human skill could save him? Who among you can say that such may not be the condition of some dear friend of his own? No one is willing to resign himself to the stroke of Providence until human aid has been tried in vain; that aid is not afforded to all, unless the community is supplied with learned and skilful physicians. It is the duty no less than the interest of government to take care of the lives of its citizens. They who labour for the wealth of the State, have a right to expect that a well educated physician should be within their reach, when they or their families are disabled from injury or disease.

In the present condition of things, I grant that the wealthy are, for the most part, provided for; but the masses, the bone and sinew of the State, require your aid. He is no friend of the poor who would withhold from them a shadow of right; he is no friend of the

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*The wealth of the community is not represented exclusively by what is called the *productive* wealth, any more truly than that is represented by the portion of it which is exported, and thereby pays for our importations or brings back specie. Bread, without a clear conscience and a cheerful state of mind to aid in digesting it, loses much of its value. Useful knowledge, religion, morality, contentment, and NATIONAL GLORY, are elements of national wealth; and within certain limits, the fine arts, belle-lettres, all innocent and healthful amusements, are equally so with material productions.

rich who would not hasten to grant it. Men of property are uneasy at the blows which have been aimed at it. Do they forget that property has its duties as well as its rights? and that if it is to be defended, it must be defended with clean hands? The middle class of the community taxes itself even more than the State taxes it, for various objects of education and benevolence, essential to the well being of society, and to the security and value of property. Do the very rich give their time and their money in proportion to their means? Even if they did both, which all of them do not, they would not do all that even-handed justice requires. The millionaire has but one pair of hands wherewith to defend his wealth. The poor, with little property of their own to defend, are the defenders of the property of others; soldiers, but without the soldier's pay; for

> "they also serve
> Who only stand and wait."

In securing for all classes alike the advantages of the healing art, you will do something towards balancing the account between property and the mass of the community. By acts of kindness alone, was the feudal system rendered tolerable. The old English gentleman, who "ne'er forgot the poor," and the lady of the manor who prepared the posset for the peasantry, held society together by the bonds of love. Injustice begets alike, crime and rebellion. It fills our prisons; it overturns and revolutionizes em-

pires; it begat the tribunes; it brought forth Mirabeau.

It is not the medical profession which is chiefly interested in asking you to provide good medical aid for all classes. Those now in practice, have no pecuniary interest in urging the state to provide for the better education of medical students. The public must always employ physicians; and it rests with the legislature to decide upon the degree of knowledge and skill which they think it right to give to men entrusted with the care of the health and lives of the people. In supporting your common schools, it is not the teachers for whom you legislate; and in supporting medical schools, it is not the medical professors and still less the medical profession, on whom your bounty is bestowed. Neither is it the rich who will be chiefly benefited by the greater diffusion of medical knowledge. They can obtain good medical aid as it is; and their sons they can send abroad to be educated, if they please.

But it may be answered, that an appropriation was made to establish a Medical College in New-York, more than forty years since; and even within the last year, the sum of *seven thousand dollars* has been divided among the four medical schools of the State —less than one-quarter of a cent for each inhabitant. I remember to have heard of a man, who, being reproached by a neighbour for neglecting the education of his son, for not attending with sufficient care to his bringing up, replied, that within the year he had

already devoted *half a day* to that matter—to giving him wholesome instruction; and that if it were really necessary, he was willing to devote another to the same object! A new generation has grown up since that appropriation was made; and your offspring, now on the stage, greatly need another *half day* of your parental care.

The common schools have grown out of that instruction of the public mind to which medical men educated at your medical schools have in no small degree contributed. Will you throw down the ladder by which you have risen? There is not, there cannot be any conflict of interests between the various departments of education—all are alike essential to the well-being of society, and alike entitled to the fostering care of the legislature. A quarrel between the common schools or academies, and the higher seats of learning, literary, scientific or medical, would be like the quarrel of the belly and the members in Æsop's Fables.

The defect of the American character, as regards scientific acquirements, is overweening self-confidence, or an undervaluing of the necessity of technical knowledge, for the successful pursuit of the learned professions; and consequently a lamentable deficiency or superficiality in their acquirements. This characteristic has tended to deteriorate the general standard of medical education. Among other causes, now happily removed, may be cited the general prejudice against the dissection of human

bodies, the want of great hospitals, and the low standard of preliminary instructions.

Medical education requires years of study, and physicians are subjected to great expense in books and instruments. Our scattered population affords no adequate remuneration for such an outlay. In view of this condition of things, the medical colleges cannot induce our young men to undergo a thorough course of study; and they, or some of them, send them forth with their degrees, with very little or not any practical knowledge of diseases, and otherwise very imperfectly qualified to discharge their very responsible duties. In advocating a higher standard of medical education, and the bringing of it within the reach of a greater number, I am fully aware that a sparse population cannot afford adequate remuneration for talents and acquirements of the best order. In the very nature of things, these can only be maintained in large towns; but it is important, and it is practicable, that every neighbourhood should possess at least one physician competent to treat injuries, to perform operations demanded by sudden emergencies, and to manage judiciously acute diseases. But at present, men of this class (with some striking exceptions) are found only in the cities and larger towns.

Of late years the State has given the medical schools in general, of which the number is greater than in France, about half enough to pay the expenses of the medical buildings. The expenses of the

museums and laboratories, and other incidental expenses, together with the emoluments of the teachers, are met by the fees received from students. A school is attractive to students which gives degrees upon easy terms; whose examinations are not too rigid. It is therefore quite possible for a school to be flourishing, while the general standard of the education of its students is becoming debased. The attention of the medical profession in the United States is now very thoroughly aroused to a sense of these evils, and they are resolved, if possible, to remedy them; and having associated for that purpose, it cannot be doubted that they will succeed. The remedies I would suggest to the legislature, have for their object to bring a good medical education within the reach of a larger number of students, by opening the doors of our medical schools without charge, or on easy terms, to all that have received the necessary preliminary education, and to those only.* To insist upon a longer period of study, to make the examinations more strict, and to relax these rules in no case whatsoever; and withal, to require all the schools to confer degrees according to law. The total number of students is already too large, but of those properly educated, altogether too small.†

* Much of the time of the professors of Chemistry is now occupied in teaching Natural Philosophy, which the medical student should have learnt before he began to study medicine.

† Medicine not being a remunerating profession to those who incur the expenses of thorough instruction, two great ends should be sought: the more easy acquisition of medical education by those who have been well trained in

A distinct professor of agriculture might also be attached to each medical school. The professors should be paid by salaries, leaving it to your wisdom to provide additional means to promote and foster that great interest.

If New-York opens her medical schools, or any one of them, the other States must follow her example ;* thus, gentlemen, you will legislate in this great matter for the whole Union—for the whole Continent.

The Governor has directed your attention to the encouragement of agriculture and the mechanic arts. Surgery is a mechanical art—the art of arts. We ask you to foster our handicraft. Farmer legislators, sow with good husbandry your dollars on the field of medical science ; a great common not fenced in by patents, and you will receive ample returns.

On the petition of the American Medical Association, last year, Congress passed a bill excluding the importation of spurious drugs. It remains with you

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preliminary studies, and the exclusion from the ranks and collegiate honours of the profession of poorly educated candidates. The only parties who might suffer in the event of such a change would be some of the teachers. In some instances medical schools have been formed like joint stock companies—matters of mere speculation. Without a Hospital, it is idle to attempt to impart practical knowledge to a collection of students in medicine, and a Hospital of 100 beds, I believe to be the minimum for a medical school, unless for primary medical schools not granting degrees. The plan pursued of dispensing with practical instruction in this country, was never attempted, so far as I know, in any other.

* See Appendix.

to provide every part of the State with good physicians.

Thus, gentlemen, I have presumed to place before you the policy of the earlier days of our republic as worthy of your imitation, rather than that of a more recent period. I have endeavoured to exhibit in its true character the profession of medicine, its intimate connection with all the great interests of society; what it has done and what it is capable of doing in meliorating the condition of mankind; and above all, I have shown the wants of our community, and how largely the State is interested in fostering medical learning.

Thus inadequately, but according to the measure of my ability, a solemn duty has been performed; a minister of humanity, I have laid her grievances at the footstool of power.

In this momentous matter, may you feel rightly, and may you reason justly, and above all, may you act wisely. Act as you will be satisfied to have acted when hereafter subjected to the surgeon's knife, or stretched on the bed of sickness with your anxious friends around you, and your best friend, your physician, hanging over you, your eyes are fastened upon each other's countenances; his to appreciate your condition, yours to read your fate. Do this, and you will do right.

APPENDIX.

EXTRACTS FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, VOL. I.

Report of Committee on Education, page 236.

"In all the most enlightened nations of Europe, the standard of qualifications essential to the attainment of the doctorate of medicine, is far higher than it is in the United States. The preliminary education is broader and more thorough; the term of medical study is from one to two years longer, the curriculum includes a greater diversity of subjects, the series of lectures are more prolonged, and the examinations more elaborate, searching, and practical. But beyond all this, there is one feature in the medical schools of Europe which stands in marked contrast with many of those in the United States. At Paris, at Strasbourg, at Montpelier, at Vienna, at St. Petersburgh, at Berlin, at Edinburgh, at Dublin, at London, a great hospital forms a part of the scene, and furnishes an essential constituent of the material of instruction. In the United States alone, is continued an obsolete system of teaching demonstrative science by description, of teaching the manipulations of surgery, and the art of recognising and healing diseases without exhibiting the practice of either, and of explaining the movements and changes of living bodies to those who are ignorant of the laws which govern inert matter." * * * *

"*Whereas*, A general sentiment prevails in the medical profession, that the active competition existing amongst the medical colleges of the Union, has a tendency to lower the standard of professional requirement, and to depreciate the value of the degree:

"*And Whereas*, The facility with which charters for medical corporations are obtained from our State governments, exposes the medical profession to the continuance and increase of these abuses, inasmuch as these corporations possess alike the power of granting the license to practise—

"*Therefore Resolved*, That, in the opinion of this Convention, some additional checks to the exercise of this right should be established by the great body of the medical profession." * * * *

"It has been objected that the necessity of an increased number of physicians is such, that the schools must supply them, not, it is admitted by all, *well* educated, but instructed so far as the circumstances of the case will allow. So far from coinciding with this opinion, your committee are convinced that the present rate at which graduates are furnished by our

medical colleges, exceeds the wants of the country. Have the members of this Association now present, coming as they do from every quarter of the land, passed through sections devoid of doctors? Have they not, on the contrary, traversed many a town in which one-half of the number of physicians, if well educated, would be adequate to the performance of all the professional duties in a better manner than they are at present fulfilled?

"If the number of physicians were too small to meet the necessities of the country, it is reasonable to presume that the medical faculties of our schools would constantly receive applications from persons wishing for a medical man to settle among them. But what is the fact? are not such applications exceedingly rare? On the contrary, is it not almost universally true, that the principal source of anxiety harassing the minds of young physicians, is the difficulty of obtaining situations where their services are needed? Do they not, in many instances, travel hundreds, perhaps thousands of miles, in search of a place in which there is a fair prospect of supporting themselves? Go where they will, do they not, as a general rule, find every position pre-occupied? Are not all vacancies immediately supplied, and do not two or three physicians frequently settle in a village, the population of which will hardly furnish a sufficiently remunerative occupation for one? Are there not numerous instances in which the difficulty of finding a suitable residence induces the young practitioner to abandon his profession, and seek in other and less dignified pursuits, that prosperity which, from its crowded condition, he is no longer permitted to expect from his legitimate vocation?

"The population of France is about 35 millions, and, during the past year, according to the London Medical Gazette, the number of students in her three schools which are vested with authority to confer degrees, was 1050. Now, on the supposition that one-half of these received a diploma at the end of the session, the number of graduates would be 525, or one to every 66,666 of the general population.

"It is estimated that there are 20 millions of inhabitants in the United States. The number of graduates in 1847, at twenty-four of our medical schools, was 1188, or one to every 16,835 of the population. But these returns are only from about two-thirds of the schools. The annual number of medical graduates in the country cannot be far from 1500, or one to every 13,333 of the population. On the supposition that these calculations approximate to accuracy, it will be perceived that the proportional supply of graduates in medicine in the United States, is five times as great as in France. This, of course, does not include the licentiates and under-graduate practitioners in either country.

"From all these considerations, the inference is inevitable, that our present ratio of supply of medical men is greater than is demanded by the exigencies of the people." * * * *

"Your committee are well aware that some of the brightest ornaments of

our profession are among the teachers in these institutions, and they would readily accord to them all due praise as to a body of learned and skilful men, diligent in their important calling, and ardently desirous to advance the prosperity of the profession. It would, however, be claiming too much for them to suppose that they are so unlike the rest of mankind as not to be insensibly influenced in their views by their own position, or that, in their zeal for teaching, they might teach too many and receive pupils deficient in that important preparatory instruction, both theoretical and practical, which should be derived from their private instructors." * *

"In the eager competition which now results from an excessive supply of medical men, your committee believe that much of the prevailing empiricism finds its true origin. If, by legitimate means, occupation is not found, the physician must abandon the profession or seek a livelihood in quackery. In our large cities, the major portion of the most successful charlatans are individuals who, educated at our schools, have failed to acquire employment in the regular way. If professors' emoluments were fixed salaries, the evil would be struck at its root.

"There are three parties interested in the great subject which originated this Association. They are the medical schools, the profession, and the public. As, however, the necessities of the public, the wants of humanity, constitute the basis upon which the profession is supported, the mission of the schools and of our fellow members is not faithfully discharged unless those necessities and wants are ministered to in the most effectual manner. The schools are no farther immediately valuable than as they faithfully subserve the interests of the profession. The interests of the profession are only to be considered as legitimate objects of protection, in so far as they conduce to the welfare of the community. If there must be a conflict of interest, no right-minded man can hesitate in deciding which of the three parties should yield." * * * *

"Before a recent Board, one gentleman defined a lotion to be 'a kind of application,' and an evaporating lotion 'one which does not evaporate.' Another confessed his ignorance of the freezing and boiling points of water," &c. * * * * These were all graduates.

"Statement in relation to the United States Naval Medical Corps."

"Signed,

WM. MAXWELL WOOD, *Surg. U. S. N.*
NINIAN PINKNEY, *Surg. U. S. N.*,
Delegates to the Nat. Med. Association, from the Naval Med. Corps."