

nature in our nomenclature, and have it as nearly descriptive of the thing itself as possible. Then we approach the true scientific ideal.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Medical Education.

MONTCLAIR, N. J., Sept. 26, 1896.

To the Editor:—The two editorials upon medical education in the last issue of the JOURNAL are exceedingly well considered and show a decided disposition to go to the root of things. What is particularly pleasing in your remarks is the strong demand for *thoroughness* in our medical schools, and the intimation that until better methods of teaching are adopted the mere lengthening of the curriculum will avail little. The medical schools seem disposed to indulge in much self congratulation because a number of them have extended the period of study required for a degree of doctor of medicine to four years, and most of them now seem to require more or less preliminary education. In the latter direction it hardly seems possible that they can go too far. But the rigid requirement of four years study of medicine is perhaps not so wise a measure. At all events it has always seemed to me that the object to be gained in going to a medical school is a knowledge of medicine sufficient to enable a man to enter upon the practice of it, and some men will easily acquire in three years what it will take others four to accomplish. No two minds are precisely alike in childhood and as individuals approach maturity these mental differences increase rather than diminish so that it may prove a hardship and an injustice to a man with an unusually brilliant and acquisitive mind to be forced to spend the same amount of time in studying for his degree as the more slow going individual. Your editorial speaks of bedside examinations of students. In like manner the candidate should be examined in the deadhouse as to his knowledge of gross pathology, should operate upon the cadaver (if living subjects are not available), should bandage the manikin, etc. He should compound prescriptions, and be required to detect and demonstrate incompatibles and poisons and should give the antidotes to the latter; in short he should be put through an examination which would really reveal what he knows.

No written examination, no oral examination, no bedside examination, nor even the certificate of good moral character, alone is a sufficient test of a man's capacity to enter into practice. But a judicious combination of them all is, I submit, necessary and should be adopted in each case. Let the examinations last from three to six days. The examining board should sit constantly or nearly so and the candidate should be allowed to appear before it whenever he chooses. Let a fee sufficient to pay the board's expenses, say from \$50 to \$100, be charged each candidate. If he only desires to take part of the examinations, there seems to be no reason why he should not do so, paying only the fees of those examiners before whom he chooses to appear.

One student might qualify himself to pass all these examinations in two or three years. Another, who would perhaps make a sober and more reliable practitioner, would require four or five years. And—and this is the most satisfying part of the plan—a dullard, a superficial or lazy student, or one whose preliminary education had been quite defective could never pass at all. What a glorious day it would be for American medicine if such a plan could only be realized! How such a body of trained examiners would sift out the weak and badly prepared candidates! No amount of cramming would enable a weak or illy prepared man to pass a competent and trained examiner, who could take the applicant to the bedside, to the operating room, to the laboratory and to the dead house, who would

require one or more carefully written papers upon his particular subject, and any number of answers both oral and written that he might think proper.

Such an examination as the one outlined used to be required and I presume still is by the Army Examining Board. When this board had finished five or six days' examination of a candidate, both the board and the candidate felt that the latter had told all he knew. It was the only fair and satisfactory medical examination which I ever passed. My examinations for my degree were trivial, almost foolish, and my examinations for the hospital were too short and were *greatly a matter of luck*.

It has been asserted over and over again that an examination does not show what a man knows; and this allegation is measurably true of such examinations as I have last spoken of, depending for their result as they do upon so many fortuitous circumstances, as, *e. g.*, the readiness and assurance of the candidate in case of oral examinations, and his capacity for cramming in case of written examinations. But an examination that takes plenty of time and which attacks the candidate's fund of knowledge in various ways as, for instance, setting the ready and superficial man to write answers which require thought, accuracy and careful study, and on the other hand, asking the slow, methodical man, whose written answers may be good, such questions orally as to reveal whether his work has covered sufficient ground, or taking the bookish man to the bedside or the laboratory and letting him show whether he can put his theories into practice, etc.

If the medical schools, the AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, the New York Academy of Medicine and every representative body of physicians and the profession at large will unite in insisting upon competent boards of examiners in medicine (whether they be State or National) we may sometime get such bodies of examiners and such examinations that the degree of doctor of medicine shall of itself confer distinguished honor. Our medical schools and our physicians would in that case no longer be looked down upon by our foreign confrères. The greatest good for the greatest number would be attained because the average physician would be a man of sound education and broadened views. This state of affairs would perhaps be rather near the millenium, but it is really not entirely beyond the range of possibility. Very respectfully yours,

RICHARD C. NEWTON, M.D.

Expert Medical Testimony.

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 28, 1896.

To the Editor:—There have been many papers and articles written on the subject of expert testimony but none I think so clearly express what is needed in courts as that published in our JOURNAL of Sept. 26, by L. Harrison Mettler of Chicago, under the title of "Insanity in Court."

The Doctor's arguments are so convincing that criticism is well nigh disarmed. His demand for a separate medical trial to precede the civil where a plea of insanity is offered, carries great weight and would seem to be perfectly fair.

The commission, suggested by him, to be composed of learned and experienced experts appointed by the supreme court or in other constitutional way beyond the reach of politics is certainly to be desired.

It is only too true that "the present system does not carry out the abstract spirit of the law that every man shall be tried by his peers; but on the other hand works injustice in many cases of real insanity and favors the exercise on the part of criminals of feigned insanity." Such being the case, is it not time that the great AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION should assert itself and formulate and pass resolutions in accordance with the progressive ideas on the subject of expert testimony.

Yours very truly, T. RIDGWAY BARKER, M.D.