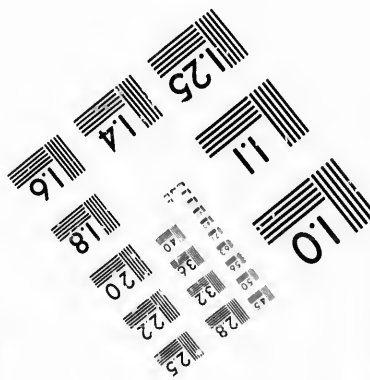
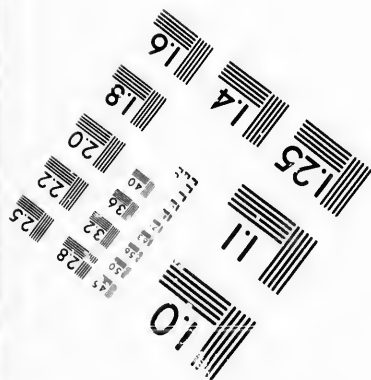
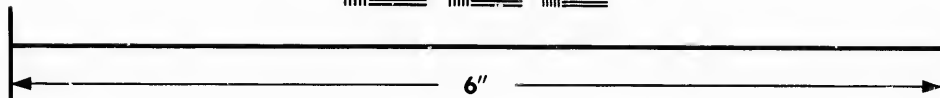
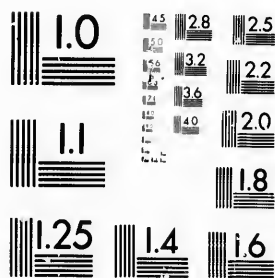


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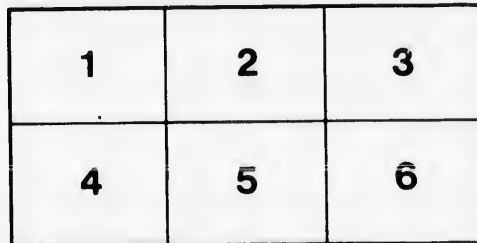
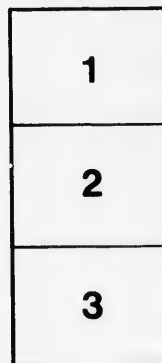
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# ADDRESS

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AT ITS

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FEBRUARY 13, 1862.

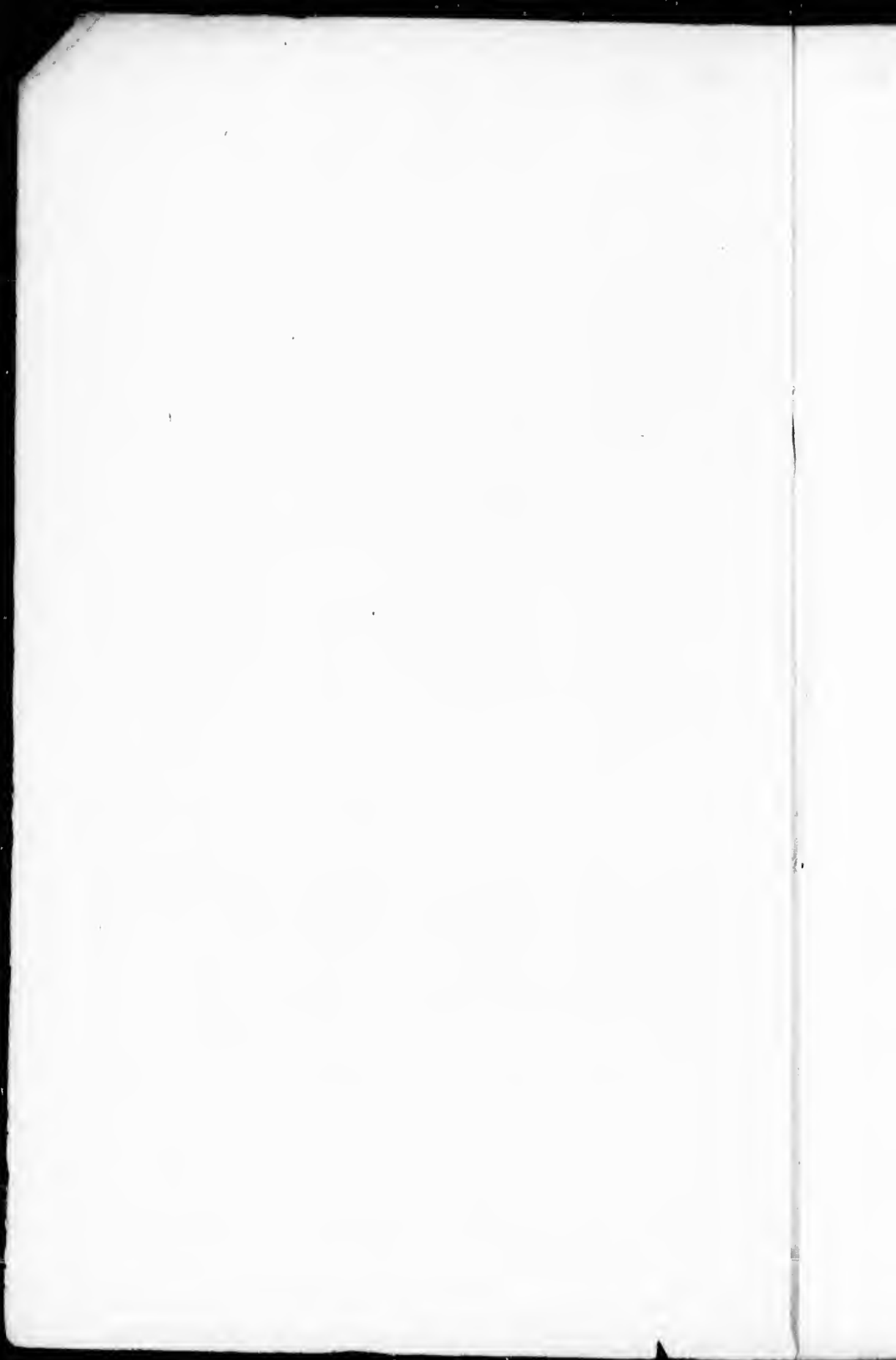
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JAMES SINCLAIR, M. D.,

RECORDING SECRETARY.

Published by the Society.

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## ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,

Members of the St. John Medical Society :

In compliance with a resolution adopted at a recent meeting of the Society, I proceed to attempt the fulfilment of a task which, for reasons which I need not enumerate, ought to have been imposed elsewhere. Indeed I can account for the peculiarity of your choice only on the ground that, from the nature of his duties, a Secretary may be supposed to possess particular advantages in forming an estimate of the condition, progress, and prospects of the body in which he holds office.

The intention of the resolution referred to, was, I presume, that a statement should be made of the principal events that have occurred in the Society during the past year, and that any suggestions which might arise from a consideration of its past and present position should be laid before you, with a view of furthering the objects for the accomplishment of which the Society has been organized. In connection with these points, therefore, I beg leave to submit the following Report:—

At the last Annual Meeting, the Society consisted of thirteen members ; since that time, the name of one member has been erased from the roll of the Society, and the names of three new members have been added. At the present time, therefore, the Society consists of fifteen members.

Several changes have been made during the past year in the Constitution and Bye Laws of the Society. Among others, the annual fee required of country members has been reduced to two dollars. Two additional offices also have been created, namely—those of Vice President and Corresponding Secretary.

Since the last annual meeting twenty-three regular meetings have been held. On two occasions the Society failed to be constituted for business, the number of members present not being sufficient to form a quorum.

The subjects brought formally before the Society for discussion, during the past year, were—Organic diseases of the heart, Aneurism of the Thoracic Aorta, the Connection of Convulsions with large losses of Blood, Bloodletting in Inflammatory Affections, Nature and Treatment of Inflammation, Dyspepsia, Epidemics, Cause of Spread of Cholera and Yellow Fever, Conditions favoring the spread of Cholera, Ulceration of the Stomach, Inflammation of the Bladder and its Treatment, Intestinal Worms, Uterine Hemorrhage, Hooping Cough, Jaundice, Functions of the Liver, Gunshot Wounds, Physiology of the Ganglionic System of Nerves.

A few actual cases of disease have been reported, and several recent morbid specimens were laid before the Society.

In thus briefly reviewing our position during the past year, the question naturally arises, What has been the success of our Society? The object of the Society, as expressed in the Constitution, is the improvement of its members in medicine and the auxiliary sciences. In estimating the degree of improvement that may have been attained, it is unfair to take into consideration only the amount of information actually imparted during the meetings of the Society. Has not some one of us been led by some casual remark, or by the starting of some apparently uninteresting question in the Society, to enter upon some new path of enquiry which has conducted him to conclusions the most unexpected and satisfactory? Has not the discussion of a subject occasionally obliged some of us to furbish up old stores of knowledge which had become rusty from disuse? Have there not been instances in which we had supposed that we were pretty thoroughly acquainted with a subject, and yet, on listening to the remarks of another, have we not discovered that there were points which we had entirely overlooked, and which we afterwards attended to in our private studies?

But, in addition to the information thus directly imparted, or acquired privately in consequence of suggestions thrown out in the Society, we ought not to overlook the fact, that a certain amount of intellectual exertion has been called forth by our discussions. The value of this result is

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so generally ignored that I wish to draw towards it especial attention. Many persons in the deliberations of associations like ours, see nothing valuable save the communication of hard practical facts. Facts, say they, constitute knowledge. It should, however, be borne in mind, that the human intellect does not fulfil its design by acting merely as a passive receptacle of facts communicated from without. Facts are, in themselves, but crude material; and it depends upon the qualities and preparation of the mind which receives them, whether they shall remain in their primitive, undeveloped, and comparatively valueless condition, or whether they shall be so elaborated and vitalized as to form a part of the living organism of truth. And let us be well assured that the mental processes by which these effects are produced, are not conducted by blind and unerring machinery, such as that employed in factories, by which the most uninstructed and unskilled laborer may, by turning a crank, convert the rudest substances into a polished fabric. The operations of the mind more closely resemble the work of the seal engraver, an artificer who has hitherto found no labor-saving and infallible machine to relieve him of the necessity of bringing to his business a degree of skill, which can be acquired only by long and severe practice. If this view of intellectual operations be correct, it will be perceived how necessary is mental exercise in order to the attainment of the strength and skill required to sift and interpret facts, to arrange them in scientific order, and to arrive at the great principles of which these facts may prove to be the exponents. And in so far as this point is concerned, I claim that our Society, while it is far removed from the character of a mere debating club, properly constitutes a mental gymnasium; and that subjects even of trifling import in themselves introduced into our Society, may in this way become eminently useful. I need hardly point out how much mental training and exercise are needed in the medical profession. Notwithstanding the many great and sublime physiological and pathological principles evolved during the last half century, no inconsiderable portion of our knowledge yet remains in

a crude and isolated condition. A vast amount of severe and properly directed toil must be expended upon this chaotic mass ere it shall assume definite and systematic proportions. And it is folly to await, with folded arms, the advent of some medical Heracles, who shall perform for us at a stroke the labors which destiny seems to have apportioned off among the profession at large. How much of the work has been allotted to us we know not, but, at all events, we do well to prepare ourselves for adding our quota, be it great or small, to the general store. And who dares assert that even our Society, obscure as it is, may not, one day, play a prominent part in placing our noble science before the world, a model of symmetry, order, and beauty?

Leaving the question of intellectual profit and loss, I ask your attention to another point that ought to be considered in estimating the advantages arising from this Society. I refer to that peculiar softening of the manners, that unity of sentiment, that kindliness of regard, which are the natural results of social intercourse. Perhaps in no walk of life are there so many circumstances calculated to produce the opposite of these conditions as in the medical profession. The old are apt to place value almost exclusively on the lessons of experience, and to regard with a species of pity the empty pretensions of the young. The young pride themselves on their acquaintance with the latest theories of the day, and feel disposed to deride the old gentleman who administers his calomel or blue pill for no better reason than that he has found it beneficial in similar cases, and who cannot enter with his medicine at the mouth or other port of entry, follow it in all its turnings and windings through the system, note its successive actions and reactions, its thousand sympathies and antipathies, and finally emerge with it through its favorite emunctory; and all this in exact accordance with the most approved hypothesis on the subject. Among those who stand on an equal footing, and who are battling for the same object, a certain degree of professional, if not personal, rivalry cannot but exist. Again, in a profession such as ours it is natural for an

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individual to imagine that nowhere have the streams of knowledge flowed, so pure and copious, as at those fountains from which he slaked his early thirst; while a large and sturdy band of medical Nathanaels are utterly incredulous that any good thing can come out of Nazareth. Again, in no other profession or business does genuine merit meet with so little appreciation, and with so uncertain a reward. In the arts, as a rule, a good workman will produce good work, and the excellence of his workmanship is manifest. The joiner is not compelled to frame a door from unseasoned wood, nor is the tailor expected to furnish his customers with well-fitting habiliments from material all too scant. The lawyer lays his case before a jury—often incapables, it is true, but with the assurance, nevertheless, that the presiding judge sits to direct them in their verdict. But the medical practitioner is too often compelled to leave his case to the tender mercies of the ignorant and the malicious, with no judge to guide them, no censor to correct. How often are the abilities of the “doctor” assayed and stamped by a self-constituted committee of old ladies assembled in solemn conclave around their bread and butter, and in the inspiring presence of that modern household god, the tea-urn! How often is success coolly anticipated, and disappointment cruelly avenged, by those who have made the modest demand, that the doctor shall rejuvenate old age, and preserve the young in eternal youth; that he shall infuse health and strength into the worn out frame, and snatch the expiring victim from the jaws of inevitable death! How often is he ignorantly censured where he is undeserving of censure, or even where he is deserving of praise! An individual thus smarting under unmerited wrongs, is not to be stared at as a monster if he entertain some feelings of bitterness when, with vision jaundiced by injustice, he fancies he sees a rival, perhaps no more skillful than himself, yet by means of an insinuating address, and a happy faculty of making all things work together for his own good, rioting in popular favors, and receiving the plaudits of the multitude as a reward for his very blunders.

Upon this question, then, I claim a verdict in favor of

our Society, inasmuch as its meetings serve to bring together members of the profession, to promote a friendly interchange of sentiment, to break down those feelings of distrust which are so apt to be engendered in solitude, to cherish that natural love of right which dictates a course of honorable conduct towards each other on all occasions, and, in an especial manner, to strengthen that sentiment which has no name in English, but which the French call *esprit de corps*, that spirit which impels men to forego their individual preferences, and interests if need be, in favor of the body of which they form a part, a spirit without which no artificial organization or body of men can hold a prominent position or even a protracted existence, and deprived of which, our learned, ancient, and honorable profession must relinquish its rightful and long maintained heritage of purity and honor, and descend to grovel among the most ignoble of the arts which the basest of men ply to eke out a degraded existence.

In view, then, of the results which have arisen from the institution of our Society, the conclusion may be fairly drawn, that the hopes with which the Society was organized have not been disappointed, and that advantages have incidentally arisen which were not previously contemplated.

Let us now inquire whether we may calculate, through the continued existence of our Society, upon the permanence of these beneficial results, whether they may not be rendered still more valuable, and whether other and more extended advantages may not justly be anticipated from the Society, without making any essential change in its original character.

The question of the prospect of the continued existence of the Society is of some importance to us, but the data from which conclusions are to be drawn are somewhat conflicting. Our Society has now passed through an ordeal of two years. With an increase in the number of City members, the average attendance has been smaller during the year just ended than during the previous one. On the other hand, while the Society held twenty-four meetings during the past year, only fourteen meetings were held

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during the year ending February 1861. Again, had the quorum remained during the past year as it stood during the year previous, the same number of regular evenings of meeting would have passed without a quorum in both years. The average attendance during the past year was perhaps as large as could reasonably be expected from the comparatively small number of City members and the frequency with which the meetings were held. Still, a firm determination on the part of each member to occupy his place at the meetings of the Society as regularly as circumstances will possibly permit, would in all probability produce a somewhat higher average. Doubtless there is not a gentleman connected with the Society who, if it were exposed to sudden danger, would not promptly rush to the rescue. But Societies like ours rarely die of acute disease. They perish generally through a slow and insidious decline. Member after member fails, from one cause or another, to keep alive sufficient interest to attract him strongly to the regular meetings. His attendance becomes desultory, and at length ceases. For a time, the few who continue to hold the welfare of the organization deeply at heart, rally round the fading object of their hopes, but even their courage at length fails, and the deserted thing miserably perishes.

Our Society as yet prominently presents no such untoward symptoms. On the contrary, it possesses many features indicative of a vigorous vitality. One of the most convincing and cheering signs of its being destined to a long and prosperous existence, appears in the warm and unflagging interest which has been taken in its welfare, ever since its origin, by those of its members who are the farthest advanced in the practice and the honors of the profession. To find the more youthful members regular in their attendance, and anxious to further the interests of the Society, is of course praiseworthy, but is nothing beyond what is expected of young men eager for the conflict of opinions, and solicitous to derive advantage from any practical hints that may be thrown out on subjects with which they may be supposed to have at best but little

beyond a theoretical acquaintance. But the case is very different with those who have already borne the burden and heat of the day, whose ears have long ceased to tingle at the sound of a new medical theory, for whom the busy strife of tongues has well nigh lost its charms, whose chief business in the Society is to impart rather than to receive, and whose chastened sense of propriety impels them, instead of giving a loose to their own passions, to moderate excitement in others. To these gentlemen, therefore, whose disinterested zeal has done so much towards cherishing and sustaining the Society, the gratitude of the younger members is justly and in an especial manner due.

Feeling hopeful, then, that our Society presents as yet no evident symptoms of dissolution, we may proceed with the more cheerfulness to inquire whether its efficiency may not be increased.

It may be a question whether some variety in our mode of conducting the exercises of the Society would not render our meetings somewhat more lively and interesting. Our Constitution certainly gives ample scope in this matter. Lectures, essays, addresses, readings, discussions, and conversations are all allowable modes in which the time of the Society may be employed, though we have hitherto limited ourselves chiefly to the method of formal discussion. With regard to the various modes specified, some difficulty may be experienced in apprehending the points of distinction between some of them. If each mode possesses characters distinct from the others, it were better that they should be pointed out, and that all the machinery over which the constitution gives us control should be put into energetic action. To effect this object, it may be a question for the Society to consider, whether, in addition to the ordinary meetings of the Society, the adoption of a system of quarterly meetings may not be of service. For each of these meetings the Society might appoint a carefully written paper, to be prepared by some one of the members, the subject being either left to the choice of the individual, or determined by the Society. By this means the even tenor of our semi-monthly meetings would be agreeably varied.

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Again, if some system of reporting actual cases at our ordinary meetings were adopted, and urgently insisted on, the value of our Society as a guide in practice would be materially enhanced. It may also be a point to consider whether the delivery of an annual address might not with advantage be made the duty of the retiring President. Whether a social gathering of some kind, of the members of the Society, at the end of the year, be advisable or practicable, the Society is best able to determine.

The wisdom of the Society has in no case been more apparent than in its adoption of a Code of Ethics. Its value has already been felt in preserving harmony in our Society, and it will doubtless be experienced more and more, and perhaps in a wider sphere. If the pecuniary condition of the Society should at any time warrant the undertaking, the general distribution of the code, so that every medical practitioner in the province should possess a copy, would do much towards upholding the purity of the profession.

To another of the internal regulations of the Society, I would wish to draw attention. It will be remembered that a resolution was adopted at one of our meetings, to the effect that city members absenting themselves, without sufficient cause, from the meetings of the Society for a specified time, should *ipso facto* cease to be members of the Society. Now, it is evident, that if our Society is intended to be purely a working Society, a Society calculated simply for mutual improvement in scientific knowledge, the fewer barren branches that encumber the stem the better. I think, however, that it is not, and has not ever been, intended that the operations of our Society should be confined within strictly circumscribed limits. On the contrary, I believe that it is the ardent wish of every member of the Society, that its influence should be exerted in every possible manner that may honestly contribute to the prosperity of the profession. There can be little doubt that the Society, by the adoption of wise and liberal measures, may exert a directly beneficial influence beyond its own limits; but it must first occupy a position that will command attention. Numbers then become of some importance to

us. Again, any useful results arising from the action of the Society are more likely to reach individuals connected, however loosely, with us, than if they be entirely detached. Under these circumstances, then, it may be a question whether it would not be wise to allow a certain degree of laxity in our internal regulations in favor of members whose attendance may be, even to a great degree, irregular. If a definite limit to the forbearance of the Society is desirable, it might be arranged with reference to pecuniary contingencies.

In considering the propriety of extending the operations of the Society beyond the limits prescribed by the strict letter of the Constitution, the objects to be attained should be clearly determined. A few hints are all that can be attempted on the present occasion.

The relations subsisting between the profession and the public, in this province at least, are not so satisfactory as could be wished. Probably at the present time the profession generally does not hold the confidence of the public to so great an extent as it did a hundred years ago; certainly not as it did in the earlier days of our race. At all events, but few of us at the present day stand a chance of being elevated to a seat among the gods; or of listening to the sentiment which Idomeneus utters in reference to Machaon:

A wise physician skilled our wounds to heal,  
Is more than armies to the public weal.

*Pope's Hom. xi. 636-7.*

The causes of this withdrawal of public confidence are numerous, some of them lying at the door of the profession, others the natural results of the varying conditions of intellect among the people. So long as men remain in ignorance of nature's laws and operations, their imagination revels in all sorts of absurdities and impossibilities. The line which separates the natural from the supernatural is dimly or not at all perceived. A people in this condition are ever ready to ascribe more than mortal powers to any one clever enough to excite their easily excited wonder; and knaves

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are always in abundance to contribute in this way to their gratification. The dawn of intellect produces a reaction. False pretensions are now occasionally discovered in those previously pronounced infallible; and a distrust of the old gods is engendered, as wild and irrational as the previous brutish credulity. Nature comes at length to be recognized to some extent as working in accordance with uniform laws. The idea is novel, and is seized with avidity; and in the absence of a higher and a correcting knowledge, and with a sharp look out still for wonders, the most fanciful hypotheses, founded on the merest shadow of fact, are undoubtedly received, and embraced as sublime and universal truths. Now, however humiliating the acknowledgment may be, it is nevertheless true, that, in medical matters at least, many even of the most advanced portion of mankind have not yet attained beyond this very moderate degree of mental illumination. Hence we find crowds of quasi-educated men and women, at the present day, spurning the modest welcome of sober philosophy, and flying to the impure embraces of impudent delusion, and finally oscillating in a state of helpless perplexity between one extreme of absurdity and another.

It avails but little to inquire whether some one is not to blame for this unfortunate state of affairs. Instead of dealing in useless recriminations, let us rather endeavor to discover and apply a means of cure. In the absence of a correct appreciation of the great general principles by which nature is governed, the people must at least be trained to exercise a faculty which nature has given to all, but which few use, or know how to use—the faculty of common sense. It is incredible how entirely the exercise of this faculty is suppressed by the public in questions relating to the healing art. It is difficult to believe that individuals, even though they are incompetent to decide between what they call different systems of medicine, should fail to perceive the ludicrous absurdity of discarding the precepts of an educated physician for the mummeries of an aged crone; and yet such acts frequently occur, and not invariably among the lowest orders of society. Still more difficult is it to

believe that persons, otherwise rational enough—at all events in no danger of mistaking sixpence for a shilling—and possessed of what is styled a liberal education, should carry about their persons, as a charm against the assaults of rheumatism, a *raw potato*; and persist too in maintaining its efficacy even at a time when their aching joints are rising in open rebellion against its potent sway; and yet this precious talisman may be found nestling in the pockets of even fashionable garments.

Now, common sense in medical matters is not to be called into activity by popular lectures on the Medical Sciences, nor yet by means of those sapient oracles called Domestic Medicine books. Much, however, may be effected by a proper conduct on the part of the practitioner at the bedside of his patients. Nor is it required of him, for the accomplishment of the end in view, to enter into scientific details which cannot be comprehended, and which may be mischievously misunderstood. His duties are, many of them, rather negative in their character. Let him carefully avoid on the one hand a pandering to popular prejudices, and, on the other, a captious opposition to every suggestion that emanates not from himself. Let him beware of the spirit of Prophecy and the gift of Miracles. Let him rarely arrive at a time when a moment later would have been all too late to display his wondrous powers. Let him restrain his virtuous indignation at the criminal ignorance of his brother practitioner; and should he be called in after the dismissal of another medical man, let him not, after applying his omniscient nose to the phial left by his unfortunate predecessor, fling it, in a paroxysm of rage, out of the window or into the fire. These, however, are vulgar doings, and but few are guilty of them; but there are many trifling acts exerting an unfortunate influence on the popular mind, which would not occur were a good understanding established among the members of the profession. In the present heterogeneous condition of the profession in this Province, however, a good mutual understanding is an object difficult to be attained. Effort, constant, persevering, undespairing effort, on the part of those who perceive the

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magnitude of the prize, is necessary in order that it be secured. One great means of accomplishing the end in view, I believe to be frequent and friendly personal intercourse. Here then is a field of operations worthy of our Society. Let us, as a Society, and individually, endeavor in an honorable manner, to cultivate friendly relations with the profession as well beyond, as within our own limits. Let us not cast anathemas against even an erring brother, who is not utterly beyond reclaim; and if it is impossible that we should treat him as a gentleman, let us at least treat him as if we were gentlemen ourselves. And let us, above all, exhibit to the world that the Medical Society of Saint John is animated by no spirit save those of purity, and honor, and singleness of purpose; and the time may come when our Society shall become the temple to which the eyes of all the sons of medicine in our Province shall be turned.

In this connection, I wish to make one remark respecting the responsibility which attaches not only to the members of our Society, but to the profession generally, practising in the chief City of New Brunswick. If propriety of conduct is to be sought any where, it will be looked for in the seat of the highest civilization. Therefore it behoves city practitioners to exhibit on all occasions to their more scattered brethren in the rural districts, the model of professional honor and gentlemanly courtesy. And yet complaints are occasionally heard from medical gentlemen residing in the country, of doubtful professional conduct on the part of practitioners who have been called thither from the city. If these complaints have a real foundation, and such a state of things be allowed to continue, the profession in this Province will ultimately exhibit very unattractive features. But against this evil, a potent remedy exists in our Society. Let our arms be extended far and wide into the country; and let the ears of the Society be open, and let them be known to be open, to every professional cry.

It would greatly conduce to success in every direction, were a greater number of at least the more influential part of the profession in Saint John enrolled as members of our Society. This object may ultimately be attained, but it

will not be attained through teasing inopportunities. At the same time, a gentlemanly recognition of our brotherhood might at times be peculiarly acceptable. If the Society should determine upon a system of Annual Addresses, a special invitation on such occasions to the various medical gentlemen in our vicinity, might be received as a graceful compliment.

In concluding, I may remark that it is a practical question of some difficulty to determine, to what extent the Society should, at the present time, consistently with propriety, assert itself as an exponent of medical opinion in this Province, and obtrude itself generally upon public attention. The existence of our Society has not yet been recognized even by our City almanacks; and yet bodies not more important, if more pretending, find a place in these treasuries of local information. Now, although modern civilized society is by no means troubled with a general plethora of modesty, yet it is possible that even this rare and valuable moral quality may be concentrated at certain points to a degree little short of positive congestion. It may be wise, then, that some attention should be paid to passing events in the world around us, in order that fitting occasions may be embraced, upon which our existence and position as a Medical Society, may be properly asserted.

I had intended to touch upon the advantages to the Society, the profession, and the public, of having established a system of registration of births and deaths, the necessity of having the medical topography of the Province, to some extent, explored, the utility of some acquaintance with its medical flora, and the aid which our Society might contribute in reference to these points, by encouraging medical gentlemen in various parts of the Province to join the Society, who might act chiefly as corresponding members, but I feared that your patience would be already exhausted.

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