is organization, a system by which the profession can express itself as a unit upon vital questions, and through which the greatest possible benefit will accrue to individual members. The British Medical Association is thoroughly organized by numerous branches, yet the area of territory in which this system has been found so successful is less than that of many States of the Union. In this vast country members of the American Association are scattered North and South, East and West; the only method of reunion is an annual meeting, which takes many practitioners a journey of 2000 miles to attend, and an expenditure in time of two weeks. During the interval between these assemblies the Association is practically non-existent; it is difficult to obtain even a collective expression of opinion, and as a factor in politics its influence cannot be exerted, owing to the want of proper representation.

It will be impossible for regular medicine ever to attain its rightful position in America without some system whereby its sentiments can be voiced; and this should be the National Association, organized by its branches, in every State and Territory; represented and governed by its council; and kept in constant communication through its JOURNAL. The methods by which this is attainable must be adopted at a general meeting of the Association, but it will be profitable to discuss the matter beforehand, so that they who undertake its inception may have the benefit of previous deliberation. Meanwhile, it is well to deal with the objections which may be urged when it is proposed to interfere with existing organizations.

The "two reasons" which "Branch" puts forward in regard to State Societies are really the principal obstacles to encounter, namely: status and finance. Of these the first is least important. There would be no "dependency" except in theory. The Society which organized with similar objects and adopted the "Code of Ethics" of the Association for its guidance is already in close affiliation; otherwise its autonomy is complete. In its own section it should be supreme, and it would remain the centre to which the local societies focus. The subject of finance is more important and must be carefully considered. It is not too sweeping a statement that no State Society is numerically as strong as the regular profession in that State would entitle it to be. Its income is small and modest balances in the treasury are the rule. The principal expense is the annual volume of Transactions. Whether this publication is desirable is a question. No doubt much of the matter might be "profitably dispensed" with and the "very bad" papers omitted; but it is well to bear in mind that some of these are reports from various sections and must necessarily be printed. They, however, serve a useful purpose by acting as an incentive to better work, and tending largely to keep alive an interest in the Society and its annual assembly. THE JOURNAL of the Association could not undertake to publish more than the minutes of a meeting, yet any scheme which proposes to abolish the publication of this matter will probably be received with disfavor, and in my opinion may be harmful in its action. With local or County Societies the case is different.

They do not publish their transactions, and the actual running expenses are comparatively trivial, so that their amalgamation would present fewer difficulties.

It is open to consideration which should be adopted, either to make each State Society a Branch of the Association, or to organize small Branches and leave the State Societies as now constituted. As a commencement the latter appears to be the most feasible project and likely to afford a large measure of success. Taking the expense *per capita* "Branch" says that "the number of members of State Societies who cannot afford to pay two sets of dues is extremely limited." This is very true, and with it comes a question of economy. A large number of physicians belong to a local society, the State organization, and the Association as well, so that they pay three sets of dues. If, therefore, a comprehensive scheme be devised which shall organize the profession under one common head, a saving can certainly be effected.

I trust that the matter will be fully discussed and some measure adopted which will enable a Republic of Medicine to rise and flourish in these United States.

Yours truly,

JAMES H. PARKINSON, I.R.C.S.

Sacramento, California.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL:

Dear Sir.—In your issue of February 6th is an item of correspondence on "Branches of the American Medical Association." I am sorry that I cannot altogether agree with the conclusions of your correspondent as to the propriety or wisdom of the proposed "Branches." Let us examine the question with a little care. "Branch" proposes that we shall, in this country, adopt the method of the British Medical Association to perfect our own organization. Their method, as he sets forth clearly and distinctly, consists in the formation of Branches under regulations of the General Council of the British Medical Association, in which each Council in each Branch has a single voice; and that "any number of members, not being less than twenty, may form themselves into a Branch of the Association, subject to such Branch being recognized by the Council. Each Branch shall be free to govern itself as its members shall see fit; but no Branch law shall be valid which, in the opinion of the Council, may contravene any fundamental law of the Association. Each Branch shall pay its own expenses, and no Branch shall be deemed for any purpose the agent of the Association, or have power to incur any obligation in its behalf."

There are thirty-four such Branches, it is stated, in the British Medical Association. It occurs to me in the consideration of this question that, while the so-called Branch plan may be a very desirable one for Great Britain, it is not adapted to the customs of this country, and the "plan" will not be popular, or meet the wishes of a majority of the profession. The object of the proposed change, if I understand your correspondent correctly, is to increase the power and membership of the American Medical Association. It seems to me that very desirable object will be much better attained, with less friction, if we

simply open the doors of the Association so that its members shall include the members of affiliated State Medical Societies who shall have inscribed their names on the register, and certified their adherence to the regulations of the Association for the government of its members in professional life. The adoption of such a rule would at once make every member, in good standing, of a State Medical Society in affiliation with the American Medical Association sending delegates to its annual meetings, a member of the American Medical Association. The rule might further provide that any member failing to pay his dues for any year would thereby become indefinitely suspended from membership in the Association. This plan, it seems to me, is much simpler than the one proposed by your correspondent. It utilizes already existing organizations, and does not change the present plan of organization, which is what I may designate, as contra-distinguished from the British plan, the American plan, and therefore, in my opinion, decidedly preferable for use here, to any imported from Europe.

It is not possible for every member of a State Medical Society to attend the meetings of the Association, but by their being permanent members of the Association they will be entitled to the receipt of *THE JOURNAL*, and then, as now, in the election of delegates to attend the business meetings of the Association—they alone having power to vote—they will be fully represented. So, then, it appears, as a matter of fact, the State Medical Societies, in affiliation with the American Medical Association, are already "Branches" in effect, and it only remains to open the doors of membership to all members of the respective Branches, *i. e.*, State Societies in good standing. The autonomy of the "Branch" is nominal in England, in our country it is real, and in accordance with our political system, which medical men, as patriots, ought to uphold rather than decry.

Therefore, while I favor the widest possible basis of membership for our general Association, I should oppose the supplanting of our State Societies by any Branch of whatever degree; and in fact there is no need, for as already pointed out, the present State organizations can not only strengthen the general Association by encouraging large membership therein, but if the American Medical Association bases the claim to membership on the applicant's standing in his own State Association, that basis will also serve as an element of strength to the State Society; thus proving the wisdom of the old moral which we adopt as our political maxim, that "in union there is strength."

Very respectfully yours,

JOHN B. HAMILTON, M.D.

Washington, February 10, 1886.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL:

Dear Sir:—I have been much interested in the letter which dealt with the subject of "Branches" in your issue of February 6, page 163. No one can take exception to the spirit of that letter, though one may differ when it comes to the details and their execution. The formation of such Branches, in my

opinion, should proceed somewhat differently from the method suggested by "Branch."

In the first place the American Medical Association should be divided into a *governing body* and a *working body*. The latter could be composed, as it is now, of members of the regular profession, who have attended in the capacity of delegates to this part of the organization, its Sections, and of "Members by Application." The former should be composed of *delegates only* of State and Territorial Branches, who should be chosen by these bodies under rules made by the American Medical Association, somewhat like this:

1. The Branches of the American Medical Association shall consist of the legally recognized State or Territorial medical organizations.

2. The State or Territorial Branches of the American Medical Association shall be composed of two parts, a governing body and a working body. The former shall be composed of delegates, one for every subordinate society, of all medical organizations, who recognize the authority and subscribe to the constitution and By-laws of the State or Territorial Branch of the American Medical Association.

3. The working body shall consist of all regular physicians, who are elected to membership under the rules of the Branch, not conflicting with those of the American Medical Association. All laws and all matters tending to maintain and enhance the interests of the American Medical Association, its Branches and their members, shall emanate from the governing bodies, to be known as the Council of the American Medical Association and the Council—Branch of the A. M. A. respectively, with this proviso, that everything suggested by such Councils must receive a ("two-thirds," or "three-fourths"?) vote of the whole Association in annual meeting assembled to legalize it. And, further, no rule or motion shall be adopted by a Branch, or its component parts, which conflicts with the already existing rules of the higher organization.

4. The Council of the American Medical Association shall consist of one delegate for every (ten or twenty?) members of the State and Territorial Branches. Said delegates must be members of the Council of their respective State or Territorial Branches. Provided, however, that no person shall be eligible to the Council of the State or Territorial Branch, who has not submitted a paper, in some Branch of the science of medicine, which has been accepted for publication by his society. And provided further, that no person be eligible to membership in the Council of the American Medical Association, who has not submitted a paper upon some subject connected with the science and art of medicine, which has been accepted for publication by the State or Territorial Branch of the American Medical Association of which he is a member.

5. The members of the Councils of the American Medical Association and its Branches shall be known as "Fellows" of the American Medical Association, and as "Fellows" of the—Branch of the A. M. A. respectively. And they shall retain this title as long as they are in good standing in their society and