Relations of popular education with the progress of empiricism : annual address read before the New Jersey Medical Society at its eighty-seventh anniversary, held at Trenton, Jan. 25, 1853 / by Othniel H. Taylor.

RELATIONS OF POPULAR EDUCATION WITH THE PROGRESS OF EMPIRICISM.

ANNUAL ADDRESS

READ BEFORE THE

NEW JERSEY MEDICAL SOCIETY,

AT ITS

EIGHTY-SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY,

HELD AT TRENTON, JAN. 25, 1853,

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OF CAMDEN.

PRESIDENT FOR 1852.

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ADDRESS.

Fellows and Members of the Medical Society of N. J.

GENTLEMEN—

By your favorable and perhaps too partial appreciation, it becomes once more my duty to address you officially, at this, our Anniversary assembling; and I trust, where all are so familiarly conversant with the thousand heterogeneous calls upon the time and attention of the medical practitioner, it will not be necessary to deprecate a severe judgment upon the style of my remarks.

"A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind;" and if the subject matter of my discourse should meet with your approbation: if it should elicit some novel thought, and (which is more important) prompt us to novel actions, tending to increase the dignity of the medical profession, and advance the interests of the public, of which we are the servants, you will undoubtedly overlook mere faults of manner; for polished phrase and rhetorical ornament have seldom been promotive of the stern purposes of duty, or the harsh truths of science.

On a former occasion, I had the honor to offer for your consideration, some speculations on the improvement of medical instruction—a subject which for some years past, has attracted, and still continues to attract an unusual share of attention from the entire profession. I endeavoured to illustrate some of the duties of this Society, and its broad constituency, as a local portion of the associated profession of the whole country, in relation to this vitally important subject; and if these remarks, coupled with those of many co-labourers in the same field, have produced as yet, no practical result; let us hope that all the seeds of reform, scattered broadcast over the land, have not fallen on stony ground, but that the germs still sleep in a fertile soil await-

ing only the maturity of time, and the summer sunshine of opportunity, to rise into the leaf, the flower, and the perfected fruit. The plough and the harrow vigorously employed, are essential to the luxuriance of the harvest, but a perpetual agitation of the ground may destroy what it is designed to foster. It is therefore not my intention at present to renew the subject.

There are numerous other questions not less closely interwoven with the public weal, which legitimately claim the attention of a scientific body, founded upon such authority, and destined to fulfil such functions, as the Medical Society of New Jersey.

By our existing charter, modified as it has been recently, so as to relieve us from a portion of our *responsibilities*, by allowing us to recognize the Diplomas of the best Collegiate Schools of the country, without subjecting the holders to additional examination, before admitting them to our fellowship, we are still not only the constituted guardians of the moral and the professional conduct of our fellow members, but also the legal protectors of the public health against the machinations of empirical pretenders, who with better knowledge do not hesitate to pursue a dishonorable trade, by practicing upon the credulity of the unenlightened.

But here again it is not my purpose to tax your patience with a subject upon which I dwelt in a former address, in considerable detail. For our apparent neglect of duty in not prosecuting, according to law, these transgressors upon the rights, the property, and lives of the citizens of New Jersey, we are really less to blame than we at first sight seem to be.

The honorable character of a liberal profession is appreciated only by the educated and enlightened portion of the community. The masses look upon the practice of medicine and the routine of ordinary trade, with equal eye; and the all powerful dollar, the true aim of the merchant, the farmer, and the mechanic, is regarded as almost the chief object of the physician.

The spirit of the Hippocratic oath, which, modified to meet the necessities of modern times, and the existing condition of society, still considered by ourselves, as binding upon every honorable member of our fraternity, is yet unknown to those beyond the pale.

What wonder then, that every effort we may make to repress an evil of such magnitude as the unlicensed tampering with human life, however disinterested that effort may be, is attributed by the ill judging crowd to a sinister and selfish motive—the establishment of a monopoly or trade? But while complaining of such gross injustice—while we lament that the path of duty can only be pursued under the taunts and misconceptions which are of all things most painful to a noble mind, are we sure that the evil is incurable?

No effort has been spared, it is true, to awaken legislative attention to the propriety of protecting the public health, by laws established to restrain the unwarrantable assaults of ignorance, but the result has rarely proved permanently fortunate, and even when momentarily useful, the good has been not unfrequently, more than compensated by a consequent weakening of that respect, with which practitioners of the divine art have ever been honored, perhaps to a greater extent among savage tribes and in benighted communities, than in the most civilized conditions of society.

For this mortifying fact, there must exist some adequate cause. Let us devote a moment to its investigation. The immediate cause of the evil seems obvious enough. We naturally seek it in the imperfection of the laws themselves, or the improper mode in which they have been executed. But the latter clause is included in the former, for the execution is determined by the statute. In the case before us, the execution of the laws against empiricism, is entrusted to ourselves; and we, as has been before observed, have found the attempt impracticable, except at a sacrifice of manly feeling, which even the community has scarcely the right to demand of any class of citizens.

Do we not then trace the impunity of unlicensed empiricism back to the inherent imperfection of the laws? But let us step one pace further in the train of causes. To what shall we attribute the existing imperfection of the laws for the regulation of medical practice? In answer, let me ask, by whom are these enactments made? By bodies of men, representing the mass of the community, from which we, when viewed professionally, stand forth more perfectly isolated than any other class. Our

science is recondite, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." If a determining majority of legislators were competent to judge a medical question, if they were themselves conversant with the wants of a medical education, and the delicate rules of medical ethics, the moral propriety of which is perceivable only by the initiated, they would then constitute no improper representation of their great constituency.

Even the few legislators selected from our own ranks, have mostly relinquished the profession for another, and hardly compatible one, before a long course of practical acquaintance with one difficulty has rendered them suitable advocates in our defence, and even were they in all respects qualified for the task, their feeble voices would be last in the roar of the great army of those who look upon medicine as a mere trade, and would govern it by mercantile rules alone. Again, in these latter days, the ranks of empiricism outnumber those of the regular practice—they only are represented in the halls of legislation, and often wield their numerical power, far greater than our own. Would we wish it otherwise? I trust that no American would be willing to urge a single argument against those institutions, to which we owe all our prosperity as a people, however he may regret the serious evils which are occasionally observable in the operations of the system.

Who would wish to expel the life-giving sun from the firmament, because his mid-summer arrows sometimes carry death in our midst, or because some spots abate the glory of his effulgent radiance. Even if we could succeed in removing this ignorance of our legislators upon subjects apart from the ordinary pursuits of men; even if the wisest of legal restraints upon empiricism could be enacted, and effectually executed at our suggestion, though human life might be for a time more certain, yet in the present state of society, we should ultimately fail in our purpose.

The enlightened masses, ever open to deception by pretenders, whose vaunted claims they are unable to test or deny, would soon be taught to regard us as monopolists and arbitrary rulers; and in a country, in which, happily, the popular voice is law, all such restraints would be removed, or new and incom-

patible enactments made, to the destruction of all order, so that the evils which we deprecate, would be enhanced instead of being lightened. Let us look across the water. In Pennsylvania, the regular graduate holds no legal privileges, and many empirical sects have acknowledged legal organizations—their institutions being endowed with corporate powers, secured by the same high authority that created the venerable University of that magnificent State. Is the profession, therefore, less respected in the land of Penn, than here in our own Commonwealth? Is it less efficient?

In Delaware, an Association, like our own, exerted for many years, a similar healthful influence within the pale of the profession. At length empiricism invaded the territory of our gallant little sister, and, somewhere about the year 1820, the Medical Society, through one of its fellows, induced the legislature to bestow upon it certain examining powers, and to render its fellowship or its diploma requisite to the legal practice of medicine within the State.

In small communities, changes of system are more easily and rapidly effected than in those of greater numerical strength, and the ultimate results of the grant of exclusive powers, to the regular members of the profession, in a country with democratic institutions, were demonstrated in Delaware more quickly than would have been possible in a larger State. Let us profit by her experience. The complaints and murmurs of the empirical practitioners excluded from legal rights by the grant just mentioned, rose loud and high almost upon the instant. The legislative ear was wearied by their unceasing expostulations, and but two or three years elapsed, before another act was passed, which struck a deadly blow to the dignity of the profession, and in a great degree destroyed the usefulness of the Medical Society, as a guardian of the public health.

The same immunities which were secured to the holders of diplomas from the most distinguished schools of the country, were extended by an express statute to those also who could produce diplomas from a Thomsonian College, and men who had devoted years to the duty of perfecting themselves in the knowledge of the multitude of sciences, which form the founda-

tion of the art of healing, were forced into a species of unwilling fellowship, with the unenlightened pupils of a school founded upon no science at all, with men whose vision is limited to one kingdom of nature alone; who, in their reasonings, if reasonings they can properly be called, repudiate all generalizations, and whose practice is reduced to the rule of purely empirical dicta. A temporary calm, it is true, followed this strange action of the legislature of a truly enlightened State. The Medical Society struggled on, in the midst of the despondency resulting from this broad insult to its dignity, and the complaints against the exclusive privileges of the regular, and one branch of the irregular profession were confined to those stragglers from the great army of empiricism, whose members were yet insufficient to effect an organization under a collegiate head.

But it was not to be expected that quietude could permanently be established, while one division of irregulars were enfranchised to the exclusion of all others. Thomsonian Colleges were succeeded by Homœopathic Colleges, and, at a period a few years later, another law was passed, by which the immunities granted to the devotees of the vegetable system were extended also to the infinitesimalist. Indeed, this second proceeding was the inevitable consequence of its predecessor, for on no principle of justice, could legal advantages, accorded to those who scoff at all science, be refused to those, who at least profess to found their practice upon a theory, though the better instructed may denounce that so called theory, as the unsubstantial shade of an hypothesis.

The final effect of this wise legislation in Delaware, for the regulation of the practice of medicine, is this: The principle has been virtually established, that whenever any body of empirics shall succeed in obtaining corporate rights, as a medical school, through the philosophical ignorance of the law-makers in any State, the diploma of that school shall entitle the holder, to all the advantages conferred upon the regular practitioner, while the latter, in order to claim the most honorable position in his proper fraternity, must incur the expense, and submit to the restrictions consequent upon membership in the Medical Society, or the obtaining of its license—a tax upon learning and an immunity for ignorance.

These evils, gentlemen, have not fallen upon New Jersey, but let us candidly ask ourselves the reason. That like causes produce like effects, is an unalterable law of nature, and in due time, under the existing circumstances of society, this rigid exercise of our legal powers, in the suppression of the practice of ignorant pretenders to skill in our art, would lead in all probability to its legitimation by statute, here, as it did in Delaware. That this result has not already taken place, may be attributed perhaps as justly to our lenity in the exercise of our powers, as to the greater extent of our territory and the population, or to the superior wisdom of our rulers.

It is fair then to conclude, that, if we would operate effectively and according to the spirit and intention of our foundation, in protecting our own respectability, and the health and life of the community against the constantly increasing assaults of empiricism, we must essay some mode of action, other than immediate appeals to legislative bodies, which are unfitted to judge wisely of the necessity of the case, and on which the popular constituency is still less enlightened. Does it not appear reasonable then, that if we wish ultimately to correct the errors of medical legislation which cause such just complaint—if we wish finally to establish our professional rights, and elevate our craft to its proper position, as one of the most important classes of the community; we must begin by removing that unfortunate blindness of the masses, on all subjects relating to disease and Hygiene, which is the true source of these errors, and the general want of just appreciation under which we labor?

But how, it will be inquired, can this darkness be removed? At first sight, the difficulty of the question really appears insurmountable, but may not some of these difficulties originate in errors of our own? 'Tis true, we cannot indoctrinate the masses safely with correct medical theories. We cannot venture to argue before such an audience, the propriety of various plans of treatment of disease, and the relative merits of conflicting opinions in our science, from the fact that even our very language would be as unintelligible to our hearers, as the technicalities of a sailor to the landsman, whose footsteps never trod the deck of a vessel. There exists no pursuit to which the precept of an

eminent poet, "A little learning is a dangerous thing," is more applicable than to the practical department of our noble calling; and it would be folly to advise the general public "to drink deep or taste not" here, for so numerous are the ramifications—so vast is the extent and complication of our art, that the exclusive devotion of our time, and the occupancy of many years in study and close observation, are necessary to fit the novice for an entrance, even into the vestibule of the temple of Esculapius. But modern experience manifestly evinces, that the popular teaching of the first principles of the science of life is not only practicable, but highly useful. In many academies, and even primary schools, the outlines of physiology are now considered a necessary portion of the regular course of elementary instruction, and the application of sound physiological principles to the art of preserving health, and the development of mental powers has been the subject of numerous addresses to mixed audiences. These efforts have proved no less beneficial to the public, than conducive to the fame and the fortune of the pioneers in this department of instruction.

Drawing without stint upon the inexhaustible mines of nature, for the richest and most interesting illustrations upon the vegetable world, in its boundless variety of forms, from the lichen or scarcely visible conferva, to the cloud-piercing Californian pine, or the thousand trunked Indian Banian—upon the animal creation, from the jelly-like polype, with all its functions, equally diffused throughout its simple cellular body, to man, in all the fearful and mysterious complexity of his organization—the elements of physiology, when properly treated by a master-hand, possess the power of enhancing the popular attention of both youth and age, the lettered and unlettered, in a greater degree than those of any other science.

May not we find then, in the more general circulation of a knowledge of the first principles of life, a more available barrier against the progress of empiricism, than even the majesty of the law has yet been able to erect? May we not by enlightening the masses, the *constituency* of our political representation, pave the way for the election of legislators, who may wisely enact laws for the preservation of the public health? May we not

become the creators of an enlightened public opinion, which will support such laws above the contamination of ignorance and the assaults of unprincipled acquisitiveness? Or, failing in thus correcting the inherent imperfections of Medical and Hygienic laws, may we not at least fall back upon this newly enlightened public opinion, for protection against the evils of which we so justly complain?

By being made familiar with the extreme variety and delicacy of the machinery of life, and with the curious interlinkings of the numerous functions required for the accomplishment of what seems to the uninstructed, the simplest operations of vitality in health, the now uninformed public, would be taught duly to appreciate the grasp of mind, the profundity of study, and the keenness of tact, that are requisite to fit the medical philosopher to solve the simplest problems even in the theory of health. Would that public then consent to entrust the ignorant or half informed, with the power to tamper with the springs and wheels of God's master machine, the *human frame,* in the vastly more complex conditions resulting from disease, with its ten thousand aberrating sympathies? What man, the owner of a Cotton Mill or a watch, finding an error in the apparatus, threatening his mere personal interest, would appeal to the shoemaker or the merchant for its repair or regulation? What man, in doubt as to his eternal welfare, and confused by conflicting theological opinions, would fly to the practitioner at the bar, in order to unravel his doubt of conscience?

It cannot be supposed then, that a public properly enlightened on the subject of the laws of life, would continue to put confidence in men divested of preliminary education, drawn from the humbler walks of life, from the stable or work-shop, and after fifteen months or perhaps two years of partial study under one sided teachers, sent forth with a legal but ridiculous diploma, to practice on the lives and hearts of parents, children, husbands, and wives, on all the individual interests and domestic ties, which alone render life desirable in this sublunary scene of physical suffering.

Let us suppose some individual of inquiring mind, but unprofessional occupation, to have availed himself of an offered op-

portunity of attending a really philosophical course of popular lectures, upon the principles of physiology and hygiene, when the knife of the lecturer, acting perhaps on the body of some brute animal, in condescension to the natural aversion from human dissection, has laid bare before him, in one broad view, the almost infinite complexity of bones, muscles, nerves, vessels, viscera and tissues, and reacting to a common purpose in the most ordinary operations of daily life. When this inquirer finds that all his efforts, short of years of exertion, would fail to fix upon his memory the details involved in the performance of any general function; would he dare to trust the simplest external injury of any gravity, to the management of the natural bone-setter who becomes a surgeon by intuition? When taught that the severest pain in the head may result from a concealed irritation of the stomach—that the most dangerous fever may be merely a symptom of a pin-scratch on the toe, too slight to attract the attention of the patient, will he repose confidence in an arrogant sect who prescribe only for symptoms, and advocate the doctrine "similia similibus curantur." Even to suppose the possibility of such results, is to deny the impress of rationality, stamped by his Maker upon man.

I have always entertained the opinion, that it was possible for practitioners of our profession, by the natural effects of the habit of looking at the "res angusta domi," to become near sighted, as the over attentive school-boy does, when he robs himself of his natural rest, and devotes himself unceasingly to his wearying pages, in order to win the honor of some far distant prize. The "otium cum dignitate" of a professional old age, is the wisest as well as the most rational object of every one who wastes the energies of early and middle life, in the self-sacrificing and exhausting duties of our calling, and it behooves us to be careful in struggling too constantly, though with honorable feelings after this most desirable result, that we should not permit ourselves to overlook those opportunities of usefulness, which occur on either hand, though they may be at some little distance from our immediate path.

The members of a truly liberal profession should never for a moment forget, that to communicate knowledge, is to repay the

Gods. Who is there among us, that does not acknowledge the sentiment of Seneca?

"Si cum hac exceptione detur
Sapientia, ut reclusam teneam,
Nec enunciam rejiciam."

"If wisdom were given me, upon the condition that I should keep it to myself, and not proclaim it, I would reject it."

There is nothing in the nature of the subject, that renders the study of physiology unfit for a wise system of popular instruction. There is no danger that a little knowledge of this kind, would engender that rashness, which too commonly leads the half educated student of pathological hypothesis and therapeutical dogmas, to tamper with disease in his own case, upon the principle, that every man best understands his own constitution, or to thrust himself before the public, as a practitioner of the healing art, armed with a diploma from some institution miscalled scientific, whose professors, wise in their own experience, reject the experience of ages. The influence of the diffusion of physiological knowledge would be precisely the reverse of this, and it may well be doubted whether among the causes of the growth of empiricism in a country where all men read—where every cottage has its book shelves, there is one cause more prolific than the neglect of the science of healthful, living actions, even in the schools devoted to pathology.

The learned and far-seeing Dr. Benjamin Rush—one of the "fathers of American Medicine," was thoroughly imbued with the importance of the principles and policy which have just been indicated, and, carrying his views perhaps a little too far, most strenuously advocated the diffusion of a portion of practical medical knowledge, as well as hygienic theory among the people. He did so on the avowed principle, that such a course would be the most successful means of retarding the march of Quackery, which, if alarming in his day, is vastly more so now. His opinions on this subject, may be detected in his introductory lectures, which were addressed not exclusively to the medical class, but to mixed audiences, invited to be present at their public presentation, and we are informed that many of these lectures, were read in private circles for criticism, comment, and

suggested commendation, even before their delivery in the University. Many of those who enjoyed the happiness of a personal acquaintance with this truly great man, and who still remain among the living, retain a vivid recollection of his general advocacy of this policy, and his condescending efforts, safely to break *down* all unnecessary barriers between the medical profession and the great mass of society. It may be well questioned, whether the profession has not retrograded in opinion on this subject, since his death.

In the beautiful code of medical ethics, derived from the essay of the celebrated Dr. Percival, and modified to meet the requirements of this age and country, by the American Medical Association, (a code by the spirit of which, all regular and honorable practitioners acknowledge themselves morally and solemnly bound,)—we find most wisely condemned the sinister arts of those, who employ secresy, the advertisements of special pretension, or the preservation of patent or mercantile rights, in any thing relating to medical or surgical practice. We find also the courtesies due from one Physician to another, correctly established, and not only the duties which the profession owes to the public, but those which the public owes to the profession, stated and made the subject of comment; but we do not find any suggestions of the propriety of diffusing among the people, the knowledge that would render such sinister arts ineffectual, and such selfishness opprobrious with the masses. Of what avail is it, that we should address to ourselves grave commentaries on the respect and consideration, that the uninitiated owe to the practitioner of a liberal and dignified art? If we would influence the conduct of others towards us, surely, we should direct our reasonings to them, rather than to our brethren, to whom such disquisitions can bring no added light.

It is with all becoming modesty, that I venture these, perhaps, unpopular suggestions, but it does appear to me, that by drawing too distinctly the necessary lines which separate us as a body, from the great circle of our fellow citizens, we may lay ourselves open to misconstructions, and promote the evils of which we complain. And yet it must be confessed, that there is little use in dwelling upon mere generalities, in relation to this subject.

This discourse would be unworthy of your acceptance, and the time which it has occupied sadly misspent, were I not to attempt, at least, to give a somewhat utilitarian direction to the suggestions which have been thrown out. This then, I shall endeavor in a few words to do.

The wide diffusion of scientific and literary information throughout New England is proverbial, and (let me not be considered as making the remark invidiously), while that portion of the Union has contributed her full quota to the ranks of quackery in other States, her people thus enlightened, are less easily duped by ignorant pretenders at home.

This happy immunity, she owes, before all other things, to her admirable system of Lyceums. There is no city—there is scarcely a village in her broad domain, that cannot boast an institution of this character, in which throughout the long winter evenings, a series of weekly lectures is delivered.

These lectures are attended, not only by the male population of adult age and refined education, but by females and children, apprentices and factory girls. Side by side with wealth and fashion, sit the humble operative and modest domestic; acquiring by imitation and observation, habits of order and amenity of manners, while drinking in rich draughts of knowledge, be it from the more sparkling streams of polite literature, or the deeper currents of science, as they pour forth from the minds of some of the most talented thinkers of the age.

Till recently it is true, that History, Poetry and the Drama, have enjoyed too large a share of attention from the peripatetic teachers of the north, while the physical philosophy of life, has been too much slighted by the more learned lecturers of the day, and has been entrusted in many instances to incompetent hands, probably in consequence of this very disposition of which I venture to complain, the desire to retain all knowledge of the sciences collateral with medicine within the pale of the profession. Fortunately, however, this evil is now on the wane in New England.

The enthusiasm attendant upon the advent of M. Agassiz the accomplished Swiss naturalist, who was recently connected with Harvard University, has rendered popular, far deeper researches

into the arcana of nature, and now some of the most distinguished scholars of the day, are occasionally engaged in diffusing a knowledge of the laws of the animal economy, through the medium of Lyceum Lectures.

If then, under such unfavorable circumstances, this mode of furnishing proper mental aliment to the youth of the Northern States, was found effective, not only in restraining the vices resulting from the absence of rational amusement, at an age when mental inactivity is utterly impossible, but also in limiting the domain of empiricism, by the enlightenment of its victims—much more may we anticipate from the novel impetus given to the study of nature, during the last few years.

And why should these advantages of the Lyceum system be confined to the New England States? Is New Jersey too poor to imitate their laudable example? It is true, that a few of our larger towns may boast of institutions similar in name and perhaps somewhat analogous in purpose; but even in these, there is a radical defect of system, destructive of their usefulness.

The funds of the midland or Southern Lyceums are devoted exclusively to the maintenance of a library, a hall, and perhaps a cabinet of curiosities. Not a dollar of the income, is usually devoted to the remuneration of that talent which is selected for the purposes of public instruction within its walls. The honor of addressing a few hundred individuals, is the bribe held out to induce some men of intellectual distinction, to travel perhaps at their own expense, it may be, from some far distant city, to lecture at a small provincial town.

But let us suppose that public spirit and disinterested desire for usefulness should sometimes lead able men to make the necessary sacrifice, and devote a portion of their leisure to the enlightenment of their benighted fellow citizens, in this manner. It should be remembered that men of science are proverbially poor —the very nature of their studies compelling them to be so. Is it then to be supposed that such will sacrifice sufficient time and gratuitously meet the expense of necessary illustrations, for a course sufficiently extensive to develope the elements of any branch of human learning, in a practical and useful manner?

Our Lyceum courses are composed of a series of disconnected

lectures on the most heterogeneous subjects, from which little practical and no scientific knowledge can be acquired. The History of Greece—the Philosophy of Life,—the Nature of Things—the Value of Education,—and a thousand other generalities, each wide enough to require for its proper elucidation a month of time, are seized upon as subjects for discourses of an hour, and the orator, cut off from the possibility of teaching, must content himself with a mere personal display of elocution to the amusement of an audience, that quits the Hall, with perhaps a lively impression of the grace or awkwardness of the speaker—but a most dream-like and misty conception of his theme. Our eastern neighbors are wiser—with them a portion of the income of Lyceums is invariably appropriated to the payment of a consideration to the lecturer—which he must receive, before he is permitted to leave the apartment. No matter how humble the offering be, (and it varies in different towns from five to twenty, and even thirty dollars) it is not material how wealthy the recipient, it cannot be declined without offence. A refusal is met by one or two retorts, either the objector is politely reminded that he has no legitimate right, to force upon the public an obligation, under which that public does not wish to rest, or he is told, and sometimes with much feeling, that the accident of fortune does not warrant the wealthy, in bringing a blush to the cheeks of talent perhaps quite as useful, though less happily endowed with means, by giving to the payment of a just debt, the air of gratuity.

Two noble results follow from this custom in New England on the principal that whatever is paid for is prized. Her audiences are vastly more attentive, than those which are addressed gratuitously; and on the principle that labor duly compensated, is usually well done, the quality of the discourses and their practical usefulness is astonishingly enhanced. Subjects that require time for their proper elucidation, are much more fully discussed, and connected courses embracing many lectures by the same individual, before popular and village audiences, are of common occurrence.

Small as is the compensation given for each course, its consentaneous delivery, in each of four or five adjacent towns, ren-

ders the total remuneration sufficient to the end in view, and many admirable scholars, in the eastern States habitually realize a competency, mainly by the most useful process of peripatetic teaching.

The formation of a similar system for our State, is surely not beneath the contemplation of this Society, and would prove in its hands and under its patronage, not only a powerful lever for the moral advancement of the community, but, if rightly directed to the spreading of a knowledge of physiological truth, a most efficient means of curtailing the practice of empiricism, and elevating the popular estimate of the dignity of the profession.

By railroads and other facilities of recent date, most of our smaller towns and villages are drawn into close communication in point of time and easy transport. Most of them are provided with Halls for the use of societies, and fixtures adapted to the business of lecturing, available for public purposes at a very reasonable rate, so that, there is no town of a thousand inhabitants that could not conveniently afford such a subscription, as would yield five or even ten dollars for each, of twelve lectures, which would constitute a weekly course during three months, when business is at a stand and the public are anxious for mental improvement.

Let the people of any neighborhood be once convinced, that knowledge of real and practical utility could thus be economically obtained, in place of the display and idle verbiage too frequently offered them, under the present system, and their willingness to move in the matter, would undoubtedly be found fully equal to their obvious ability.

And, members of the Medical Society, shall we not—are we not in duty bound to be up and doing in this really important work? Each of us, in his proper sphere, possesses an influence sufficient for the initiative step. Within our own pale, there is adequate energy and talent to carry it out to a happy and most useful issue. Let us devote some thought to the question, and, after examining the premises, resolve to act. Assuredly if we succeed, we shall win from a grateful public the acknowledgment of important services, and even in case of failure, we shall be

cheered with the consciousness of having deserved its thanks.

But there is yet another and a parallel mode, in which this Society may promote its own just reputation, and advance, to an incalculable extent, the diffusion of knowledge, while struggling for the suppression of empiricism and its consequent evils. Our vision need not be restricted to the present generation. Corporations are not limited like individuals, to a life of three score and ten. They endure through after ages and may legitimately look to the interests of our yet unborn successors. If, by the regulation of Lyceums we can remove in some degree the errors of ignorance among the people of the present day, through the influence of the common school, we may act upon the people of to-morrow. By arming our youth with a rational knowledge of the philosophy of life, we purify the very foundations of intelligence and precipitate those adulterations, on which the destructive animalculæ of empiricism depend for their support.

Physiological studies have gradually been forced to a certain extent, into the school systems of other States, but no where, so far as I am informed, has the medical profession as a body, exerted its legitimate influence, in the regulation of popular instruction. If it be right to employ our aid and powers in favor of Lyceums, it cannot be less so, to attempt a reform in this direction also.

Now, New Jersey stands unenviably distinguished among her sisters, by the total absence of well regulated public schools, under the direction of her Legislature. The small fund which she annually appropriates in aid of the voluntary taxation of the local districts for the purposes of education, bears no proportion either to the wealth or population of the State, when compared with those by which she is surrounded. The isolated and ill-regulated efforts of her citizens in this direction are divested of all unity and approach to system.

How small an exertion on the part of this Society, during the last session of her Assembly, would have removed the blot from her escutcheon, and would have supplied the means, at least, if not the wisdom of arrangement necessary to effect a thorough reformation. A proposition to appropriate to the School Fund

of the State, the income tax on roads (a fund amounting now to nearly one hundred and thirty thousand dollars, and constantly increasing), is said to have been lost in the Senate by a single vote. Cannot a Medical Society, in which so much State pride is felt, determine a *single vote* among the conscript fathers? One effort—one little struggle—and the victory would be won.

But it is not sufficient that we should advocate the appropriation of adequate means. We should also take an interest in the law by which the application of these means may be determined. To be effective, the School System must be rendered uniform in principle throughout our territory, without attempting to make a railroad of the human mind, and to bind every child in the commonwealth to one routine of study, and one set of class books after the Austrian mode; each should be thoroughly instructed in the elements of those practical sciences, which have direct relation to the duties of American citizen, whether economical, political, social, or moral, while the refinements of classical and polite knowledge, so ameliorating and humanizing in their influence, should not be neglected. They should be subordinate to the more immediate claims of pure utility, instead of being made to appear, as they usually are, the end and purpose, rather than the ornament of a genuine education. Among the truly useful sciences, none are more appropriate—none are more indispensable in a wise system of public instruction, than physiology and the kindred subjects of Hygiene. It is our duty to see that their claims are duly recognized and effectually defended.

But no such uniform system is practicable unless the machinery be under the direction of some competent individual head. It cannot be established by the disconnected efforts of scattered townships, but should be regulated by a general law, and placed under the jurisdiction of an able Secretary of Instruction, whose arduous duties should receive a reasonable compensation.

And now, having fulfilled the task allotted, in a manner which at first glance, may not appear so technical and exclusively professional, as the occasion might seem to require; allow me in self defence, to remind our fellow citizens, who, as invited guests, may have honored this somewhat dull address with a

patient hearing, that this Society, being a creature of the law, with legal purposes, has other duties to perform than those which relate directly to the science upon which rests the art of healing. Its obligations to the community extend, to collateral as well as immediate measures, that are connected with the preservation of the public health, and it would be severely censurable were it to rest satisfied with a near-sighted view of its responsibilities; confining its attention exclusively to those affairs which immediately affect the purse of the individual honor of its members.

The soldier on the field of battle—the clergymen in the pulpit —the lawyer at the bar, does not lose the character of the private citizen, in assuming a position that isolated him from the mass as a constituent of a peculiar class; and why should the medical practitioner be more widely removed from the broad fellowship of his kind? On questions of constitutional importance—the bar, as a body proper exerts a permanent influence. Wisely the clergy of all denominations participate in every public measure designed for the purification of the morals of society; urging by the combined force of their character and energy, the measures which they deem most essential to the well-being of the human soul, even in the forum and before the conscript fathers.

Why then should not the corporate faculty of our peculiar art be felt in legislative halls, when questions arise that affect the very organization of the human frame, the structure and functional power of that mysterious engine, by which the soul of man is brought into relation with external things? While the law deals with the purse, the capital of the vast workshop of Society, and regulates the application of its labour, while religion prescribes the moral duties of the swarming operatives, and gently bends the multiform results to the honor and the dignity of the divine architect owner—to medicine belongs the task of keeping the machine in order, and of directing the repairs, without which all would be confusion, crash and terrible explosions.

"Mens sana in corpore sano," is an adage as ancient as it is true, and as the want of proper mental culture, whether in early

childhood, when the brain is forming, or in adult age, when time is wearing its wheels, must weaken or destroy the regular movements of the most complex apparatus; to us belongs the paramount necessity of the guardianship of that education, which forms the human mind. Without our aid—without a diffusion of the knowledge of the physiological laws of life, the lever by which religion carries out the great ends of existence, cannot fulfil the proper functions, nor all the wisdom of the law prevent the overthrow of order among the teeming millions of ill-directed agents.

And now in conclusion, let me deprecate all possible censure from those, who perchance may be present, and whose duty it is to make laws for our highly favored State. We thank them for their patient and long enduring courtesy, in listening to a discourse, which in its very nature precludes all eloquence. One in which oratorical ornament would have been impertinent, as calling off attention from the practical and serious bearing of the subject.

It has been no part of our design to encroach, in the least degree upon their proper province, but as a citizen of that free and happy country, in which the humblest voter is a portion of the sovereignty, I have but endeavored to direct the attention of a somewhat exclusive class, to the objects of duty and circles of legitimate exertion in a wider and more general interest.

And to you, gentlemen of the New Jersey Medical Society, let me apologise for any disappointment you may feel, in the selection on this occasion of a subject, so foreign from the usual routine of our annual addresses.

If from the suggestions now thrown out, you should be induced first to reflect and then to act upon the great questions thus crudely stated, I am convinced, that even the more immediate results would cheer you with the consciousness of having acted well. You will have stricken a *blow* at the *root* of empiricism, instead of idly lopping off the topmost branches of a tree, that bourgeons faster than we with all our axes, are able to curtail it. And in this honorable struggle you will no longer meet the opprobrium, or the suspicion of interested motives, that has ever followed our previous attempts. Here, the community goes

with you, not against you, and all now present, be they guests or members, with thousands beyond this hall, moved by our influence—thousands in future years, will bless the day, when the embodied medical profession of New Jersey, stepping forth from its beaten path, shall erect the banner of popular education, and without transcending its legitimate powers, shall awaken to the full perception of the beauty of that noble saying of Terence—

"Homo sum, et humani, nihil a me alienum puto."