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BY

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GENTLEMEN,—We all equally indulge the hope that the door which will close upon our mortal remains, may not also shut us out from the respectful remembrance of our fellow men. This desire, conjoined with precedent, prompts me to freshen in your recollection the memory of three of our professional brothers whom the past year has taken away.

The death of the first Dr. McNeil, was attended by circumstances calculated to elicit even your sympathies, often exhausted by incessant demands. Over him the solemn Angel of death spread his wings in the very temple of gaiety;* he cast no shadow before him to indicate the coming event, but suddenly grasped his victim in the enjoyment of the high spirits of robust health, and the vigor of mature manhood. So rapid a transition from life to death startles all from their blind confidence in the morrow, and vividly reminds us, that,

“ Our hearts though stout and brave,
Still like muffled drums are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.”

It is not needful that I extol Dr. McNeil's virtues or disclose his faults. The former will long live in the memory of his friends, and be

* The Opera of the Orleans Theatre.

cherished forever in the hearts of his family; and by their amplitude will broadly cover the feebleness and paucity of the latter. A thousand tongues unite in singing such love and praise to him dead, as their hearts felt for him living; and no voice of detraction sounds a discord to this harmony.

His last hours were spent in the enjoyment of that art which had been a subject of his youthful studies, and had continued to be a delight of his life. Within the shrine of the Muses, the blood-vessel was ruptured, by which the frail tenure of his life was upheld, and an apoplectic lethargy swept over his senses while the grand airs of the "Prophet" were still resounding in his ears.

The scourge of the South has again brought desolation upon our land, and once more clothed our Penates in the habiliments of mourning. Our noble profession, with characteristic charity rushed to the rescue of the sick and the dying. But alas! for the impotence of man, their feeble resources so earnestly exerted in behalf of others, were inefficient to save many of themselves. In the vaults of Norfolk and Portsmouth alone were entombed thirty-eight of our confrères. In this city, two children of Medicine ventured their lives in discharge of their duty; seeking honor and usefulness, they exchanged for them the solemn shroud and the hearse. The fate of Thos. M. Neal and P. O. Tête, resident students of the Charity Hospital, and worthy sons of Louisiana, justly challenges that strong admiration due to high moral courage. Mere physical daring is an equal attribute of man and the brute creation. Let us congratulate ourselves, that our youths, if proven heroes on the fields of Mexico, by the sea-shore of Cuba, and under the "Oaks," face with undiminished fortitude any death, whether threatened by man or a pestilence. Disease may jaundice their cheeks, but fear cannot blanch them.

Never is death more touching, than when its iron hand has stiffened the vigorous limbs of youth. Youth, with its fresh beauty, its jovial hilarity, its sanguine hopes, and its lofty ambition seems as though it were not born to die. What heart is not saddened when the grave claims its victory in this "spring time of life;" when existence of itself is delight; when earth is converted into a heaven by keen enjoyment of the present, and bright images of the future? But if the sympathies of society are thus shocked, its interests too deeply suffer, when such men as we now mourn, are hastened away. They had early learned the great lesson of life, "to labor and to wait," and, if spared, an honorable and perhaps brilliant career might have left their "footprints on the sands of time." But thus cut off in the bright morning of existence, before

"wickedness had altered their understandings, or deceit beguiled their souls," they happily realize the poet's beautiful expression of death, "la mort est le soir d'un beau jour."

Fellow Physicians, join me in the hope that for these three professional brothers "the sharp edge of the grave may have proved but a foot-scraper at the wicket of Elysium," and that they now enjoy a repose, more enviable than life, where hope charms us with pleasing delusions, but unsatisfying realities sear our hearts with discontent always, and often with despair.

Gentlemen, I now invite your attention to a brief review of the benefits which the medicine of recent times has conferred on mankind, and to some reflections upon the future of our science.

The reduction of the theories of former times to the practical purposes of life has characterized the present century. A wide spread opinion seems to prevail, that our science has not partaken of this utilitarian progress. Many, while granting that our text books have vastly swollen their former dimensions, think this enlargement more like a dropsical effusion than a substantial increase of healthy tissue; an extension in theories, rather than in useful practical facts. There are some, so skeptical as to believe, that the medical art, after all, is but a delusion foaled by popular credulity, and counsel mankind to "throw physic to the dogs."

The public entertaining generally the most irrational ideas of medicine, cannot be expected to form well-founded hopes of its progress. The invention of the steam-engine and the telegraph excite the wonder of the uninitiated fully as much, as would the discovery of some potent panacea, to exterminate "all the ills that flesh is heir to." They do not reflect that the former were merely practical deductions from long established principles, whereas in medicine we have not only to deduce conclusions, but more difficult still, we must find our premises,—that however apparent to our senses may be the facts, disease and death, yet these are but results, their causes, and modus operandi being often involved in an obscurity which has baffled the sedulous investigation of ages. Thus of all sciences medicine is *par excellence* an inexact science.

In judging, then, of its comparative progress, let the comparison be instituted between it and kindred sciences. Law, Theology, the Art of Government, approximate the nearest, although each of these has certain fundamental principles for its basis, an advantage which medicine does not possess. But the professors of these sciences should beware how

they carp at our inefficiency. For if we are mystified by the same clouds which obscured the vision of Hippocrates, so we will find that what perplexed Justinian, has not been elucidated by Blackstone nor Story,—that what was dark to Plato or St. Paul, has not been illuminated by the “shining lights” of our day—and that, if the Grecian Themistocles truthfully boasted that he could make a small state a great country, we, now searching for his equal, find only those who can reverse the antithesis,—make a great country insignificant. In truth, if we would find a well-marked progress, or anything like perfection in any of these sciences, we must visit the realms of the imagination—the Golden Age, Utopia, or the Millenium!

In demonstrating the progress of practical medicine, I shall not go beyond a time that many now living can recall. In my cursory survey you will find nothing which is not already familiar to you; yet I hope, by arraying facts together, to give them a strength united, which may have been diminished by their separate consideration. “The strength of all sciences is as the strength of the old man’s fagot in the band.”

It must be confessed that some of our most important interrogatories to the Pythoness of our Temple, have received but oracular responses—information clothed in unsatisfactory ambiguity, or old knowledge decked in a novel and mystical form. The first principles of animal life remain as deeply secreted in the penetralia of nature as our moral existence was prior to divine revelation. Moses has told us that “God breathed the breath of life into Adam,” and our knowledge of vitality is yet limited to this dictum of the inspired law-giver. Inflammation and diseases of the cerebro-spinal system, though somewhat illuminated by occasional rays of light, still rest in obscurity and darkness. Fever immolates its hecatombs of victims, but modern researches have not taught how or wherefore. And contagion, though revelling in endless discussion, and constantly hailed with shouts of Eureka, still finds its parallel in the biblical description of the wind: “It bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.” Our savants have but little surpassed the poetical suggestion, that “hell itself breathes out contagion to this world.”

The evils which result from our ignorance of these subjects are apparent to all; and the discontent produced by them causes mankind to ignore the benefits which our science has conferred upon them. It is a sad fault of human nature, that the enjoyment of what it has is always marred by its craving for what it has not. The world vanquished would

lose all its charms, were the vista filled with brighter worlds still to be conquered. Whilst deeply lamenting the imperfection of medicine, I shall now attempt to induce a better appreciation of what it has already accomplished.

The progress of practical medicine has been greatly promoted by the study of pathological anatomy. The number of functional disorders has been diminished, and well-marked organic lesions have been pointed out to characterize them. Dyspepsia has been found to depend frequently upon chronic gastritis and other organic changes; palpitation, upon valvular lesions of the heart; and asthma, upon chronic inflammation with emphysema. We are farther indebted to this study for our knowledge of laryngismus stridulus, œdema of the glottis, Bright's disease, albuminuria dependent on scarlatina, apoplexy on heart disease, and tubercle as a constant product of scrofula. The frequency and importance of local inflammation in fevers have also been more decisively established. And many diseases, as rheumatism, gout, cancer, and phthisis, formerly deemed only local disorders, have been shown to be confined to no one organ, but to be general constitutional maladies. To detail the practical information which has been recently acquired in regard even to pulmonic and cardiac diseases, would transcend my limits. Let me only remind you, that it is not many years since hæmoptysis and a "stomach cough" were regarded as *causes* of consumption, and the treatment of the same disease was an antiphlogistic regimen, and a farinaceous diet; that before the time of Corvisart and Laënnec, Carditis included all diseases of the heart. There is scarcely a disease in our extensive nosology which is not better understood now than formerly, and the immediate causes of death even have been more completely unravelled.

Chemistry, which has made so many wonderful revelations in the present century, conferring invaluable services upon the arts, has happily illustrated many medical topics. Hygiene, dietetics, physiology, and pathology, all owe to it essential additions, and many of their phenomena formerly but little understood, have been fully explained by its aid. To it is due a more accurate diagnosis of albuminous and saccharine urine, of calculous deposits, and satisfactory explanations of the therapeutic action of acids and alkalis, astringents, escharotics, disinfectants, and some antidotes. By furnishing reliable tests for many poisons, its services are constantly demanded in medico-legal investigations.

But the richest contributions of chemistry will be found in our pharmacopœia—most valuable remedies have been lately introduced therein, and though there are many morbid conditions still wanting a

controlling medicament, there is now no disease which is not amenable to one or the other of the objects of medicine, the postponement of death, or the alleviation of suffering. Among the host of new remedies introduced into our dispensaries, may be mentioned as most important, nearly all of the vegetable acids and their salts, the vegetable alkaloids, —strychnine, morphine, quinine, etc.—and their salts; iodine and its salts; salts of ammonia, soda, magnesia, potash, mercury and iron; the subnitrate of bismuth, creasote, ergot, croton oil, and chloroform. The virtues of all of these medicines are indisputable, and the benefits which have accrued from them too numerous to be detailed here. Suffice it, that there is scarce a prescription now written which does not include some one of them; and that every practitioner can recall innumerable instances of suffering relieved, and of death averted, by their efficacy.

Many remedies have also been successfully applied to new purposes, as phosphate of lime and cod-liver oil in scrofula; iron in neuralgia; quinine in all malarious fevers; colchicum in rheumatism and gout; blisters to check gangrene; sulphuric acid as a prophylactic in lead poisoning; the hydrated sesquioxide of iron as an antidote for arsenic; and benzoic acid in uric acid deposits. Errors and abuses which attended the application of some remedies have also been pointed out; and their qualities and virtues are better understood. I may forcibly instance mercury and tartar emetic. The therapeutic action of remedies is still involved in mystery; yet something has been done even here. Besides the classes of medicines already mentioned, as explained by chemistry, I may add the application of the physical principle of endosmosis and exosmosis, in elucidating the action of salts upon the kidneys and intestines. This sketch of the progress of chemistry and *Materia Medica*, though imperfect, will at least serve to prove that our profession has not been wasting its time in idle discussion and useless theoretical inventions.

About the year 1800, opticians succeeded in perfecting for the microscope a double lens, free from chromatic and spherical aberration. During the last thirty years, this instrument has been extensively used in medical researches. Whilst thus far it has not performed the service anticipated in disclosing the grand arcana of medicine, it has nevertheless thrown some light upon practical points. Histology has been created by the microscope. From this knowledge no great benefit can yet be claimed, still an accurate distinction of the different tissues must be serviceable in diagnosis and treatment, and may, when perfected, form a foundation for a better nosological system than any now extant.

Microscopists claim to have discovered an important fact, "that porrigo favosa, mentagra, aphtha, and other diseases in man, consist of cryptogamic plants growing on the skin or mucous membrane." The diagnosis of urinary deposits has received most essential aid from microscopy, uric acid and its salts, the triple phosphates, the phosphate and oxalate of lime can be readily distinguished by the microscope, as also sugar, cystine, chylous and fatty matter, blood, pus, mucus, exudation corpuscles and epithelium cells, all of which possess pathological interest and importance. Fibrine, which when exuded into the tissues and subsequently absorbed, passes off by the kidneys, can only be discovered by this instrument. Fungus of the testicle, deemed malignant, and treated by extirpation, has been proved to be simply exuberant granulations which has led to the preservation of the organ. Legal medicine has derived practical advantages from the microscopic character of blood, hair, and semen. Other useful services are claimed by some microscopists, as the distinction of cells characteristic of tubercle and cancer, but this may be fairly considered as still *sub judice*.

When we reflect how indispensable are the services of the eye in investigation, we may confidently anticipate that the microscope, which so enormously increases its power, is destined to play an important part in the future progress of medicine. The eye perceives ordinary particles $\frac{1}{400}$ of an inch in size, gold dust $\frac{1}{1125}$ of an inch, and threads $\frac{1}{4000}$ inch in diameter. The microscope accurately increases this truly wonderful power to the incredible extent of 100,000 times; so that a thread $\frac{1}{4000}$ inch in diameter—just within the limits of unassisted vision—would appear about one-fifth of an inch in diameter.

It has been well observed, that, that is a godlike function of the healing art, by which man is enabled to recall to his fellow man reason long banished, and restore to society the helpless victim of insanity. At least a thousandth portion of every community is composed of lunatics, whom the superstition of the past century condemned as vile creatures, thus cursed by the Almighty for their sins. They were suffered to roam at large "as the beasts of the field," or were confined as criminals in some loathsome dungeons with chains for their safeguard. Human nature shudders at the sufferings of these unfortunates, to whose deplorable state, more terrible than death itself, was added the heartless mockery of their fellow creatures. But the scientific researches, and philanthropic labors of our profession have effected a vast reform. We now pity the sad symptoms of disease, where our ancestors shuddered at the curse of God. We treat with medicinal and moral remedies, what they have

treated with the gallows. We give them all the attention which a progressive science demands—the comforts of a happy home, the kindness flowing from a well-earned commiseration, and send them forth again to the world, restored to health, usefulness and happiness. So that in the asylums of our own country, from seventy to ninety per cent. of recent cases recover, and from twenty-five to fifty per cent. of those whose insanity has existed longer than six months. Such a result is well calculated to stimulate us to prosecute still farther our study of these maladies; and well illustrates how different is the practical charity which distinguishes our profession above all others, from that verbose philanthropy founded upon a morbid love-in-a-cottage sentimentalism which is a feature of the present times!

What words are adequate to describe that improvement in our science which was contributed by the genius of Laënnec! Peruse the text books of but thirty years past, observe the ignorance prevailing upon diseases of the thorax, consider ourselves deprived of the aid of Auscultation and Percussion, and we may then duly appreciate a discovery which is alone sufficient to rescue medicine from the charge of retrogression. Auscultation and Percussion have rendered the diseases of the chest, formerly the least understood, the best understood of all internal diseases. By their assistance, we can distinguish derangements symptomatic of diseases of the chest, from those sympathetic of other affections. We can often discover latent diseases, which no manifestations of functional disorder have caused us to suspect. We can often procure invaluable information not otherwise obtainable, in diseases of children, of the delirious, and of the comatose. We can distinguish not only the tissue in which pulmonic disease is making its ravages, but also the situation, extent and progress of this disease. Additional precision and rapidity is given to our prognosis, as well as to our diagnosis, and we can frequently foretell the lesions to be found after death, with as much accuracy as the autopsy itself can disclose. To the diagnosis of disease of other organs, especially of the abdominal and encephalic, auscultation loans an indirect, but often most important assistance. Surgery is not ashamed to gather strength from its alliance, and obstetrics claims its resources in solving vital questions, often involved in doubt and obscurity, the existence of pregnancy, the vitality of the fœtus, and its position in utero. Auscultation and Percussion, by furnishing a vast fund of valuable facts, have established correct indications for forming a rational basis for therapeutics, and have thus contributed to the proper method of treatment. In consideration of the almost incredible igno-

rance which formerly prevailed in diseases of the circulatory apparatus, we may in borrowed language proudly exclaim, "a radiant light has chased away the darkness, and Laënnec, the inventor of stethoscopy, has replied with a shout of triumph to the mournful exclamation of Baglivi, *O! quantum difficile est curare morbos pulmonum! O! quanto difficilius eosdem cognoscere!*"

The past twenty-five years have witnessed an indisputable progress in our knowledge and treatment of a class of diseases, which, says Parent Duchatelet, has inflicted more injury on mankind than all the pestilences which had ever ravaged the world. I refer to those maladies by which Ricord's name has been rendered so familiar to our profession, and if their introduction here required an apology, I would tender you Ricord's, "science is chaste, even stark-naked." The improvement in these diseases is, in a great measure, attributable to the introduction of inoculation as a means of study. By it, the origin of syphilis in a special cause, has been demonstrated; many undecided points in its pathology determined; gonorrhœa exculpated from causing secondary accidents; and the important distinction between the virulent and non-virulent disease has been conclusively established. Syphilis has also been divided into well marked stages of great practical value; and we have been taught the proper application of efficient remedies, as nitrate of silver, mercury, and iodine, which were formerly administered without discrimination. In fine, we diagnose with certainty, and treat with success, where doubt once prevailed, and failure followed.

A success so gratifying in the treatment of these diseases, has been attended by the most patient and praiseworthy exertions for sanitary reform. Many European countries are now reaping the benefit of these labors, and prostitution, that foul but unavoidable source of woes unnumbered, has been wisely subjected to legislative control. It has been proved beyond cavil that "every attempt to prevent public prostitution has had as its result an increase of clandestine prostitution." This clandestine prostitution has a terrible meaning to the initiated medical man. Its signification is emphatically, an increase of seductions; an increase in the profligacy of the married; an increase of illegitimate births, and an increased frequency and severity of all venereal diseases. The importance of the subject will excuse the dry details of statistics in illustration of the difference between legislative persecution and legislative control and protection of the frail nymphs of the Cyprean goddess. In the sixteenth century one twenty-fifth of the population of Paris belonged to this class; in 1837 one seventy-fifth. In 1800, one woman

in every nine was diseased; since 1830, one in every sixty. In Berlin, in 1849, there were among the soldiers there garrisoned, 1,423 diseased; in 1852, among the same number of soldiers, there were but 332. With such facts, and innumerable others of like import before us, should we hesitate to apply the remedy? Will common sense suffer itself to be longer outraged by the ignorance and inefficiency of our law-makers, and by a puritanical sanctimony which irretrievably damns all but itself?

To these conquests of the medicine of recent times must yet be added our victory over those direful plagues Scorbutus and Variola. It is but sixty years ago that effectual means to check the ravages of scurvy were adopted. This loathsome disease which formerly destroyed thousands of lives annually, checked the enterprise of merchants, and paralyzed the naval arm of governments, has now become a comparatively rare and innocent disease.

Vaccination more recently conferred a service upon mankind which a few instances of the former ravages of the small-pox will show us, cannot be over-estimated. Mexico, in a short period after the introduction of this disease, lost three millions and a half of its inhabitants! Greenland was once almost depopulated by it! And it is computed that France annually lost by it one hundred and fifty thousand children! The prophylactic remedies for scorbutus and variola are simple and sure, and both these diseases might have been ere now exterminated, and studied in our medical records only as pathological curiosities of the past, were it not for the ignorance of the people and the criminal carelessness of their governments. Medicine has supplied the means, the censure due for their non-adoption should not rest upon its shoulders.

Such, gentlemen, are some of the most important fruits of our past labors. Their merit, even if enfeebled by my weak advocacy, will abundantly suffice to establish the claims of medicine to the title of a progressive science. In every land, able and noble medical men have extended to the afflicted these benefits, which have doubly blessed those who have received as those who have administered them. That they have greatly promoted that high object, the preservation of life, to which our labors are devoted is conclusively established. Among other proofs may be offered some reliable statistical data. The records of Geneva, which extend back some three hundred years, give as the average duration of life in the seventeenth century, twenty years; in the sixteenth, thirty-two; increased in the nineteenth to forty-five years. In the last century the annual mortality in England and Wales was one in forty inhabitants; in the present it is one in sixty. This sanitary improvement is still more

apparent in our hospital records. In the eighteenth century the London hospitals lost one woman out of forty in child-birth, and of the children one in fifteen died. In the nineteenth century, the deaths in such women were reduced to one in about three hundred, and in the children to one in eighty. The Hotel Dieu, which in 1816 lost two out of every nine admissions, does not now lose two out of double that number. Facts so favorable to the progress of medicine are beyond a doubt attributable not only to the advanced knowledge of particular diseases, but also to sanitary reforms which have at the same time been originated and effected by our profession.

If legitimate medicine is entitled to increased regard, so is illegitimate medicine, as illustrated by Homœopathy, deserving of greater indulgence than similar inventions, for it is a decided improvement upon the charlatantry of former times. With no positive virtues, it can claim the great negative merit of wisely confiding for its real power in the *vis medicatrix naturæ*. You, who so well know how often drugs cheat nature of the praise justly due her; how often your medicines receive the gratitude due only to your discretion, cannot wonder that a plausible man should make a successful practitioner; who has the sole merit of leaving nature alone, and the tact to have *her* efficacy ascribed to the potency of *his* sugar of milk and tinctures of water. We, equally with the Homœopaths, rely upon the healing power of nature; but with patients, they gain here a decided advantage over us, for their innocuous infinitesimals never acquire the odium of having caused a patient's death, whilst we are often deemed culpable of or accessory to nothing less than murder, even when death has followed an innocent placebo. Those of you who have practised much in a certain class of our community, have surely enjoyed such flattering testimonials of your capacity. They are most likely to occur upon the presentation of your bill.

In addition to the above merit, Homœopathy has gained strength by not disgusting the "true believers" with nauseating drugs. It has been long inculcated that medicines should act "*tuto, cito, et jucunde*," which may be homœopathically translated, inefficiently upon the system, quickly upon the imagination, and pleasantly upon the tongue. The *jucunde*, though the last is not the least important of these injunctions, and we are hardly excusable for having so much neglected that which, if of little importance in the *science* of medicine, acquires considerable magnitude in the practice of the *art*. Remember that the Romans conquered the world by adopting the superior arts of their enemies; let us be equally wise.

In these two virtues lies all the real merit of homœopathy; but it has a firmer foundation still in that credulity and love of things strange and new which Charlatans have ever fattened upon. This is the satirist's subject, so I leave it for him to portray the gullible public, with its pussy paunch, enthusiastically gulping down Barnum and Hahnemann *pro re natâ*—turning his head at times to damn the suffering dupe “who first cries hold, enough!” and then returning like poor little “Oliver” to lick the sugared spoon, and piteously cry for “more.”

That necessity, the inexhaustible public appetite for humbug, which fathered Homœopathy, and the equally inexhaustible credulity which mothered it, never lose their generative power. Let, then, the “weak brethren,” followers of this faith, continue to illustrate the “medical properties of the imagination.” And since a similar evil has always, and must ever exist, long life to this “art of *amusing* a patient, while *nature* cures his disease!”

The benefits which the labors of the past have enabled the present to enjoy, I have attempted to represent to you, it is with still greater diffidence that I now draw your attention to what our future promises.

It is an old and popular belief that every poison has its antidote, every disease its restorative remedy; that life is to be preserved, old age rejuvenated, and even the “stuffed bosom cleansed of that perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart” by some magical *elixir vite*. Such credulity requires a vaporous imagination for its conception and superstitious ignorance for its nutriment. To anticipate from a simple remedy an immediate restoration to health, destroyed by a long continued drain upon the constitution is more chimerical than the hope of a bankrupt to be restored to fortune by a ticket in a lottery.

But is it a visionary idea that the *reason* of man is amply adequate to devise a curative means for every malady? Though man is morally defective being born “prone to sin,” physically he should not fall heir to any imperfection; for health is his natural condition, and bodily suffering is a conclusive evidence of the violation of the physical laws of our being. Is there not strong probability that all of these physical laws can be discovered, and that once discovered, we may, if guided by reason avoid their violation, and consequently disease? But, were future discoveries to render it possible for men guided by reason to preserve their natural healthy condition, the passions of men which are equally natural would thwart so desirable a result. The failure which has thus far followed our exertions is, in a great degree, attributable rather to the moral deficiencies of man, to the “weakness of the flesh,” than to any deficiency

in our reasoning faculties. One of the chief labors of our profession is to remedy diseases brought on by artificial wants and immoral indulgencies. We are truly waging war against the penalties of carelessness, ignorance and sin. These penalties, for the most part, are expiated by those only who have justly incurred them; but too frequently the "sins of the father are visited upon the children, even unto the third and the fourth generation," and the innocent are made to groan in atonement for ancestral dissipations. We cannot hope to contend successfully against disorders thus produced, until the prophesied Millenium smile upon a world, free from passion and from sin. Our physical health is indissolubly connected with our moral well-being!

To attempt to foretel to what extent the science of medicine may be enabled to contend against such diseases as our own moral indiscretions may give rise to, would be to advance in a maze of hypotheses and conjectures, which, while giving full play to the fancy, would set reason at defiance. Yet in counteracting the evils which flow from the violation of nature's laws, we have already accomplished much, and could even now effect much more, if the laws would lend to the requirements of medicine the weight of their authority. But the public, whilst bitterly complaining of the imperfections of our science, very inconsistently declines reaping the benefits which it can confer, and thwarts us in our attempts to render our knowledge profitable to the community. It is our duty to prosecute our studies into the causes of diseases, and to devise preventive remedies against them, for this is the principal means by which we must hope to prove most serviceable; but it is the duty of the public to promote sanitary reforms based upon the knowledge acquired by us. Unless it assists us to enforce by law what our science may teach that the public health requires our best exertions will be always paralyzed, and our most strenuous labors prove abortive. The preventive remedies whose efficacy is known the wide world over, have received no countenance from many of our legislative bodies. Variola may murder our people by hundreds to the placid indifference of those selected to labor for the common weal; and venereal diseases infect thousands, and infuse their poison into the blood of posterity, without exciting so much attention as a horse race.

To look for such legal assistance here in Louisiana is hopeless, for we can never obtain it until our profession will have degenerated into pot-house politicians and wire-working intriguers, and will condescend to regale our Solons with champagne and oysters, *ad libitum!* Such are the means that successfully repealed the only laws which made a distinc-

tion between the educated physician and universal quackery! Long since did the medical profession of Louisiana attempt to obtain from our Legislature registration laws, without which our study of the causes of disease, and of their effects upon the community, must remain unsatisfactory, and comparatively profitless. Their able memorial pointed out other interests besides the public health, which these laws would subserve; the additional security which would be conferred on every citizen in those important legal rights dependent on birth, marriage and death, as well as the elucidation of many points connected with political economy, life insurance, and sanitary reform. Political capital could not be made out of such a proposition, so your past experience will foretel the result.

Marriage is another subject which should be properly restricted by law, and is deserving of greater attention from our profession than it has ever received. Thousands of children are annually born with an hereditary predisposition to those terrible maladies, the *opprobria* of medicine, scrofula, cancer, epilepsy, insanity, etc. To remedy these, we must go to their source, eradicate their cause—improper marriage—for we cannot hope ever successfully to treat by pills and potions those afflicted with such diseases, which are literally “bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh.” Can we reasonably anticipate to cleanse an infected patient, sprung from rotten seed, whose very life-blood is a stream polluted? It is to be hoped that the day may come when as much attention will be bestowed on the generation of the “lords of creation” as is devoted to the breeding of cattle, hogs and horses; when the sportsman, who will not suffer his stallion of pedigree to mingle his pure blood with the cart-horse, may also object to the union of his scrofulous children with those equally contaminated. Intermarriages within the imprudent limits of consanguinity, and unwholesome matches between those hereditarily predisposed to disease, are forerunners of certain disease and misery! and if reason ever triumphs over passion, they, though now regarded with indifference, will be condemned as what in truth they are, disgraceful and criminal.

Consider the vast amount of disease which might be thus averted—the overwhelming amount to be avoided by temperance and morality, and the great number of disorders which we now know how to cure or prevent; and I believe you will concur in the opinion, that *reason* is competent to devise controlling remedies for all diseases, could the passions of man be subjected to rational control. Those which are not remediable by one means or another are now but few, and I doubt not that time and

labor will teach us their causes, and devise preventive remedies, which are the most essential. For so far as mankind in the mass is concerned, it will little profit them that we can cure this or that form of disease. So long as nature's laws are violated, disease and suffering must follow. We may change their features, but we cannot avoid the result. What, then, will it benefit mankind, if, when you have severed one head of the monster disease, another equally hideous is to sprout on its shoulder? Common sense and the history of medicine alike teach the medical philosopher to found his hopes of medical progress upon the prevention of disease. The eradication of disease by drugs is the boast of quacks and the dream of enthusiasts!

The improvements already accomplished are principally due to our progress in etiology, microscopy, chemistry, physiology, pathological and comparative anatomy and statistics. They have effected much, although but in their infancy, and hold out sufficient inducements for the future to awaken the slumbering ambition of every student of nature. We can look forward with sanguine hope that a Kepler may yet arise to reduce our chaos of special facts to some general laws, and that a Newton will succeed to reduce these into but one. Then may medicine accomplish as astounding results as astronomy, and we may be enabled to foresee a coming pestilence with as much certainty as Le Verrier—to the wonder of mankind—foretold the existence and future appearance of a planet which was as yet unknown and unseen. Youthful anticipations are prone to be too sanguine, yet the progress and ultimate perfection of our science is a belief so full of pleasure and of hope, so indicative of ardor and of enthusiasm, that I would not have this credulity aborted by the sad croaking of disappointed old age. As Cicero said of Plato, "*cum quo errare malim, quam cum alias recte sentire,*" so would I say, here in the wrong, rather than there in the right. The past gives us hope, and holds in its grasp sufficient facts to convince us of the truth of Bacon's aphorism, "before a thing is done, men doubt if it can be done, and after it is done, they wonder it were no sooner done."

In conclusion, gentlemen, allow me to felicitate you upon the harmony which prevails in our profession in this city. May the blind prejudice of cliques never again throw discord in our midst! May the older members of our profession continue to incite the younger to increased exertions both by their words and their deeds! Let them hold forth their lights to illuminate our onward path! But should Young Physic presumptuously question Old Physic's infallibility, let Old Physic remember that the verdancy of spring must naturally replace the "sere and

yellow leaf" of winter; and though he *is* a giant, and Young Physic may be but a dwarf, yet the dwarf sits on the *shoulders* of the giant, and as age perfects his sight, must necessarily see farther than the giant himself. If to self-love is not added the greater sin, *self-neglecting* age should be indulgent to that fault from which its own youth was, perhaps, not exempt.

In our science the Old Foggy and Young Presumption must both be content ever to remain but as children gathering pebbles on the seashore of truth. Let the old and the young in unison labor to pick up sufficient of these beautiful pebbles to erect a perfect edifice. Happy he, who by talent and industry may collect enough to letter his name, on its everlasting walls, and thus wed his merit to fame and the future. But thus aspiring, it behooves us to cultivate for our profession an appetite not to be glutted by satiety, a love which will be enlarged by repletion and strengthened by age. In such a love we may happily entomb, as in a grand sepulchre, all our other passions as they successively decay. Thus feeling, thus *acting*, we may proudly reply to the invectives of sceptics and the scurrility of wits, "poor medicine may be slighted, it may be, but degraded it cannot, shall not be, so long as its foundation is science and its end the good of mankind;" and we may farther point them to the solemn but significant fact, that in the day of suffering, and the hour of death, it is to us that the sick look for succor, and the dying for comfort. The chamber of the sick man is the empire of the physician, and there at least is he duly recognized as the honored and powerful agent of that God "who healeth our diseases."