

about 1830-1840 there were practically no restrictions, the profession became a "free for all," bogus diplomas were openly and unblushingly sold and displayed by their purchasers as credentials of membership in a learned profession. The country was overrun by hosts of ignorant, immoral and dangerous swindlers, self-styled doctors who preyed upon the unfortunate afflicted; isms and so-called "schools" of medical practice multiplied, a mushroom crop of diploma-mills sprang up over the land, and as a natural result the general standard of medical education and of requirements for graduation—except among the best class of medical colleges—fell lower and lower."

Timely legislation has spared the Canadian provinces from such evils, nay more, the methods which with us have proved so successful have been copied and put into effect in almost every state of the American Union.

A few words about the embryonic form of our present organization, viz., the old Licensing Board. Originally it was composed of three leading practitioners with the P. M. O. of garrison as umpire; latterly his services were dispensed with. The last members of the Board were the late Dr. Jennings, the Hon. Dr. Almon, and the Hon. Dr. Parker. The sole duty of the Board was to test the knowledge of men who wished to practice, but who had not the customary qualification. The examination was to a large extent a practical one. The candidates were usually men who obtained their knowledge either by private instruction from a practitioner or a partial collegiate course. Occasionally a genuine natural doctor presented himself, and if all the anecdotes related are authentic, many amusing scenes must have transpired. They usually arose from a reluctance on the part of the candidate to disclose his methods of treatment. The licentiates of Nova Scotia, once quite numerous, are fast disappearing and before long will be extinct, and it is only right to express what competent persons to judge have told me that among them were many very skillful practitioners, commanding the highest respect in the communities where they laboured.

The second step in medical legislation was taken in 1856, when a Registration Act was adopted. It enacts that qualifications are to be registered at the Provincial Secretary's office where they may be inspected on payment of a shilling. A licence is granted to those who are able to prove that they were in practice prior to 1821. Unregistered persons are prohibited from holding provincial appointments, and the assumption of a registrable title is made penal. This Act like the previous one is moderate in character and devoid of objectionable features. It supplies the defects that practical experience had shown to be lacking in the former one. One feature of interest is that the agitation in connection with its presentation to the legislature led to the formation of a provincial organization known as the Medical Society of Nova Scotia. The gradually increasing number of persons coming into the province from other places, thoroughly versed in all the vile arts of the quack, provoked a strong desire among the profession to repress the evil. Repeated efforts to obtain legislation ended in failure. The question was then taken up by the Medical Society of Halifax. A committee appointed for the purpose reported as follows: "With regard to the improper treatment of bills presented of late years to the legislature, your committee are of opinion that the only alternative now left by which an effectual resistance may be offered to the unjust procedure of the committees of Assembly appointed to investigate the petitions of medical men, is an union of the profession throughout the province. To effect such union your committee suggest that the medical society of Halifax should become a provincial association and its title altered accordingly, —and further, that the practitioners throughout the province be invited by a circular to become members of the association."

On motion of Dr. Parker it was resolved "That it is expedient for the members of the profession in this province to organize themselves forthwith into an association for scientific and professional purposes for their mutual protection, and that every regularly qualified practitioner in Nova Scotia be invited to join the association." In 1854 the association was organized

and the Hon. W. Gregor elected President, the country members having heartily endorsed the scheme. A memorial was drawn up for presentation to legislature, and the Act of 1856 was introduced by the late Dr. Webster of Kentville.

We may look upon this period as a dividing line between the old and the new. In earlier days the imported element in our profession largely predominated, now their supremacy was steadily waning, and before long became insignificant. In leaving the legislation of the past I trust it will not be considered inappropriate on my part to make a brief reference to some of the difficulties that had to be contended with in those days. O. W. Holmes, in that strange and fascinating story, *Elsie Venner*, portrays a very interesting character, the old doctor. He says: "Oh yes, country doctor, half a dollar a visit, drive, drive, drive all day—get up at night and harness your own horse, drive again ten miles through a snow storm, shake powders out of two vials—come back again if you don't happen to get stuck in a drift—no home, no peace, no continuous meals, no unbroken sleep on Sunday, no holiday, no social intercourse, but one eternal jog, jog, jog in a sulky until you feel like the mummy of an Indian who had been buried in a sitting posture and was dug up a hundred years after." Take away all the consoling features from this and throw in the following additional hardships and you get an idea of the trials of the earlier practitioners in this province. The roads were simply bridle paths through the forest. Streams had to be forded. A journey might often have to be completed on foot. Water carriage, when available was regarded as a boon. The serious emergencies of a mixed practice had to be surmounted single-handed with very slender resources at command. Periodicals did not exist and the library was limited to a few volumes. The fees were as small as the services rendered great. Of domestic comforts there were none. Yet in spite of all these obstacles educated men toiled and moiled from year to year until death ended their labours. The best men of the past do not suffer any by comparison with the leaders of to-day, and they have left us patterns of simplicity of character, of candour, humanity, and generosity that cannot fail to be reproduced in an intellectual and civilized community.

PRESENT LEGISLATION.

Not long after the Act of 1856 was adopted, a new and much more dangerous factor confronted the profession, by a slow but steady depreciation of the value of a diploma as an evidence of professional attainments. The exposure of diploma mills, and the downward tendency of a keen competition among a large number of irresponsible medical schools, caused a growing sentiment in the profession, in favour of a higher standard of education and qualifications. This found expression in the Act of 1872, a year ever to be memorable in the history of medicine in this province, and rightly so, for the profession then obtained self-government. The Act of 1872 with amendments, gives the profession full control of all questions relating to medical education, registration, and discipline. This brought us into line with Ontario and Quebec. The other provinces, with one exception, shortly followed in our footsteps. So that the Canadian profession have reached a standpoint to-day, that has not been attained elsewhere.

An explanation of the methods by which the provisions of the Act are carried into effect, with an account of what has been accomplished will, I trust, be the means of convincing many persons of its value, who have hitherto evinced but little interest in its working. To work the Act, an organization is created, styled the "Provincial Medical Board. It is composed of thirteen regularly qualified practitioners, of not less than seven years' standing. Seven of the thirteen are nominated and appointed by the Governor-in-Council, and hold office at pleasure; the remainder are elected tri-ennially by this Society. The revenue is obtained from Matriculation and Registration fees, and is expended in defraying necessary expenses, such as travelling expenses of members who reside out of Halifax, registrar's salary, and examiner and solicitor's fees, etc., etc.

The officers appointed are, matriculation and medical examiners, a registrar, who must be a qualified practitioner, a treasurer, who is usually a member of the Board, and they also