

Exposure of facts.

Contributors

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Vought (J. G.)

EXPOSURE OF FACTS.

Fellow Citizens, and Gentlemen of the Medical Profession,

Painful as the task is, the necessity of self-defence compels me to expose a copy of the following letters for public perusal. The magnanimous and loyal power of the Medical Society, combined with the Professors of the old College, are fearful odds against one, who is only a medical man among you, almost penniless, though not entirely friendless. I call myself a man, and as such, have always meant to show myself; and rather than be duped, misled, or silently suffer myself abused by the mighty men of my profession, I will sacrifice my health, my life, my all, in opposition to such measures. I have appealed to the Hon. Society for redress, and as often as my documents were presented, so often have they been menly evaded; not even read before the Society, but treated with silent *dignity*. It is true, the former President filled the chair with *dignity*; but was it not that *dignity* which many make use of as a cloak to hide their ignorance and duplicity? By some I am met with fawning treachery, which warns me of the caker in their hearts. I placed myself before the *Heart* of the Medical Society, and found its feelings adamant to impartial justice. I now look to another source—the public *Heart*, which I trust is not callous to the touch of humanity. May not the public yet learn that arbitrary and supreme as our Society seems to be, it is only a body of trustees, and not the sole owners of medical science? Free simple may be found in the breasts of such as make improvements in medical science for the general good of community, whether they be in or out the Society.

JOHN G. VOUGHT,

*Physician to the New-York Infirmary for diseases of the bowels,
No. 139 Grand street.*

P. S. The author considers it unfortunate to be obliged to publish this statement, against one who has held an honourable office in the Medical Society. He wishes not to beat himself against the bar of his own cage, suffer the power of passion to overrule reason, or to injure the standing of Dr. Onderdonk. As Dr. O. has not made the least effort to effect reconciliation, the author hopes the public will excuse him for fulfilling his promise.



To Dr. Thomas Cock, President of the Medical Society of the
city and county of New-York.

July 26th, 1828.

DEAR SIR,—Please excuse the liberty I take in thus addressing you on a subject of no personal interest to yourself, further than it relates to the arduous task of fulfilling the duties of the office you have aspired to, as President of the Medical Society of the city and county of New-York. It has been my fortune to be placed in friendly and honourable competition with some of the medical profession justly enjoying eminent degrees, whose worth and talents I highly respect, and in such association and council I have felt the glory of the medical profession. It has also been my fortune to meet the reverse of the profession, and Dr. Onderdonk, who held the office you now enjoy, is one who has manifested his wisdom, first by refusing to consult with me in a case where he was sent for expressly by my consent and approbation, and secondly, by taking the patient on his own hands and prescribing when I had been the attending physician for several days. This was done in a most ungenerous, ignorant, and insulting manner, contrary to all medical ethics; and when called on for an explanation, he added insult to injury, by plumply and falsely denying the charge. After such occurrences, his conduct towards me in the Society, at the last meeting, may be easily accounted for. It may be thought by many, an improper step in me, to come before the Society and claim my right of membership; but I was actuated by the necessity of self-defence on the occasion, and although I declare frankly that I meant to advance no dishonourable allusions to the Society, still my disposition towards the President then presiding was not altogether the most friendly and conciliating, for which I consider I have ample reason to proclaim—and as in my views the step was legal and honourable, I have no further excuse to offer. Therefore I considered myself a legal member of the Society independent of its members and officers, and as I observed to the President, I left the Society on account of its being improper to remain while a question was discussing relative to my own situation, and not because I thought the President or members had power to deprive me of my seat as a legal member. When my diploma was handed to the *Commissia Minora* about one year ago, they thought proper not to recommend me as a member, and the reasons I understood were, that I had opened an infirmary for the cure of bowel complaints, had an interest in a patent recipe, made an improvement on bathing tubs for the conve-

nience of families, and published a treatise on bowel complaints, (before I had the tail of M. D. attached to my name,) in which I have recommended my improvement as a secret remedy in the cure of bowel complaints, and public advertisements, &c., all of which they say assumes the character of Quackery, and shall deprive me from being a member of the Medical Society.

Now, dear Sir, if an inquiry be made into the conduct of the profession generally, I would be glad to learn where the line of quackery (according to the true signification of the term) shall be drawn. It is the object of all who tend to the practice of medicine, at least to make a livelihood by it; at all events, I never yet found one who strictly attended to it merely as a source of pleasure. It is evident to every candid observer, that all ambitious practitioners do make an effort in various ways to obtain the confidence of the public; and on a deliberate investigation of facts, do not a majority of the profession stoop to the level of the meanest of their fellow creatures, by pursuing a course of (what is justly termed by some) *private quackery*? I am one who is accused of open and public quackery, and still I feel myself on a par with, (and guilty no farther than) the most respectable and honourable part of my profession. For ten years I have confined my attention to that branch of medical practice, which is acknowledged by the profession at large to be the most difficult to obtain general success. And because I have convinced some that improvements on the common practice in such cases, may be accomplished, they call out quackery. My time and my fortune has been devoted to this subject. I have opened an infirmary for the cure of bowel complaints on my own plan, and with my own means, which is approved by some of the most learned and honourable part of the profession. I ask, who are the persons that opened the Eye and Ear Infirmary,* and the In-

* [Note by a member of the Society.] Dr. Chesman is undoubtedly protected in his *sign* for the cure of diseases of the eye and ear, because he is or has been one of the *committia minora*, and a surgeon of the New-York Hospital. The difference is, Dr. C. rides under the sanction of an official station, (the charlatan car) with the full approbation of the Medical Society, when an individual who may possess much greater merits and acquirements, is prohibited the ordinary right of reclaiming his own merits, the result of personal and arduous experience. The medical tribunal to which he may have recourse should possess and exercise the power to suppress and disparage the pretended superior skill of opponents whose failures are the cause, and the only cause of opposition. The physician to the New-York Infirmary for diseases of the bowels, has published his theory, principles and practice, and dedicated his work to his medical subscribers and to the married ladies of the United States. The practice in other infirmaries in this city is concealed from the public eye. *Quere*—which is most dangerous to community, public or private *quackery*?

firmary for diseases of the lungs? * And wherein have I acted more dishonourable to the profession than those concerned in these establishments? They used their abilities to render their work popular and beneficial to society, and my exertions are made for the same purposes, in my own behalf. I have published a work on diseases of the bowels, and as to the secrecy of its contents, remedies & principles, (please accept a copy of it) I will beg to refer you to pp. 53. 56, 57. 96., and a case 101. &c., together with the general principle of the whole work, designed not so much for the benefit of physicians and persons residing in cities, as for families distant from correct medical information and medical prescriptions. There have appeared before the public some newspaper *puffs* in favour of the merits of the author; but I know of none less modest and more in the superlative form of a *pf*, than the notice in the Evening Post, headed, "*N. York Medical and Physical Journal*," which says, "It ought to recommend it to the *special notice* of the faculty. It has received a powerful addition of editorial talents in the persons of Doctors A. Smith, T. R. Beck, Stevens, and J. R. Smith, and presents a *combination* of professional talent *unsurpassed* by any similar work in the *Union*."

As to my interest in a patent recipe sanctioned by the general government, I conceive the Medical Society has no more right to investigate this matter, than they have to investigate my interest in a farm, or will, or anything else. This is confined to the business of the apothecary establishment, and so long as it does not interfere with my professional services as a physician and surgeon, the subject is foreign from the powers of the Medical Society; at all events they have no right to act upon it before they admit me as a member. On this head I can only be considered on a par with the inventor of Hull's Trusses, who has always retained his seat in the Society; and on the same principle I retained mine in the count of Monroe, in defiance of all overbearing opposition. My name being attached to an American invention I consider no more disgraceful or dishonourable, than the names of many of the professors of medicine (who hold the highest medical honours) being attached in the form of certificates, &c. to most of the inventions, patents, and improvements which are daily hawked through our country, from east to west and from north to south. When we look at the jarring state of

* Have the founders of the firmary for diseases of the lungs incurred the approbation of *quackery*? And was not the present resident physician, (Dr. Manly,) one of them? Let physicians only obtain the countenance of their masters in the Medical Society, and they may then play the *quack*, either public or private, without molestation.

the medical profession in this city, how contemptible does it appear to every unprejudiced and honest eye! The best of the faculty does not escape the malicious charge of *quackery*, from some quarter or other. The friends of the two colleges call each other quacks and impostors, and every artful, and I had almost said, disgraceful means, are used to build up the one by the destruction and downfall of the other. Those who are attached to the Medical Society use their utmost to persecute and disgrace such as do not feel disposed to comply with their wishes and come under their dominion and control; and several of their most respectable members have withdrawn from the Society with disgust, and a determination never again to show their faces within its walls.

But, dear Sir, I will trespass on your patience no longer, with this unpleasant subject. I address you with wounded feelings, and a hope that your mind will not be biassed by the prejudices of others. I have made two honorable attempts to connect myself to your Society, and am now aware that the gigantic power of the Society is collected to crush me at a blow. But I ask of them no pity. Let envy and jealousy rage around me, conscious of my own innocence, I feel myself elevated far beyond their reach.

Let me close, by informing you that I was educated in Schenectady, Albany, and Philadelphia, and have practiced medicine and surgery in this state since 1813, under as legal, and I trust honorable a diploma as the state of New-York has power to confer. You are at liberty to use this letter either publicly or privately, in or out of the Society, as you may think proper, with my declaration as first stated, of no dishonorable intentions towards yourself or the Society.

Respectfully yours, &c.

JOHN G. VOUGHT.

Jan. 25th, 1828.

To Dr. Onderdonk,

Dear Sir,—You are a stranger to me, but I can no longer refrain from inquiring the reasons why you refused to consult with me, on the case of Mr. Peckwell's chill, on Sunday last. It is the first uncivil treatment I have met with by my fellow physicians in the course of 14 years' practice, and the injury to my feelings demands an explanation.

Yours, &c.

JOHN G. VOUGHT, 139 Grand st.

Feb. 2nd, 1828.

To Dr. John G. Vought, 119 Grand st.

Dear Sir,—I received your note of 25th ult. at which time I was much indisposed. I beg now to say, that I did not “refuse to consult with you;” and I am sure, had you *been present*, you would not have accused me of uncivil treatment. *There must be a misunderstanding.*

Yours, &c.

JOHN ONDERDONK.

Feb. 18th, 1828.

To Dr John Onderdonk,

Dear Sir,—Your answer to my note of Jan. 25th, I consider no apology for your infringement upon my rights in the case of Mr. Peckwell's child; but only a denial of the fact. You certainly refused to see me when Mr. Peckwell requested to send for me. The 4th division of Medical Ethics, say that, “honour and justice particularly forbid a medical practitioner infringing upon the rights and privileges of another, whether he be a native or stranger settled in the country; and no physician is to visit a patient under another's care, without informing the attending physician.”* In this particular you have deviated from the gentlemanly conduct of an honourable practitioner of medicine, and a candid acknowledgment of facts is your only apology for reconciliation.

You may be informed that I have been a legal practitioner of medicine in this state for 4 years, and my character never impeached by civil or medical authority; and no case of *mal practice* can be brought against me, which is perhaps more than your honor can say of yourself. I depend on my industry and professional talents for my support, and am one who never wishes to injure the feelings of my fellow creatures, and ever ready to defend my own rights; but all times ready to meet reconciliation when such is manifested by proper acknowledgment. These are the motives which will govern me in this case.

Yours, &c.

JOHN G. VOUGHT.

* Mr. Peckwell acted the gentlemanly part—he consulted Dr. V. about sending for Dr. Onderdonk. Dr. V. agreed to meet him. Mr. Peckwell promised to send for Dr. V. when Dr. O. came. Mr. P. offered to send for Dr. V., and Dr. O. refused to see him, and replied it was of no consequence, that Mrs. Peckwell would tell him what Dr. V. had done for the child. Dr. V. remained home for three hours, (only 2 doors from the patient) expecting to be sent for to meet Dr. Onderdonk, till he went to see the child, and found him under the prescriptions of Dr. Onderdonk.

† Perhaps the Dr. has forgotten the dislocated os humeri, and his honorary title of M. D. from the Old College. Has he any other diploma to show for his dignified station in the medical world?

7
August 28th, 1828.

To Dr. John Onderdonk, Vesey st.

Dear Sir,—I had heretofore received the advice of some of my friends, and concluded to take no further notice of you; that your ignorance of the duties and hours of the medical profession was a sufficient apology for your despicable and unlawful treatment towards me in the case of Mr. Peckwell's child. But I have lately understood that you are boasting to the medical gentlemen in this city of turning us out of the Medical Society, and privately accusing me of impudence for entering the Society and claiming my seat as a legal member. This, sir, demands a public explanation, which shall belong, unless you make such acknowledgments as are acceptable in my views. If it is your wish, you shall be accommodated with an exposure of characters. If you are so ignorant as not to know the fact, I now again inform you, that all legal Medical societies are open for all classes of citizens, and physicians and students of medicine are often solicited to attend by officers who understand the gentlemanly duties of their profession; and *furthermore*, that all private transactions or caucus meetings are, by the honourable, deemed acts of quackery, and repugnant to the liberal character of the medical profession. You know, sir, that I left the Society because you gave your opinion that it was improper that I should remain while a question was to be decided relative to my own case, and not because I thought you or any other man had a legal right to request me to withdraw.* If your age has not endowed your mind with capacity to discern the honour of upright and manly conduct, and the disgracefulness of the opposite, you have at least obtained thereby the advantage. Little minds are ever ambitious of *personal protection*, exempting themselves personally, and prostrating the honour and credit of the profession to which they pretend to belong. "For Science dawned not on thy humble birth." I hereafter declare myself your public enemy in the medical profession.

JOHN G. VOUGHT.

Since the above was set in type, I called on the Secretary of the Medical Society, (Dr. Graves, for the documents handed to them in February last. He politely answered, that at this time he was out of the city, and the secretary pro tem. during his absence, did not record any documents relative to Dr. Onderdonk and myself, and that he never laid his eyes on any thing written on this subject. This shows that the President secretly kept the papers from the Society, or destroyed them. I have ample proof that they were handed to the presiding secretary by the door keeper.

J. G. VOUGHT.

* The above are exact copies, verbatim as near as could be made out. The author can prove every transaction, and far more if necessary.

From the N. Y. Morning Courier.

[COMMUNICATED.]

It is understood that some of the members of the Medical Society in this city, think themselves privileged to use the ignominious lash of private persecution upon such physicians as are not members of their Society. They also appear to take the law in their own hands, and choose who shall, and who shall not be members of the County Society, notwithstanding all legal qualifications that are presented by applicants. The physician to the New-York Infirmary for diseases of the bowels, No 139 Grand-st. is made an example of their good feelings, and is one whose situation he is willing should be investigated by a general public. In June last, a legal diploma was filed, and handed to the Medical Society, (or a committee of the same) with a request for membership, according to law, and proposed by a member of the Society. This was rejected, on the principles that the applicant's name was attached to a compound, sanctioned by the United States as his own improvement for curing bowel complaints, which, according to the Society bye laws must deprive him of membership. It was stated to the Society, that said improvement never has been held as a secret or a nostrum—but public explained, for the benefit of all who choose to profit by it in various ways; (see Vought on Bowel Complaints, pp. 53, 60, 66, 171, containing formulas for Alkaline Draughts, Enemas and Baths, the only ones of the like kind on medical record,) on which ground the applicant retained his standing in the Medical Society of the county of Monroe. It was also stated that the article in question, so much envied and harped upon, belonged to the Apothecary department of the New-York Infirmary for bowel complaints; and so far as related to the practice of medicine and surgery, he was willing, in every particular, to conform to the laws and rules of the Society; but his membership (as also that of many others) was denied. He was deprived the liberty of justifying himself, and the power of making his own defence. The applicant commenced the study of medicine under Doctors M'Clelland and Low, in Albany, in 1808—closed under D. Stearns, and at the University of Pennsylvania, in 1812 and 1813; and has since practised medicine in this city, Albany, and Rochester, and is member of two Societies in this state. The objection was, not because he is unqualified, either personally or legally, to practice medicine, but because he is authorised by government to use his improvement in the healing art at his own discretion, for the general good of community. Other were also rejected, who merit the honors of the profession, (if any there be worth contending for in the present state of affairs) equal to many who stand polished members of the Society. And why? *Quere*—Was it not because some of the Society were fearful they would use their influence in favor of the Professors of Rutgers College?

We look for that day when our legislature will revise the medical laws to prevent quackery and imposition, and place individuals, medical institutions, and professors who have equal merits, with equal rights and privileges—competition is the grand stimulus of improvement, and monopoly the quietus of ambition and enterprise.

A PHYSICIAN.

