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CENTENNIAL OBSERVATIONS

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ON THE

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

OF THE

CONNECTICUT MEDICAL SOCIETY.

By S. G. HUBBARD, M. D.,

NEW HAVEN.

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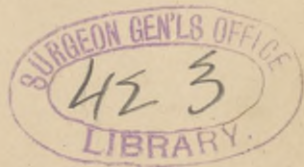
BY S. G. HUBBARD, M.D., NEW HAVEN.

[Read before the Meeting of the New Haven County Society, April 16, 1885.]

Under the operation of physiological law, the growth and development of organic bodies depend upon the regularity and completeness of the molecular changes which occur in them. Men and their institutions, in subjection to a similar natural law, must undergo repeated material transformations and such constitutional changes as will best fit them to fulfill their legitimate functions; otherwise, healthy existence cannot be maintained. The constitutions of States, the charters of colleges and cities, the organizations of scientific bodies, and all those associations which are the outgrowth of civilization, and mark the progress of mental and material development in every community, must be constantly subject to modifications and changes if they would keep pace with the advancement of human thought, and with the absolute requirements of mankind.

Whenever such changes become impossible of accomplishment decay and death are close at hand.

The necessity for the inauguration of such organic changes as affect the life or usefulness of an institution may have been for many years an admitted fact in the inner consciousness of its thoughtful members, awaiting only the expanding force of a rare or even of a common-place event to develop a feeble admission of possible danger into a deep and positive conviction of its existence. The interest which always centers around chronological events in their relations to the life and welfare of a public institution, converts most naturally these centennial days into an occasion for critical introspection of our affairs and prospects.



We have reached, to-day, Mr. President and Gentlemen, a period in our history of the greatest possible interest and importance ; — an epoch of time from which we shall date all the events in our future, — a point of observation from which we may look backward and carefully note the successes and the mistakes of the first hundred years of our existence; and looking forward from this elevation into the dim unknown we should endeavor, in the light of contemporaneous history, and of our own experiences, to cast the horoscope of the future, bringing to our aid the calm spirit of philosophical inquiry and the cautious boldness with which we are accustomed to consider the gravest professional problems.

But while we broaden and deepen our foundations to meet the demands of a newer civilization, let us correct our mistakes, and strengthen ourselves for the new triumphs and trials that await us in the progress of the second century on which we have just entered.

This centennial anniversary of the New Haven County Medical Society, as it was at first named, is an appropriate occasion for recalling briefly the condition of the profession of Connecticut in the early days of the republic, together with the circumstances and purposes which led directly to its formation, and the events which followed it. We may thus be enabled to trace to their source the striking peculiarities for which our State Society is distinguished, and to appreciate more fully the tenacity with which it adheres to the outworn theories of a dead past.

Those of you who are familiar with the interesting and increasingly valuable paper of Dr. Henry Bronson, on the "Origin of the Connecticut Medical Society," published in our Proceedings for 1873 (and all who were members at that date know it well), are aware that the principal object the founders of this society had in view was, that it might serve as a strategical base of operations — an advanced position — from which they could more advantageously direct the contest about to be inaugurated, the real purpose of which was the formation of a State Medical Society, on a plan that had been already matured.

It may, then, be truthfully said, that the existence of the Connecticut Medical Society began a hundred years ago, when all its parts were fashioned, and its lines were laid upon a borrowed model, the working qualities of which had not then been tested. And although, because of the inadmissible demands of the thirty-

two persons who petitioned for an act of incorporation, a charter was repeatedly denied to them, and its organic life was retarded for eight years, the State Society has been an actual living force in the minds and hearts of the profession since 1784. Before proceeding further, perhaps what I have said of the demands of the petitioners for exclusive rights, extraordinary privileges, and dangerous powers, requires a word of explanation.

During the closing years of the Revolutionary War, and immediately after the establishment of peace, a large number of medical men of wide experience and superior ability, of which they seemed fully conscious, returned, after prolonged and arduous services with our armies in the field, to their quiet homes in Connecticut; and it would not be strange if they brought with them the habits of command, the self-appreciation, and the arrogance so common among professional men of that early time, greatly intensified by the influences of army life. They found already organized in a neighboring commonwealth, by men of similar experiences and mental habits, a State Medical Society; and feeling the need of a similar organization themselves, and in view of the pre-eminent position and influence conceded then and always to the profession of that State, it was most natural that the charter of the Massachusetts Medical Society, granted in 1781, should have been closely copied as a model of wisdom by the early profession of Connecticut.

But when, as petitioners, they knocked at the doors of our General Assembly, in 1784, asking for the incorporation of thirty-two physicians — four from each county — as a body corporate, to be known as Fellows of the Connecticut Medical Society, chosen for life, or during good behavior, and limited in number to sixty persons, the petition was promptly denied on high constitutional grounds, and as contrary to public policy. The next year the petitioners amended their 'bill of form' and asked for a charter by the terms of which the limit in number of Fellows was extended to seventy; and in order to quiet opposition that had arisen to the charter in some portions of New Haven County, "the committee passed a vote making an addition of four more members from this county agreeable to a recommendation forwarded to the several counties." Says Bronson, "In 1787 a few cities had been recently incorporated, but what may be called a private charter, did not, I believe, exist in the State. Very naturally the legislature was re-

luctant to change its policy. More than this, there were provisions in the rejected bill calculated to excite the jealousy of a suspicious people." The question during these years took precedence in popular discussions of public affairs. It was the general verdict of the people that to grant a charter conferring upon a small number of citizens such exclusive privileges as were asked for, and constituting what was properly termed a close corporation for the administration of affairs of the greatest importance to the entire community, was regarded as a precedent too dangerous to be established — and to the lasting honor of the General Assembly, the prayer of the petitioners was again refused. "Approvingly, or adversely, the people of the State watched silently their proceedings. Yale College partook of the excitement; on the 15th of July, 1788, the Seniors discussed the question, "Whether it be safe to grant the proposed charter of the Connecticut Medical Society," and on the 6th of January following, the question, "Whether the institution of medical societies be useful." We may smile now at some of these items of our medical history, but we must not forget that, while in a few instances there was professional opposition on the ground of too limited a distribution of "life peerages" to satisfy the ambitious, the opposition of the people and of their representatives was deeply rooted in their natural democratic dislike of granting exclusive privileges to privileged classes. In 1791, the New Haven County Medical Society was duly incorporated. In 1792 the Connecticut Medical Society was incorporated with substantially the same chartered rights as it has at present, namely, — the sovereignty of the Society is exclusively invested in "the President and Fellows."

"By a change in our charter of 1870, our organization was materially improved in some important particulars, and especially in establishing the standing 'Committee on Matters of Professional Interest,' and by some other changes."

I shall offer no apology for having drawn so largely upon Dr. Bronson's paper for these interesting historical data, in view of the great importance of an adequate understanding of the principles involved in any discussion of the present needs of our State Society, and particularly in view of the fact that the historical paper referred to is not accessible to a large number of members added within the last dozen years.

In order that we may form an appreciative judgment of the

influences of the times upon the condition and progress of professional opinion in our own and the neighboring State, and as throwing a strong light on our own anomalous and untenable position, let me again refer to the peculiar circumstances in the midst of which the Massachusetts Medical Society was incorporated. Like every other interest in the colonies during the revolutionary period, the medical profession was in a chaotic state; and in the absence of medical colleges, there were in all the country no practicable agencies by which it could be redeemed and elevated, except by those originating within itself. It has been stated that among the three thousand medical practitioners in the country at that time, it was estimated that only four hundred held the degree of M.D., and nearly all of these were obtained at foreign universities. The society was chartered on the first of November, 1781, only a few days after the battle of Yorktown, and the surrender of Cornwallis, on the 19th of October. Almost any petition for the incorporation of a medical society, praying as this one did for exclusive powers of control in every thing pertaining to the profession of medicine, presented to any legislature, overflowing as this one doubtless was, with wild excitement and patriotic rejoicings over a glorious victory of such critical importance to the country, would be even now, probably, readily granted. The society was intended, and was authorized to act, in the absence of any medical college in that State, or in New England, as an examining and licensing body for all persons offering to practice medicine within its borders. It consisted of thirty-one Fellows, with a maximum limit of seventy, to be increased beyond the minimum limit by election.

To this body was committed the entire control of medical education and medical practice. It published a formidable list of over eighty volumes, which candidates for license must show by evidence that they had read — with a catalogue of a hundred and fifty more, which students were earnestly advised to read. It was at the same time a Medical Society, a Medical College, and an Academy of Medicine.

It was upon this model that our original charter was framed; indeed it was a copy, *verbatim et literatim*, of this remarkable enactment, and we can see in it the germs of the idea of government by *elected Fellows*, and the power to license men to practice medicine, which still linger among us, in spite of the eliminating

forces of evolution. The aims of the profession in both these States, were however, highly to be commended—their purposes were identical—they each desired to preserve the purity of the profession by excluding from it all persons and practices likely to bring upon it dishonor. The way before them was full of difficulties of unknown magnitude, but their zeal in the work of laying broad and deep foundations for the professional structures they were about to build was unbounded. Their knowledge of human nature seems to have been small, but in their knowledge of scientific medicine, as then understood, they ranked with the foremost. The exigencies of the occasion were great and imperative, but they were responded to in the fullness of their wisdom, and to the extent of their powers. Yet the dogmas of an old civilization still held their minds in bondage; for although just emerging from a long and bloody war, waged to secure their own personal and political liberty, they were unable to understand that perfect freedom and equality of rights are just as essential in the cultivation of the medical sciences, as they are to the growth and development of a political state.

In tracing the remarkable parallelisms so noticeable in the histories of our own society, and that of Massachusetts, I am indebted to the kindness of several friends and correspondents in that State, for the loan of valuable documents, and full replies to requests for information; thus enabling me to present an intelligible view of the two societies in comparison—and particularly of the workings of their system, and the reasons which, after a few years' trial led to its abandonment. From the able and exceedingly instructive centennial discourse of J. Collins Warren, M.D., of Boston, before the Massachusetts Society in 1881, I am able to quote facts and traditions which explain the causes which led to this great change in its organization. Says Dr. Warren, "According to tradition the workings of this close corporation were not entirely satisfactory to the mass of the profession in the State. A considerable number of prominent medical men having come into the State, and increasing every year, strenuous opposition was made against the government of the many by the few; there was unwillingness to acknowledge the supremacy of the Society, without enjoying professional equality with the Fellows—such distinctions not being in accordance with the spirit of the institutions of the young republic. Accordingly, in 1803, the number of pro-

fessional men in the State having greatly increased, and extensive correspondence having been instituted among its members, in order to devise the best means of increasing its usefulness, a radical change was made in the constitution of the society; and thereafter any licentiate of three years' practice, was eligible for an election on a basis of entire equality with all other members. He became a '*Fellow of the Society*.'"

During the next generation the facilities for instruction in medical colleges, particularly in New England, had been largely increased, and the profession of Massachusetts received its full share of the more highly educated graduates. Of course, agitation against this last remnant of exclusiveness was not allowed to cease or diminish—but was carried on with increased energy, until finally, after undergoing a great number of transformations, that pioneer Society through the indefatigable perseverance of a few wise and brave men whom I might name, fought itself clear of all impediments, and in 1859, its charter was so amended that every barrier to the full enjoyment of the rights of freedom and equality by its members was removed; and from that day to the present, any man of good character, being a graduate of a duly authorized medical college, and practicing no exclusive system of medicine, has been on application eligible for election as a Fellow of the Society, on a basis of equality. The society then became for the first time in its history, and still remains, *open*—and *free as the freest*; while our own State Society remains the sole representative in New England, of a pernicious system based upon the crude and erroneous ideas of a century ago.

The striking fact should not be forgotten that our own Society is the only one in New England that is governed by a board of Fellows; and that the Society of Massachusetts is the only other one that ever was so organized in these States.

In what has been said respecting the working principles on which that model society was organized, and the almost universal dissatisfaction that was felt with the results of their system, we may recognize almost a *fac-simile* of our own organization, and of what is now actually taking place within it, but with some very important differences; the most remarkable of which are seen in the modes of electing the governing bodies. While our governing body is elected annually, its members are actually chosen by comparatively a mere handful of members of the county societies, so

few being in the habit of attending those meetings. They are commonly chosen, too, with little regard to their fitness for the very important duties imposed upon them; and being as a body necessarily without permanence it can have little knowledge of our history—still less familiarity with the needs of the profession—and I must add, that in many cases, they manifest so much indifference to their duties, that intelligent legislation is impossible; and I have sometimes heard the question asked, “Why do they attend the convention at all?”

In the early years for various reasons, the attendance was very meagre, and could hardly be otherwise; and so small was it in 1793, that the quorum, which was twenty, had to be reduced to twelve—the society then numbering over 300 members. At the present day, when we easily travel in a few hours from one extreme of the State to the other, the attendance is no better. It is not uncommon even now, to see populous and near-by counties represented (as some are pleased to style the functions of the Fellows) by only a single one until late in the afternoon; and recently from one large county not a single Fellow was present. I can mention instances in which the convention consisted of twenty Fellows, in others of fifteen, fourteen, and in one case there was not a quorum,—only eleven being present, yet the business of legislation went on. In these instances, who of the society was being “represented?” It is a common fact which I have often heard commented on, that even when the convention may be considered as full, the business of the governing body is very often transacted by four, five, or six persons; while a larger number of members than all the Fellows there present, stand outside the rail, curious spectators of the so-called legislation going on within it.

Not unfrequently, and recently, the society has been placed by this sort of legislation in positions of great embarrassment before the public, from the mortifying consequences of which there was no escape. At the same period of comparison, down to 1803 and later, in the Massachusetts Society, says a correspondent, “The governing body of Fellows was always carefully selected by themselves from among those best known in the profession as best qualified for the high trust committed to them; they were men of at least ten years’ practice, whose fitness for the office was generally conceded.” Another correspondent says, “Notwithstanding the high professional position of the Fellows, there was general dissatisfaction with the

exclusiveness of the system. There was a loss of interest in the district society meetings, and diminishing attendance at the annual meetings." Says another, "The matter of a close corporation was compelled to give way before the general march of ideas, which has made us in theory all democrats."

These quotations are good illustrations of the fact that the human mind everywhere, under similar conditions, works in parallel lines, and arrives at co-incident conclusions. The same state of dissatisfaction with our system, and the same process of upheaval exist among us with far greater cause. No one will deny that in the beginning some system of representation by Fellows or otherwise, was necessary, for without it no meetings could then have been held. The profession was poor, the facilities for travel were meagre and fatiguing, and very few, only those living near the places of meeting, could afford to spend a week and more, making tedious journeys on horseback, leaving their patients exposed to the arts of unscrupulous competitors, and spending their money,—for what? An examination of the re-print of our transactions for the first thirty years will show how small was the reward, and how poor the inducements to any except to the very few wise, courageous, and far-seeing minds whose prophetic vision enabled them to forecast the future, and patiently labor, while they waited for results they were never to witness. "Men die, but institutions live," is a truism often quoted without remembering that institutions, like men, may still live, and yet be not alive; they may be regularly enumerated as among the factors of a community, and yet be intellectually dead beyond recovery.

There are so many existing causes for the present lack of interest in the affairs of the society, that the time would not suffice to discuss them all, nor is it necessary before this audience, every one of whom is perfectly familiar with the situation. I should not feel willing to allude to them were it not for the fact that, in the course of an extended correspondence with prominent members in various portions of the State, I find a remarkable agreement of opinions among them as to the causes for the steadily diminishing interest in the annual meetings, as well as in strictly professional work. Almost without an exception, pointed allusion is made to the increase of medical politics, and to the ease with which combinations are made not only for personal ends, but for the continued control of the organization by co-operating agencies, such as are

best known outside of scientific circles, and to their unfriendly influence upon what should be the highest aim of the Society. From more than one quarter I am informed that respectable practitioners are, as a consequence, deterred from seeking admission to the Society—and what is of far more serious import, I have been distinctly told, of prominent and valuable members whom we cannot afford to lose, who are considering the question of withdrawal. I have personal knowledge of good men outside who refuse to join us, of one who has withdrawn—and of a large number who refuse for these reasons to attend the meetings at all.

It is not a pleasant duty to direct the attention of the society to alleged evils, which, if they really do exist, cannot fail to result in great disaster. If it is true that, in every county there is, or has been at times, what has been termed ring-influence, political combinations, "bossism," cliques (all these being equivalent terms used to define the agencies and forces utilized to develop results not contemplated by the law, and which are entirely foreign to the legitimate work of a medical society), is it not important that the fact should be recognized, and the evils duly considered? If it is true, as is openly declared by many, that these agencies control in many cases the election of Fellows, and have often controlled the election of officers—if it is true that under our system such manipulation is not only possible but is of frequent occurrence, and with a widening co-operation within narrow limits, directs the policy of our society to-day, what must be the prognosis of its future?

This is an evil that has always been recognized as inseparable from our system, under which the mass is governed by a mere handful of men. It may be, perhaps, not improper to state in evidence of the correctness of this view, if any were needed, that in all the correspondence I have had with our own members, this is the objection most constantly made to the continuance of our present system.

Every member who has regularly attended our meetings for a series of years, and has studied the society's history, knows that what I have said is within the bounds of truth, and might be considerably enlarged. What other reason than a most skillfully managed and widely extended ring-influence can be offered in explanation of the significant historical fact mentioned by Bronson, that from the year 1801 until the year 1856, a period of

fifty-five years, New Haven County was not asked to furnish the society with a president? Whether this policy was or was not urged on the dog-in-the-manger principle, I am not prepared to affirm; but of the fact we cannot doubt, nor that it was the work of an organized ring. And yet, there are persons who declare their disbelief in the existence of ring-influence, anywhere, now or formerly. It would not be difficult to indicate the period of its birth, and the progress of its growth. I see before me gentlemen who have had personal experience of its silent but potential influence for evil. I have already said, it has existed from *the very foundation of the society — it exists now — and from the nature of our organization, it will continue to exist, so long as that endures.* I only mention these very disagreeable facts because no individual is chargeable with responsibility for them; and because they account in large measure for the growing indifference of members to matters of the most vital importance to the welfare of the society, as shown by their continued and declared absence from all its meetings, and because it is generally believed that a considerable number of physicians in the State, decline for some or all of these reasons, to become members of it; and, moreover, because there comes from various sections of the State, the suggestion of the need of a new society, organized on better principles, and administered in a different spirit from that which now controls its councils. I am opposed to such a revolutionary step as this, believing as I do that it is possible, and far better, to remodel the society on the basis of the proposed "New Charter," and such changes in the by-laws as would thus be rendered expedient and necessary.

We are now in the same condition as were our neighbors in 1803, before they achieved their freedom from the dominion of an oligarchy. Indeed our situation is far worse than theirs, for while they endured the yoke in its full force for only twenty-two years, we have for a full century labored under much greater embarrassments, with a daily lessening power of securing our freedom from the ever-growing burden.

Before our neighbors were set fully free by the final act of emancipation in 1859, not only were the annual meetings of the society very generally ignored, but the district society meetings attracted little attention, and were of little use. But when the society became open and free, every member rejoicing in the

possession of Fellowship, on a basis of entire equality of rights and privileges with every other member, the status and relations of the whole profession were totally changed.

Indifference and distrust, silence and isolation, gave way to universal joy and gladness; and the anniversary meeting of this great and noble society, became the red-letter day of the profession in Massachusetts, and is now the Mecca up to which more than half of its 1,500 members travel every year, to listen to learned discourses, renew old friendships, exchange congratulations, and dine in harmony together.

A friend writes to me, "There has never been in the recollections of the oldest members, such a degree of professional harmony among us as of late years." Such are some of the natural and logical results in professional development, under the benign and stimulating influences of freedom and equality. Is it too late for us to profit by such an illustrious example?

Is there any obstacle in the way of a higher and more profitable cultivation of medical science among us, excepting the wretched remnant that remains of our old charter of 1784, the need of which, if it ever existed, the society has long ago outgrown? Are gentlemen willing to acknowledge themselves satisfied with the little that filled the professional demands of the framers of that charter, or of the one of 1792? Are we ready to confess that we have no higher ambition than to keep ourselves within the deeply-worn ruts of antiquity?

Will any gentleman admit that an organization which fulfilled all the demands of the profession a century ago, is adequate to meet our necessities in the closing days of the nineteenth century? Do we stand in the foot-prints of our ancestors of four generations back? Will any member offer a reason why this society should not be made as free and open as those of other New England States?

I am aware that it is easy to object to anything. It is exceedingly easy to make objections in private which no one would be able to defend in public. I am told that the idea has been industriously circulated (and I quote from the letter of an ex-president), "That, should the society be made free, and every member a Fellow, it would be easy for the members in Hartford or New Haven counties, if they wished, to pass any particular measure over the heads of the country members, who would not be likely

to turn out; and so Hartford and New Haven might combine and control the choice of the society."

Is that an argument, and can it be defended?

When has it ever been known that Hartford and New Haven have combined to control the society? Take the history of all these hundred years—did any such thing occur previous to 1856, when for two generations of men, New Haven had been denied the honor of a president? I know that since then nothing of the kind has occurred. If such political trickery were ever to be attempted, it could only succeed under our present system. Those who fear that in a state of perfect freedom, every man being a Fellow, and able to represent himself, political combinations against the rights of any would be more easily formed than now, place a much lower estimate than I do, upon the professional honor of the country physicians; and I am sure that such an objection cannot be seriously made or sustained, by anybody.

I firmly believe, that on a basis of equality, it would be impossible for members to neglect the annual meetings as they have done hitherto. Every man would feel, as perhaps never before, that he had a vital interest at stake—and a strong personal attraction to the meetings, which he would have no desire to resist. He could not resist it! From another ex-president who has no superior among us as a man of sound, calm judgment, a man of wide professional and general culture, I have received this opinion: he says "The facility of traveling by railroad is now so great, that it is much better to amend the charter so that each member shall stand as the equal of any other member."

"Let us strike for an annual mass meeting of the society; throwing the responsibility of attending it, or not, on the profession of the State—this will appeal powerfully to the higher professional instincts and pride of every man."

Another ex-president writes me: "I have never been able to see any good reason why the administration of the society's affairs should be entrusted to some forty of its members, many of whom are men of small experience in such matters, and some are too young in practice to be of any service to the society in this relation." . . . He adds: "I believe that every member of the Connecticut Medical Society should have the same powers and privileges as to speaking and voting in its meetings, that any other member has; and I have no doubt, if the better part of the

members will unite in giving their attention to this subject, the necessary changes can be made."

Another ex-president writes thus: "I believe," he says, "that in all our medical societies, whether town, county, State or national, physicians should meet upon an equal footing, with equal privileges; otherwise, our society meetings are but clubs, with invited guests, who have only the wonderful privilege of sitting mute, and watching the actors as they play. There may be some good reasons for this 'House of Lords'—the Fellows, that I do not comprehend, but from my present standpoint of information, I heartily concur with the views you have expressed."

From two other ex-presidents I have received similar opinions; in each instance unsolicited, and accompanied by statements of facts of their own knowledge, on which their opinions were based. They each protest in strong terms against a longer toleration of a system of administration so prolific as ours of every imaginable professional evil, and without a redeeming feature. It must, I am sure, be apparent to every reflecting mind, that these opinions are correct; and coming as they do from representative men who have carefully considered the subject, they are entitled to great weight. From what I have heard there can be little doubt that a majority at least of our ex-presidents would concur in these opinions if they were inquired of.

It should not be forgotten that by natural and associated right, the sovereignty of the society inheres wholly and equally in its members. But in the obsolete fashion of that early time, when the lines were distinctly drawn between the few who gave direction to public opinion, and the mass who followed them, the sovereignty of the individual was unwisely surrendered to a small body of elected Fellows; and ever since, "the President and Fellows" have continued to exercise those sovereign powers which the society should never have relinquished, but may at any time reclaim.

The adoption of the proposed new charter now under consideration would be an easy method of reclaiming these long abandoned powers, and of rehabilitating the members in their sovereign rights; thus leaving the society free to reorganize and simplify its antiquated machinery, in accordance with the more enlightened views of the present day as to what the needs of the profession require. To those who dread and oppose any change because it is a change; and prefer as they say, to "let well enough alone," and

deprecate the disturbance of venerated dust, it is, I fear, useless to offer a word of argument. But those who advocate as an adequate remedy for these great evils, the extension of representation by increasing the number of Fellows "*pro rata*"; and those who would make Fellows of all ex-presidents, thus creating a "life peerage," cannot fail to see that by either of these methods the evils would be increased and rendered more difficult of removal. In the proposed new charter, however, they can see a solution of all our troubles.

Within such a body where all its members are engaged, each for himself, in the study of medical science, in the practice of which he is of necessity his own exponent—his own representative before the public—is there any sensible reason why every member should not represent himself in the administration of the society's affairs? We shall presently see that under this new charter, and the by-laws that will naturally be framed under it, all the individual rights of members, as well as those of the county meetings, will be guarded at every point more perfectly than they have ever yet been. While at the same time, as in all medical societies organized on a basis of equality, of which I have any knowledge, such as the other State societies in New England, and the newly organized New York State Medical Association, containing more than half the members of the State society from which it seceded,* there will be no room for outside issues of any description; no possibility of combinations of the stronger against the weaker—or of one section or individual against another. If such objectionable features—such deformities—have ever defaced our escutcheon, or weakened our influence for good, they could exist no longer because every inducement to their formation will have been removed.

Much more might be said in advocacy of a reorganization of the society on the basis of the proposed new charter. But, not to weary you, let us suppose that the society has decided by a majority vote (to be cast in any manner which will secure a ballot from every member) that it will celebrate the first centennial

* As I am informed, it would be a mistake to suppose that the cause of this secession was the attitude of the State Society of New York on the code question. It was more properly only the occasion—the cause being the control of the society for years past by a group of specialists; and the control of the district societies by rings, which decided who should or should not be elected members of the State society.

anniversary of its foundation by inaugurating this "new departure" in its methods.

The society has been summoned, we will suppose, to assemble in mass meeting. The President announces the result of the balloting. The convention is ready now to consider any business brought before it. I would propose, —

First. The election upon nomination and by ballot, of a President, a Vice President, a Recording Secretary, a Corresponding Secretary, and a Treasurer, each to serve for one year, or until a successor is elected.

Second. Let the members then present from each county, elect from among their members (present or absent) two, making in all sixteen, to serve as an Executive Council, to whom shall be added, the President, *ex officio*, or some Fellow named by him, as a "Member at large." One-half of the elected members of the council to be elected for one year, and the other half for two years (to be decided by lot) or by nomination at this first meeting. In every year after the first year, eight members of council will go out of office, and the vacancies be filled by new elections, so that each member will serve for two years — while the "Member at large" will serve only one year, and go out of office with the President who appointed him. We should thus have an executive body of seventeen, representing all the county interests, composed of the best qualified members who could be selected, subject, or not, to re-election, after an interval of one term. If the President be added *ex officio* to the council, he will be its presiding officer; and the corresponding secretary shall act as its secretary, and keep and preserve records of all its business. The council to hold two meetings in each year, the last of which to be one month previous to the annual meeting of the society. The duties of the executive council to be the nomination of all officers, and the members of the standing committees, and delegates of the society — (all the other committees to be appointed by the president) and in general to prepare the order of business of the annual meetings — to exercise a watchful care for the general welfare, and to perform any other executive duties referred to it by vote of the society, and duly to make report thereof to the society.

Immediately after the meeting of council just previous to the annual meeting of the society, the council would transmit to each member of the society, the nominations it will present at that

meeting for president, vice-president, recording secretary, corresponding secretary, and treasurer, and members of the standing committees, together with a programme of the exercises of the meeting, literary and otherwise, names of existing officials, essayists, etc., in the usual form. The executive council should be paid an annual sum equal at least to their necessary expenses. I think it will at once be seen that the duties of the Council will be of controlling importance, and of the greatest benefit to the society in various ways. It will be of necessity a deliberative body, as well as an executive force; and in time will come to be regarded also as a co-operative consultant in affairs "*ad interim*." If, as it is hoped, the members of council should be selected because of their peculiar fitness for such duties, by reason of general professional intelligence, and especial interest in all that concerns the welfare of the society, they will naturally come into very intimate relations with the most active minds in the county meetings of the society; and will become almost of necessity, radiating centers of professional enthusiasm and life.

The members of council would be enabled, knowing as they undoubtedly would, every case of special interest in their several counties, to bring to the aid of the county reporters a powerful influence in securing for the "Committee on matters of professional interest" written reports of all the instructive cases occurring in the State; and if, perchance, there should be no other tangible, permanent good ever realized as the outcome, the first fruits, so to speak, of this endeavor to remodel our organization, than that of encouraging and establishing for every young man the habit of making written reports of his cases, the attainment of so great a good is worthy of our best considered efforts.

This is the best known means of forming habits of systematic study and correct thinking; and in conjunction with the right of universal suffrage, cannot fail to secure for us in the end and full completeness of our organization, all the advantages which professional association is capable of affording.

It is important for us to remember, that while the annual meetings of the society are indispensable, and when properly conducted have a powerful influence for good peculiar to themselves, it is in the county meetings of the society that each individual must cultivate his own powers, and perform for himself the labor which is

to carry forward to completion his own personal professional growth.

Here it is, if anywhere, that we are able to approach that development of individuality which is such an essential element of professional success, and by means of which so many are distinguished above their fellows.

The most sanguine advocate of the right of every member to the enjoyment of the privileges of *fellowship* on a basis of *perfect equality*, could not be so illogical and unreasonable as to "suppose that the professional qualities of any man can be changed by legislative enactment;" or that a society which for a hundred years has suffered repression and paralysis through abnegation of its inherent powers of sovereignty, can at once take position by the side of sister societies, which, for almost the same length of time, have been developing under the more favorable influences of freedom and equality.

Let us remember, gentlemen, in our efforts to determine what changes in our organic law are required by the exigencies of the hour, that we are working now, not for to-day only, but for the next century. Petty variations of methods, that carry not with them the recognition of great principles brought to light through the demands of a progressive civilization, change nothing. Frequent appeals to the legislature should not be mistaken as evidences of progress; yet every one must concede that in each change thus far, particularly in the most recent one, that of 1870, good progress has been made. I will say, however, of this charter, as its committee said of the work of all their predecessors, "that so far as it goes it is very well; but it does not go far enough." Yet they ventured as far as it seemed probable at that time, the society was prepared to follow. Surely it cannot be necessary to remind any reader of this paper that its sole aim is to aid in placing the society upon a higher plane than it has ever yet occupied; and to invite special attention to the primary step of several it must make before it can assume the position which its distinguished parentage, its century of existence, and its own self-respect demand that it should take. It must be apparent to every intelligent reader that the tendency of this movement for a reorganization of the society under a new charter is *not toward centralization, but toward the very opposite condition*. Its object is to increase greatly the general interest in the society's prosperity by formally elevat-

ing each of its members to the dignity of fellowship, and thus restoring to every one the high constitutional powers belonging to him by right, but hitherto exercised by a small body, without permanence or special qualifications for the trust. There are already possible indications that the society may soon be called upon to vote, through its fellows, for a change in the by-law concerning its places of meeting. In my judgment, a vote to restrict the place of meeting to any single locality would be equivalent to a *long stride toward centralization, and fatal to the very life of the society*. In so small and compact a State as Connecticut, with its superior railroad facilities, there can be urged no valid reason for such a vote. On the contrary, it would be easy to demonstrate that it is of the utmost importance for the society not to restrict its liberty to hold its meetings wherever it may choose, in any of the cities of the State.

The most striking and commanding features of the proposed new charter are its simplicity, and the freedom it confers upon every member of the society to do, through its by-laws, in all time to come, whatever its highest interests may demand. Under the simple provisions of this charter, or of one framed in express recognition of the great fact that the sovereignty of the individual man is inalienable, and that the power to deprive him of it exists nowhere, not even in himself, under such an accepted declaration of rights as our working charter there can be no room for discord, none for political combinations, none for personal ambition, except for superior excellence in professional work.

There will be room only for perfect unity of purpose, mutual respect, harmony, and brotherly love.

