

## VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND THE RISE OF THE PROFESSIONS

Before the first decades of the eighteenth century, medical practice as a professional endeavor was unknown in the American colonies. Self-medication, folk and herbal healing, midwifery by knowledgeable women of the community, be it rural or urban, were the rule. A few places had the advantage of ministers who also practiced medicine. Fewer still could avail themselves of the handful of practitioners who had been trained in the newly-founded English hospitals (only the French and Italian universities taught medicine).

The absence of an organized medical profession imposed no great burden on the colonists before 1700. Accidents and childbirth aside, life in North America was extraordinarily healthy. Because there was so little communication between rural settlements, epidemic diseases, even when they swept the coastal cities, seldom spread to the countryside. But the rise of the market economy in the colonies after 1700 brought with it an alarming deterioration of public health: infant mortality doubled between 1670 and 1760; in rural New England, two-thirds of the men born before 1700 could expect to live past the age of 60, but less than half of those born after 1700 would have that life expectancy (Hall 1983, 109). In the eighteenth century, colonial towns and cities were devastated by periodic epidemics of smallpox, while increasingly crowded living conditions brought with them the often fatal diseases associated with poor sanitation.

Even so, disease and increased mortality did not in themselves encourage the development of organized medicine or public health measures. As the Boston riots of the 1720s against efforts to introduce smallpox inoculation suggest, many colonists clung to a medieval fatalism about death and disease, resisting the perfectionist ideas of

the Enlightenment, which asserted that people could improve their health -- along with their social, economic, and political circumstances. The rise of medical profession would stem from forces other than the objective need for medical services.

Despite the paucity of trained physicians and popular resistance to medical intervention, the number of individuals claiming to be practitioners of "physick and surgery" dramatically increased between the beginning and the end of the eighteenth century. In Massachusetts, for example, the number of doctors increased more than 30 percent every decade between 1700 and 1790, while the general population increased only 24 percent over the same interval (Christianson 1980, 54). In Connecticut, the number of doctors in practice increased by 400 percent between 1756 and 1790, while the general population of the state increased by only 63 percent in the same period. As a result of these trends, the ratio of physicians to population in Massachusetts went from 1:1000 in 1700 to 1:417 by 1780; in Connecticut, from 1:1452 in 1756 to 1:752 by 1790. (In modern America, the ratio of physicians to population is 1:8000!).

The stunning increase in the number of physicians over so short a period of time was due in large part to the fact that setting up as a doctor required no formal training. Nor did the colonial governments attempt to exert any regulation over individuals who claimed to possess medical skills and presumed to practice upon the unsuspecting public. As the field became more and more crowded, the physicians responded much as the "shoemakers of Boston" had more than a century earlier, by petitioning their legislatures for permission to incorporate medical societies.

The earliest efforts in the colonies to organize medical societies date from the 1730s. Boston physicians evidently formed an unincorporated association in the hope of exchanging medical information and publishing a journal -- an organization along the

lines of England's Royal Society, but more narrowly devoted to medical concerns. Mention was also made of registering regular medical practitioners throughout the province, but no formal requests for such powers were ever made to the General Court. In 1749, a "Society of Gentlemen" was formed "for the weekly discussion of Medical subjects." It met periodically and then disappeared.

The first formal petition to create a medical society was made by Connecticut physicians in 1763. While the preamble of the document made pro forma references to the blessings of health and the hazards of quackery, the core of the proposal was a request for what amounted to monopoly privileges. The incorporators --and comparable groups in other counties -- would possess exclusive privileges to examine and license physicians. Their enforcement power would consist of their ability to bar non-certified practitioners from using the courts to recover monies owed for medical services. This was no small matter, particularly because payment for any services that had been rendered to a deceased patient would have to be recovered through legal claims against his or her estate and approved by the probate court.

Besides running up against the colonists' almost inborn suspicion of monopolies, as well as their doubts about interfering in providential events such as epidemics, the physicians faced a peculiarly difficult problem in justifying the grant of extraordinary privileges to themselves. Few physicians in Connecticut at this time were college graduates (not that the colleges' classical and scriptural curricula would have enhanced their skills as healers). Virtually all had been trained as apprentices in a system with no agreed upon standards of knowledge or skill. Not surprisingly, the proposal failed to gain approval.

# Memorial to the General Assembly of the Colony of Connecticut (1763)

To the Honourable General Assembly of the Colony of Connecticut to be Held at New Haven the  
second Thursday of October next --

The Memorial of us the Subscribers Physicians in the said Colony Humbly sheweth That whereas life is the most desirable of all Sublunary Enjoyments and Health so Invaluable a Blessing that without it in some Degree Life is [of] little Worth And that the Promoting of Medical Knowledge among Physicians is the Necessary and direct means to Restore Health and even Preserve Life and is of great Importance as it will Render The Practice of Physic more safe and Servicable to the Patient And at the same time yeald more Satisfaction and Honour To the Profession --

And whereas more than one hundred years have already passed away since the Planting [of] this Colony and Nothing has been Publickly done to Distinguish between by Reason of which Imposture and Imposition the Honest and Ingenious Physician and the Quack or Emperical Pretender by Reason of which Imposture and Imposition has been and still but too Commonly Practiced among us to the great Injury of the People as well as the Disparigment of the Proffession --

We your Honours Memourialists would therefore humbly pray your Honours to Take the Matter under your wise Consideration and Order & Enact that the Physicians in each County in this Colony for their Mutual Edification and Instruction have Liberty and power To meet

Together in their Respective County's at such time and Place as they shall Appoint once in three months and at the First of such of their Meetings choose a Committee of three or More approved Physicians to Continue for the Space of one year and Annually to be Chosen such Committee for the time Being to have full power to Examine and if found duly Qualified Approve such Candidates for the Practice of Physic who shall offer Themselves for Examination and if any Person offering himself Shall be adjudged not Qualified and so not Approved by such Committee that such Person may apply himself to any Quarterly meeting in the same County and be there Examined And Determined by such Meeting and Approved of it they think Fit by Proper Certificate and that for the future no Person or Persons that are not Already deemed Physicians who shall pretend to Practice Physic without such Approbation first had and Obtained Appearing by Proper Certificate be Allowed to Bring or Maintain any Action against any Person or Persons To Recover any Debt Demand or other thing for any service he of they shall Pretend to have done or Presumed as a Physician --

Or otherwise Enact and order some proper regulation for the Practice of Physic as in your Wisdom shall be thought most Proper And as in Duty bound Shall ever Pray Dated at Norwich The 27<sup>th</sup> day of Sept<sup>r</sup>, 1763.

Theophilus Rogers [and 10 others]

The Connecticut physicians were not alone in their desire to associate to enhance the reputation and economic prerogatives of the medical profession. Two years after their petition, a Pennsylvanian, John Morgan, returned from studying medicine in Europe to become the leader of an effort to form the Philadelphia Medical Society. Modelled on the European royal academies, this body professed only to be interested in furthering scientific and clinical knowledge rather than addressing economic issues. The

organization lasted for three years before being absorbed into Franklin's American Philosophical Society. Despite the fact that Philadelphia was medically far in advance of the rest of the colonies, boasting the only general hospital in North America, which soon attracted would-be physicians from throughout the continent for lectures and clinical instruction, the city's medical community proved to be unable to sustain an autonomous professional association.

Massachusetts physicians also worked energetically to organize in defense of their interests. This letter by an anonymous doctor, which was circulated through the medical community of the colony in 1765, sets forth the concerns of doctors of the period with unusual clarity and force. The reference to Masonry towards the end of the document is noteworthy, since it suggests the importance of this fraternal society, to which many physicians belonged, as an organizational model for the early professional associations.

## Graph. Iatroon Letter (1765)

SIR: There has been [for] some time on foot a proposal [for] forming medical Societies or Associations of Doctors analogous to those of the Clergy for the more speedy Improvement of our young Physicians; as by communicating to each other any Discoveries in any of the Branches of Physick, especially Botony, for which this Country is an ample Field. To get the Profession

upon a more respectable footing in the Country by suppressing this Herd of Empiricks who have bro't such intolerable contempt on the Epithet *Country Practitioner*. And to increase Charity & good Will amongst the lawful Members of the Profession that they may avoid condemning & calumniating each other before the Plebians as it is too common for the last that's call'd in a difficult Case to do by those that preceeded him which we apprehend to be highly detrimental to the Profession and the chief Root from whence these very Empiricks spring.

We don't know what Objections there may [be], there have been such Societies in Boston and where medical Academies are established & Empiricks are punished by Law there is not much need of them. We should esteem it a favor to be convinced of the impracticality of such a Scheme if it is so, & if not why it may not immediately take place.--

If you like our Design as all do to whom we have proposed it, we humbly conceive that the only way to effect it is for you to join heartily in the Cause & agree upon come certain time and Place to meet in of which all the Physicians *digni honore* must be notified and to bring with each of them a written Plan of Regulations if they please, at the Meeting to chuse a Moderator and after hearing each Plan that to be adopted which shall obtain a Majority of votes &c. &c. &c.

Presuming upon your Concurrence we desire you to promote the Design by circulating this Paper thro' the Hands of all the undermentioned Physicians, or others beyond their Limits, but we must be careful that it falls not into the Hands of any but orthodox Physicians, and to prevent it your should deliver it yourself or send it by a trusty Person carefully seald & superscribed lest a teltale Wife or Child divulge that which must be as secret as Masonry till some Societies are established.

The Gentlemen within the compass of our knowledge whom we think it necessary to invite are  
a follows, viz: [here follows the names of 24 Boston area physicians]

You are desired to repair to Gardners Tavern on Boston Neck at the hour of two P.M. precisely  
on the third Monday in March 1765.

It is hoped that the elder and established Physicians will promote this Affair by their  
Influence that cannot by their Presence.

Yrs.

(Signed) Graph. Iatroun i.e. for Greek (writing physician) Utopia 2d. of 2d. Moon.

1765th. Year of the Christian Era.

Among the physicians attending the meeting was Cotton Tufts of Weymouth, whose  
proposed regulations for the new society were accepted by his colleagues. Although  
the document carefully avoids mention of formal licensing procedures or other  
economic provisions that might cause political controversy, the Massachusetts  
physicians undoubtedly intended to deal with these issues once they had obtained a  
charter of incorporation from the legislature.

## Prospectus of Cotton Tufts as to the Formation of a Medical Society (1765)

Gentlemen: You have enclos'd the substance of a paper that was not long since circulated  
amongst a number of physicians -- In compliance with which there has been a meeting of a  
number of physicians who have confer'd upon the subject & have adjourned their meeting to ye

first Wednesday in June at Gardiners on Boston Neck. The profession at present is not upon ye most reputable footing, and the want of conversation, candor and generosity very much obstruct the growth of medical knowledge and give great advantage to the ignorant and designing. It is hard to suggest any scheme that would remedy this evil until gentlemen of genius, years and experience adopt such a scheme and exert their influence to render it successful. Your concurrence in such a design I flatter myself would conduce greatly to answer this desirable purpose. To assist ye honr'd enquirer after truth & to lead mankind to ye acquisition of knowledge a benevolent mind & much satisfaction. That much good may be done in this way I have not the least doubt. . . .

Regulations drawn up and presented at y<sup>e</sup> meeting by C<sup>n</sup> Tufts & Approv'd of:

It is humbly proposed by the subscriber, that the gentlemen meeting for the purpose of an association, do agree to form themselves into a society of promoting medical knowledge & assisting each other in the practice of physick.

That a moderator pro tempore & a clerk for the year, be chosen.

That the society meet in the months of April, July & November, particular time & place to be agreed on by the society.

That as often as nay member makes any useful discoveries or meets with any thing curious or extraordinary in physick or surgery, anatomy, chymistry, botony etc. he may present the same in writing to the clerk of the society to be communicated at the next meeting, or if he chuses, he may personally communicate y<sup>e</sup> same.

That certain subjects be determined upon from time to time to be discussed at y<sup>e</sup> meeting, upon which subjects any member may deliver his sentiments personally or in writing.

That the society invite such others to join with them as they shall judge properly qualified.

That the society agree upon some method for defraying its expenses.

That the society endeavour to support the characters of its members and discountenance quacks & pretenders in physick.

That all the members treat each other with respect, cautiously avoid calumniating or otherwise degrading each other in the esteem of mankind

and propose good will & harmony in the practice of physick. . . .

That the following rules be observed:

That no one condemns the practice of another, untill he has heard the reasons of his practice and given him an opportunity to explain himself and then not to condemn him before the patient or people.

That as often as one member is calld to the patient of another (if purposely sent for) he does endeavour to have the standing physician present, if the circumstance of the case will admit of it, and if it happens that he be not present, that he leaves his advice in writing & otherways avoids prescribing unless the case requires immediate application.

That nostrums arcanums & uromancy as practis'd to deceive and filch y<sup>e</sup> populace be discountenanced.

That prejudice to particular medicine be removed from y<sup>e</sup> populace.

That other regulations take place as occasion requires.

All which is submitted By y<sup>r</sup> obd<sup>t</sup> serv<sup>t</sup> Cotton Tufts

Following the example of their colleagues in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Philadelphia, New Jersey physicians in 1766 formed a society and petitioned the legislature unsuccessfully for a charter of incorporation. Evidently the economic purposes of the group were too plainly apparent and it immediately aroused public opposition. "Some evil-minded persons," wrote a contemporary,

had thrown odium on the proceedings of this Society, tending to prejudice the minds of the inhabitants against so laudable an institution. . . . It was reported to the Board, that the principle clamour of the inhabitants was owing to some

improper expressions having escaped some member of this Society, in regard to visiting fees and other charges which had brought the Society into disrepute with many persons who esteem it an unjust scheme invented by the Society to bring the inhabitants to terms (New Jersey Medical Society 1875, 9).

Without exception, the efforts of the 1760s to professionalize medicine failed. Perhaps the most significant obstacle to their attempts was their lack of a sufficiently clear conception of what constituted adequate standards for training and competence. It was simply not enough to assert that doctors were men of science, when the quality of their own skills were insufficient to clearly distinguish them from "quacks" and "empiricks," and when their economic interests in excluding non-licensed practitioners were so plainly evident to the public. Further, as members of a low status profession, they lacked the political skills to advance their interests effectively. Finally, the public remained skeptical of the value of science and, more broadly, of schemes to improve the lot of mankind by scientific means.

These problems would in large part be remedied over the next two decades. Physicians were actively involved in the revolutionary agitations and their service as medical officers in military units not only raised public opinion of their competence but, perhaps as importantly, they began to communicate with one another about subjects of common interest. Further, thanks to the activities of the Sons of Liberty and other voluntary associations connected with the movement for independence, such groups became both more familiar to Americans and less threatening. Even before the war had ended, efforts to establish professional societies were again being aggressively pursued. The New Jersey society, which had been dormant for a decade and a half, began meeting again and, by 1786, went forward to the legislature for a charter of incorporation, which was granted. (New Jersey had, in the meantime, acted to regulate

medical practice through a government-supervised licensing procedure in which candidates were examined and admitted to practice by a board consisting of two justices of the state supreme court, together with two "able and skillful practitioners in Physic and Surgery."

Massachusetts physicians also returned to the fray, though developments in that state suggested some of the complexities involved in professionalization efforts. One, the Massachusetts Medical Society, was organized by a group of well-connected Boston doctors. Their 1781 petition for a charter of incorporation not only shows mastery of the kinds of powers they would need to effectively safeguard their professional interests, but a sophisticated understanding of what a charter of incorporation, as a legal document, should look like. It is strikingly different from Cotton Tufts crude "Regulations" of 1765.

Beyond its formal qualities, the document advances a number of novel ideas about medicine, the most important of which involved identifying the preservation of health with the good of the community. More than this, it suggests that the community had a legitimate interest in protecting the health of individuals. Interestingly, unlike New Jersey which followed a pattern of public responsibility akin to Virginia's, Massachusetts entrusted the examining and licensing power to private group. Note, however, the provision exacting heavy penalties from the society if it tried unreasonably to limit admission to the profession by refusing to examine candidates. Evidently the legislature did not entirely trust the physicians protestations of disinterested public service! Notable too is the mention of "letters testimonial" -- or what we would call credentials. In effect, the legislature had constituted a professional group as a self-regulating body with powers to grant degrees.

# An Act to Incorporate certain Physicians by the name of the Medical Society (1781)

Common Wealth of Massachusetts In the Year of our Lord one Thousand Seven Hundred & eighty one. . . .

As health is often essentially necessary to the Happiness of Society, & as its preservation or Recovery are closely connected with the Knowledge of the Animals Oeconomy, and other Proper Effects of Medicines, and As the Benefit of Medical Institutions formed on liberal principles & encouraged by the patronage of the Law are universally acknowledged, Be it therefore enacted by the Senate & House of Representatives assembled & by the authority of the same that James Pecker [and 13 others]

Be and they are hereby are formed into, constituted & made a body politic & corporate by the name of the Massachusetts Medical Society, and that they and their successors & such other Persons as shall be elected in the manner hereafter mentioned, shall be & continue a Body Politick & Corporate by the name forever--

And be it enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the Fellows of said Society may from time to time elect a President, Vice President, & Secretary with other Officers as they shall judge necessary & convenient, and they shall have full power and Authority from time to time, to determine & establish the Names, Number, & Duty of their several Officers, and the Tenure or Estate they shall respectively have in their Offices, & also to authorize & empower their President or some other Officer to administer such Oaths to such Officers, as they, the Fellows of said Society, shall appoint & determine for the well ordering & goodly government of said Society, provided the same be not repugnant to the Law of this Commonwealth. . . .

And be it enacted . . . That the Fellows of said Society may from time to time elect such persons to be Fellows thereof as they shall judge proper & that they the Fellows of said Society shall have power to suspend, expell or disenfranchise any of the Fellows of said Society.

And be it enacted. . . That the Fellows of s<sup>d</sup> Society shall have full power & Authority to make and enact such Rules & By-Laws for the better Government of said Society. . . & to annex penalties for the Breach of them, not exceeding the Sum of Twenty Pounds to be sued for & recovered by s<sup>d</sup> Society & to their own Use in any Court of record within this Commonwealth proper to try the same & also to establish the Time & manner of convening the Fellows of the Society, & also to determine the Number of Fellows that shall be present to constitute a Meeting of s<sup>d</sup> Society, & also that the Number of s<sup>d</sup> Society who are inhabitants of this Commonwealth shall not at any one time be more than Twenty nor less than ten, & that their Meetings shall be held in the Town of Boston or such other place within this Commonwealth as a majority of the Members present in a legal Meeting shall judge most fit & & convenient.

And whereas it is clearly of importance that a just discrimination should be made between such as are duly educated & properly qualified for the Duties of their Profession & Men who may ignorantly & wickedly administer Medicine; whereby the Health & Lives of many valuable individuals are endangered, or perhaps lost to the Community, Be it enacted therefore. . .

That the President & Fellows. . . shall have full power & Authority to examine all Candidates for the practice of Physick & Surgery (who shall offer themselves for Examination) respecting their Skill in their Profession, & if upon such Examination the said Candidates shall be found skilled in their profession and fitted for the practice of it, they shall receive approbation of the Society in Letters testimonial of such Examination, under the

Seal of the said Society, signed by the President or such other person or persons as shall be appointed for that purpose;

And, be it further enacted. . . , That if the said President and such other person or Persons so elected and appointed for the purpose of examining Candidates as aforesaid, shall obstinately refuse to examine any Candidates so offering himself for Examination. . . , each & every such person so elected & appointed. . . shall be subject to a fine of two hundred Pounds to be recovered by the said Candidate & to his own use in any Court within this Commonwealth proper to try the same --

[Here follows an extended passage which would have given the Society power to regulate the activities of apothecaries and others selling drugs and medicines. It was included in the manuscript petition, but evidently crossed out because the physicians acknowledged the limits of the claims they could make on the public's favor].

And be it further enacted. . . That the Fellows of the said Society may & shall forever be deemed capable in Law, of having holding & taking in Fee simple or any less Estate by Gift, Grant or Devise or otherwise any Land Tenement or other Estate real or personal, provided that the annual income of said real Estate does not exceed Two hundred Pounds & the annual Income or Interest of said personal Estate shall not exceed the sum of Six Hundred Pounds --- All the Sums mentioned in this Act to be valued in Silver at six shillings & eightpence pr ounce -- And the annual Income or Interest of the said real & personal Estate, together with the Fines & Penalties paid to said Society, or received by them, shall be appropriated to such purposes as are consistent with the End & Design of the Institution of this Society & as the Fellows thereof shall determine.

The legislature's grant of degree-granting powers to the Society would bring it into conflict Harvard, which would establish its own medical professorships in 1782 and begin granting medical degrees. Suggesting the continuing struggle among physicians to define their professional mission and goals, one member of the Society wrote to a colleague regarding Harvard's first professor of surgery,

. . . Warren is an artful man, and will get to the windward of us all. He has made a proposition to the club, as there are nearly a dozen pupils studying in the town, there should be an incipient medical school instituted here for their benefit, and has nominated Danforth to read on materia medica and chemistry, proposed that I should read on the theory and practice of physic, and some suitable person on anatomy and surgery. He was at once put up for the latter branches; and after a little maiden coyness, agreed to commence a course. . . . (Eliot 1866, 174).

Although the Medical Society formed a committee to protest Harvard's invasion of what it regarded as its exclusive rights, a conference between Harvard officials and the officers of the Society smoothed over these differences. Peace between the institutions lasted for only a decade, however. By 1793, a powerful faction within the society, motivated primarily by their dislike of Harvard's political inclination towards Federalism, began agitating for a reassertion of the society's exclusive right to examine and issue diplomas.

Basically what was at stake here was a conflict between a gild model of professional organization based on practitioner control (which trained students by apprenticeship or, as the model was followed in England and in Philadelphia, in hospitals) and a university model, which gave training and credentialing powers to a lay-controlled academic institution (this was the model followed at the University of Edinburgh, which had become the center of medical education by the end of the eighteenth

century). This struggle between gild and lay control of the profession would be played out throughout the country over the next two decades, with Jeffersonians (who distrusted the power of the wealthy laymen who controlled the colleges) favoring the former and Federalists advocating the latter. In the Federalist strongholds of Connecticut and Massachusetts, lay models, which tied professional training to the colleges, became dominant. In New York, Pennsylvania, and the South, gild models were generally adopted. Neither the question of the proper interrelationship of the medical profession, hospitals, and institutions of higher education, nor general standards of medical licensing would be agreed upon until the end of the nineteenth century.

Despite these struggles between physicians' political and economic self interests and their inchoate understanding of their obligations to the public, by the end of the colonial period a clear sense of their role as avatars of scientific progress and of social reform seems to have emerged. Addresses to graduating classes of colleges in the 1780s point young men in the direction of learned professions like medicine not because of the personal benefits to be gained from such occupations, but because of the good physicians could do for their country and its citizens.

This address by Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush (1745-1813), a friend and protege of Franklin and Jefferson, evokes the new and distinctively philanthropic spirit that characterized American medicine as it moved towards resolution of its professional identity. For Rush, medicine, like republicanism, was experimental, not a closed-minded exercise in applying ancient doctrines. The ultimate perfectionist, Rush saw medicine not only as a powerful force in the field of public health, but in the realms of public morals: temperance, the social conditions of labor and immigration, conservation, all fell within the domain of legitimate medical concerns. In Rush's vision,

the physician, by becoming an advocate for science, became a disinterested advocate for the public good.

## A Discourse Delivered Before the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Feb. 6, 1787. On the Objects of Their Institution

*By* BENJAMIN RUSH, M.D., &c. &c.

*Mr. President and Gentlemen,*

I feel peculiar pleasure in reflecting, that the late revolution, which has given such a spring to the mind in objects of philosophical and moral enquiry, has at last extended itself to medicine, and in less than five years after the peace, before the human faculties had contracted to their former dimensions, a college of physicians, formed upon principles accommodated to the present state of society and government in America, has been established in the capital of the United States.

The design of the present essay is to point out, in a few words, the advantages which may be derived from this institution and to suggest the many resources, which our country offers for the improvement of medicine.

I shall consider the objects and advantages of our institution, 1st as a College, and 2ndly, as a Medical Society.

I. By assuming the name of a College, we shall 1st, be able to introduce order and dignity into the practice of physic, by establishing incentives and rewards for character. Men are generally

anxious to preserve the good opinion of those with whom they are obliged to associate. The reception we shall meet with from each other in our meetings will serve to correct or to improve our conduct. And if we are as chaste as we should be, in the admission of members, a fellowship in our College will become in time, not only the sign of the ability, but an introduction to business and reputation in physic.

2ndly. By assuming the name of a College we may give a sanction to an American Dispensary -- for I take it for granted, this will be one of the first objects of our attention. --

-- The variety in the degrees, and perhaps the nature of our diseases, and the many remedies which are peculiar to our country, which have as yet no place in foreign dispensaries, render this undertaking a matter of absolute necessity.

3dly. By means of our association, under the title of a College, we shall be better able to attract the attention of the government of our country, in matters that relate to the health and happiness of our fellow citizens. In the year 1725, the College of Physicians of London, presented an address to the British House of Commons, in which they bore such a testimony against the pernicious effects of distilled spirituous liquors, as laid the foundation of several excellent laws, that were calculated to lessen the consumption, and of course, the fatal consequences of those liquors. This disinterestedness of such interpositions of a medical faculty, in favour of the health and morals of their fellow citizens cannot fail of ensuring their success with a legislature.

4thly. By stated meetings as a College, we may promote enquiries and observations upon the prevailing diseases of the city. Here the timid may be encouraged, and the sanguine may be taught to doubt. Here the young practitioner may profit by the experience of the old, and the old by the boldness of enquiry, and modern improvements of the young. Here, in uniformity in

principle, and practice in medicine, will gradually insinuate themselves. Nor will the advantages of our conferences end in the acquisition of knowledge. The heart will naturally interest itself in the pursuits of the head. Here friendships will be contracted and cemented, and occasional and unavoidable suspicions or disputes may here be accommodated by explanation or mediation. By these means we shall become, not only the guardians of the honour of the profession, but likewise of each other's character.

II. As a Medical Society associated for the purposes of collecting and publishing medical observations and enquiries, an ample field lies open before us.

The human body still contains secrets which have eluded the enquiries of the anatomists and physiologists of the *old* world. Who knows but they may be reserved by Heaven, to give immortality to the name of an American physician.

Our country abounds with objects for the improvement of Chemistry, Botany, and Materia Medica. How few of the fossil and vegetable substances peculiar to America, have been examined by men capable of applying them to the purposes of medicine.

The winds, the local situations of the different parts of America, and the particular diet--dress--customs--manners--occupations--and buildings of our country, furnish immense opportunities for the improvement of pathology.

It remains yet to be discovered and recorded, whether the extent of human life has been increased or diminished in America.

The effects of agriculture, horticulture, manufactures, commerce and civilization, in their progress from their first to their last stages, upon the health and life of man, can at present be

ascertained with precision in America. Here, too, we may discover the symptoms which gradually accompany the change of natural into artificial diseases.

The comparative effects of different articles of agriculture upon health, such as wheat, Indian corn, rice, tobacco and indigo, remain yet to be explored in this country.

The cutting down of our woods has had a sensible effect upon our climate, and upon the health of our inhabitants. It remains to be determined whether the increase of fevers from this cause, is produced by the increase of exhalation, or by the progress of easterly winds westward, as has been supposed by Mr. Jefferson, in his notes on Virginia. . . .

America furnishes almost the only spot on the surface of the globe, to determine whether different forms of government have any influence upon health and life. In countries where power is confined, by hereditary succession, to a few hands the effects of political passions are much limited. But even in these countries we often read or hear of their baneful operation upon the human body. . . . In a country, where the safety, power, and offices of government are the objects of attention or desire of every man, it is a matter highly interesting to know what are the effects of the passions, which are excited by those objects upon the human body. Are madness, melancholy, the hysteria and hypochondriasis, more frequent in republics than in monarchies? I think we are possessed of a sufficient number of facts to determine this question.

It remains yet to determine the comparative effects of *labour* and *learning* upon health and life. At present the former, compared with the latter, in the middle and southern states, is in the ratio of four to one. From the number and growth of the colleges and schools lately established in these states, it will be our power to determine, in a few years, whether we have increased or diminished, with knowledge, the health of our fellow citizens.

The influence of religious opinions upon the health and life may be discovered in America; for, by the principles and forms of our constitutions, a boldness and freedom of enquiry upon religious subjects have been introduced among us, which have hitherto been unknown in the world.

The effects of emigration upon life and health, have as yet been the subject of no enquiry. Is the *maladie de pays*, or homesickness, so distressing and fatal to the Swiss, common to all the emigrants from Europe on their first arrival among us? Are they most subject to our epidemic diseases, the *first* or *second* year after they arrive in our country? And lastly, do these persons exceed in health or life the natives of America? We have many facts which will enable us to determine each of these questions.

The effects of the mixture of human species of different nations and countries upon health and life, may here be determined by accurate observations. It is certain, that the inferior species of animals are improved in strength by the mixture. But further; the mulatto possesses stronger stamina than belonged to his father or mother. The size, strength, health and longevity of Englishmen have been ascribed to the intimate mixture of the blood of half the nations of Europe, from which they are descended. To the effects of this mixture, likewise, may be ascribed that elevation and perfection which the human understanding has acquired in Great Britain. I take pleasure in sacrificing national prejudice to truth and philosophy by introducing this observation, especially as I anticipate the same national character for the operation of similar causes upon the citizens of America. . . .

To obtain an accurate knowledge of the epidemics of this city, I would recommend the preservation of the accounts of the diseases that are kept in the *Dispensary*. . . . To derive the utmost possible advantage from this history of our epidemics, let us endeavour to procure similar observations from different parts of the state, and from every state in the union.

To render our city as celebrated for medical advantages, as it has long been for other things, it will be necessary to erect in it *warm* and *cold baths*. The advantages of both these remedies in a country where the diseases from heat and cold are so predominant, need not be mentioned.

A Medical Library, will help to diffuse knowledge among us upon easy terms, while a botanical garden will furnish us with an opportunity of cultivating that part of the *Materia Medica*, which is derived from the vegetable kingdom.

Should an application be made to the legislature, there can be do doubt of our obtaining a suitable piece of ground for that purpose.

Thus, Mr. President and Gentlemen, have I pointed out in a few words, the great objects and advantages of our College of Physicians.

I shall conclude with the following remarks. It is a general opinion that the condition of man in our world is mending. The conveniences and pleasures of life, are daily multiplying by the inventions of philosophy. Many disorders, once deemed incurable, now yield to medicine. No wonder than that a general expectation now prevails -- that a revolution is soon to take place in favour of human happiness. Natural means appear to be the instruments designed by heaven to fulfill its purposes of mercy and benevolence to mankind. I am fully persuaded there does not exist a disease in nature, that has not an antidote to it. And when I consider the influence of liberty and republican forms of government upon science, and the vigour which the American mind has acquired by the events of the late revolution, I am led to hope that a great portion of the honor and happiness of discovering and applying these antidotes may be reserved for the physicians of America.

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