

bable success of any Congress from which the best known scientific men of the country are excluded. The action of the committee in regard to the "new code" men would indeed be ludicrous were it not so serious, and will have the effect of creating sympathy, where before there was only cold and formal respect. The insult offered to such veterans as Bowditch, Fordyce Barker, Draper, Weir, Mundé, Roosa, Knapp, Noyes, Agnew, Jacobi, and others, merely because of a difference of opinion on the code question, will not be tolerated by the good sense of the American medical profession.

We presume matters will probably remain in *statu quo* until the next meeting of the Association in St. Louis, when the whole question will be gone over again. We have faith in the good judgment of the medical profession, and believe that a way will be found out of the confusion and complication into which this matter has drifted.

SUICIDE AND THE MEDICAL PROFESSION IN ILLINOIS.

The oft-repeated remark, that doctors carry on their shoulders more than a full share of the troubles of this life, finds a curious confirmation in the last necrological report of the Illinois State Board of Health. In this report are to be found a few unpretending figures, which, upon a more careful examination than that bestowed by the compiler, are found to be full of meaning and melancholy interest. It is to be hoped that in its next report the Illinois State Board of Health will supplement its figures by as full information as possible regarding some important points touching that part of their report to which we call attention. In this report it is stated that 202 physicians died during the previous year in Illinois. Of this number, six are reported as having died from suicide, five from "overdose of morphia," and two from "overdose of chloral." The reported suicides form about three per cent. of the deaths, a percentage in itself out of all proportion to what obtains amongst other classes of the population. But in addition, seven deaths are reported as having occurred from overdose of morphia and chloral—or over three per cent. of the total deaths. We all know that suicides take place which are never reported. Relatives and friends have numerous motives for suppressing

the facts. This is comparatively easy in the case of invalids or chronic drinkers, especially when sedatives are the weapons of self-destruction resorted to. If this be true as regards the general public, it is much more so as regards medical men, who have every facility for quietly ending their own lives in this way. In the report before us it is not stated that a single physician died from the careless or accidental use of any other poisonous agent. This looks suspicious. Of course medical men, like other mortals, have aches and pains to soothe, and suffer from insomnia, but that is no reason why they should kill themselves in greater numbers than they do their patients. The unvarnished truth is, that the "overdose," as regards the seven cases above mentioned, was simply the invention of friends interested in suppressing the real facts. If we allow two deaths by overdose, which is quite enough, that will make eleven deaths by suicide, instead of six as reported. We cannot be far astray in our estimate of the "overdose" cases in this instance, but when we come to estimate the number of unreported suicides we have entered the field of conjecture, and each one will have his own opinion. No one will deny but such occurred, while many will be apt to conclude that the number is relatively considerable. In the instance before us we shall suppose that three such cases occurred. That will give us fourteen suicides out of 202 deaths, or about seven per cent. Where so many suicides take place there must be a great many in the profession living in a state of utter misery and despair.

In this country we feel thankful to be able to say that no approach to such a condition exists. It is rarely, indeed, that a medical man in Canada dies by the act of his own hand. It would be interesting to know something of the professional standing and habits of these Illinois suicides, for that would afford some clue as to the cause or causes of a condition of things which we hope is exceptional, even as regards the other States of the Union. In this country insanity and drink are regarded as almost the sole causes of suicide in the case of medical men, especially the latter cause. But the native American is temperate, and we are assured that the great majority of American doctors are total abstainers. Drunkenness, therefore, cannot be said to be the most important factor. The most fruitful cause, most probably, is the over-