

## EDITORIALS

## STATUS OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

*J'ai fait un peu de bien : c'est mon meilleur ouvrage.*

—Voltaire.

SUCH were the words of the greatest mocker of his century, of "the greatest of all *Persiflours*," towards the close of a life so successful as to have given him the homage of the greatest intellects of the time, to have made him the adored of princesses and the companion of kings. *To have done a little good* he felt to have been his best work ; and such perhaps would be the verdict passed upon his own life-work by many of those who have been the most illustrious members of the profession of Medicine. Whatever of greatness is attained by men, the permanent and ultimate value placed upon it, either by its possessor, or by his worshippers, is measured by the *ethical* qualities inherent in it. The great Faraday in these days of marvellous discovery is forgotten as to his experimentations, yet says his admiring disciple. "His work excites admiration, but contact with him warms and elevates the heart." Carlyle says, "The science of the age, in short, is physical, chemical, physiological, and, in all shapes, *mechanical*," and further on, adds, "There is a science of *dynamics* in man's fortunes as well as of *mechanics*. There is a science which treats of, and practically addresses, the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love, Fear and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry, Religion, all which have a truly vital and infinite character : . . . in former times the wise men, the enlightened lovers of their kind who appeared generally as moralists, poets, or priests, did, without neglecting the mechanical province, deal chiefly with the dynamical : applying themselves chiefly to regulate, increase, and purify the inward primary powers of man. . . . But a wide difference is manifest in our age."

We hope that to none will the subject of our remarks seem so foreign to the evident references in our quotations, as to cause them to ask the question, "whether we have been reading Dr. Hughlings Jackson's last address on the "Psychology of Joking"; for should it appear to them that the status of the profession is chiefly to be regulated by "curious checking and

balancing, and other adjustments of profit and loss to guide them to their true advantage," it need only be said that we speak not to them. To us the serious questions are : "Do present professional methods, both of teaching and practice, tend to the elevation of the profession in those things which have ever given it nobility? And if not, then: "is the *Pig-philosophy*, so-called by Carlyle, to increasingly be cultivated and become the higher good? Clearly we take it, we have but the two propositions, and no sort of casuistry by which the worse may be made appear the better reason will avail to modify the weight of logical conclusions. Recently a note appeared in a Hamilton paper which was "dittoed" by a morning daily as regards Toronto, to the effect that there are more physicians in these two cities than could make a decent living. When the daily press begins the chronicle of such facts, it would seem that what for some time has been too apparent to the profession itself, requires serious consideration from the standpoint of *status*. How this has come about may be explained partly by the fact of a general diffusion of wealth and intelligence amongst our people, making it possible for many to take a course in Medicine with a view to social elevation and a more polite vocation ; and partly by the fact that the avenues to the profession have been and are easy of access. Some may reply that this overcrowding exists in every line of business from that of the tradesman upwards ; but we insist that the *fons et origo* of Medicine being the existence of physical ill, its very character as a noble profession requires not only the limitation by itself of what makes it a necessity, but also lessening of work for the performance of which it draws its sustenance. To say that Law and other vocations where noble ends are avowed ought similarly to be self-destructive financially can in no wise affect the force of our argument : suffice it for us to realize wherein our true ministry consists. If our premises be correct, then it must be evident that the maintenance and elevation of the *status* of Medicine, as a ministry of charity in its highest meaning, demands first, the lessening the numbers of those, who, entering an over-crowded profession, must, in order to live—with regret do we say it—