

To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION:

Dear Sir:—I am pleased to notice that my article in THE JOURNAL of April 22 seems to have touched one of the key notes on Code revision.

We have a literary symposium on the revision question in the issue of May 6.

I had expected that "A Conservative Member" would draw aside his long and ancient cloak, and reach forth and give the brake on the wheels of progress another twist. This has been the business of "conservatives" all along down the ages. It was conservatives who said nineteen hundred years ago that the great Nazarene Teacher was an impostor, that his doctrines were innovations, that he was a disturber and mischief maker, that if he was allowed to proceed in his course the very foundations of religion would be upturned; and said conservatism finally resulted in his death upon the tree. A little later, when the beautiful doctrines of the Nazarene were perverted in the name of Christianity, it was the conservatives who burned the great libraries of the world and plunged mankind into a midnight of darkness for a thousand years.

It was the conservatives who pulled out their musty Bibles and said that the Copernican theory of the universe was contrary to Scripture, and they were sorry that Copernicus died very soon after promulgating his doctrine, thereby depriving them of the privilege of killing him.

Who was it that murdered 100,000 people on Saint Bartholomew's Day? Who was it that burned Bruno at the stake? Who was it that made Galileo recant on bended knees from his statement that the earth turns upon its axis, and kept him a prisoner and a seal upon his mouth the remainder of his lifetime? Who burned Servetus at the stake because he would not repeat "three times one are one?" Who with their musty Bibles fought to prevent the teaching of astronomy and geology? Conservatives, all of these! Who have advanced the interests of mankind and brought them up from barbarism to intelligence and civilization? Without a doubt, the heretics, directly and indirectly.

"Conservative" says that no arguments have been presented showing reasons why the Code should be revised. This reminds me of the little conversation that took place between Abraham and his hot friend in Hades. The rich man pleaded that some one be sent back to inform his five brethren, so that they might escape the tortures of eternal thirst, but Abraham answered: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Those brethren were all "conservative" Jews, the same outfit who murdered the speaker who uttered that parable. To present an argument considered tenable by one sailing under the *nom de plume* "Conservative," may be a hopeless task. The very word conveys the impression of one joined to his idols, or one who is desirous of preserving the *statu quo*.

It is very possible that "Conservative" has got on in his profession up to date without using any of those wicked patent things, and stands as the embodiment of consistency. If so, it would be interesting to take a peep into his ancient saddle bags. But from certain indications he has not kept aloof from copyrighted books, both professional and otherwise. Thanks to Dr. Rumbold of San Francisco, for the suggestion of the inconsistency of a medical man holding a copyright for a medical book. How dare they "on humanitarian principles" interpose any barrier between their knowledge and dear suffering humanity by making it more expensive to acquire medical knowledge, and hence more expensive to dispense the same? None so blind as those who will not see.

Why did not "Conservative" answer my argument in regard to patents and specialists?

But no, he takes up his old fetic, the Code, and kisses it once more and then refers to a commentary by Dr. Flint for elucidation of the whole matter. Dr. Flint was known and honored by the medical profession for many years, and his name is revered to-day by all; but neither he nor the immaculate Percival are the sole guides of the medical profession to-day, any more than John Calvin is furnishing the creeds of Christendom.

If the Code is the perfect document that "Conservative" claims for it, is it not strange that we can not all see it in the same light? And is it not strange that it has taken so much time, space and printers' ink to establish that fact? Why does it not commend itself? Methinks I hear some one say, "to all right minded people it does." Then there are a great many perverse minds in the profession. If a vote could be taken of the whole profession the anti-revisionists would be a small minority. There are only about 4,500 members of the American Medical Association, while there are about 100,000 regulars in the United States under the jurisdiction of the Code. And those who are outside of the Association care less for the Code than those inside.

"Conservative" tells us Jan. 14, 1893, that the Code was written for boys, and full grown men, and that that superfluous twaddle and small talk which so many of us object to, was designed for the fledglings, and the more weighty matters of the law for the gray heads. Surely this does explain some things. I had thought all along that the major part of the document was not designed for fully matured men and medical practitioners, hence I was right in using the word puerile. But, now, I move you that we delegate that part that belongs to the boys back to the medical college faculties and allow the professors to deal it out to the youngsters as they think the occasion demands on commencement nights.

Allow me to give a few excerpts from the so-called "immaculate" document written by the unerring Percival,—not addressed to even the boys in the profession, but to persons who do not know there is a Code of Ethics, do not care to know, and never will know,—under the title of "Duties of Patients to their Physicians:"

"The members of the medical profession . . . certainly have a right to expect and require that their patients should entertain a just sense of the duties which they owe to their medical attendants." "The first duty of a patient is to select as his medical adviser one who has received a regular medical education." "Patients should prefer a physician whose habits of life are regular, (see) and who is not devoted to company, pleasure, or to any pursuit incompatible with his professional obligations."

"A patient should never weary his physician with a tedious detail of events or matters not appertaining to his disease," etc.

These are a few samples of a long lingo of what I call *drivel*, addressed to the abyss of empty space. But even if these statements from the "great guns" of the profession were actually in the hands of all the people, none the less would they be *drivel*. No reason for revising though, for "did not the immortal Percival write it?" But "Conservative" says, January 14, 1893, that the original, inspired code of Percival contained 20,000 words, and that our present Code contains only 5,240 words. What vile hands reduced and compressed that heaven born creed into so small a compass? Is it not possible that something has been lost or some meaning changed? "Hands off—a little more compression and we shall not be able to recognize our idol!"

The idols seem to be trembling all around anyhow. The old creeds of the churches are now kept in musty boxes for

decades at a stretch, and are only hauled out at ecumenical councils when the "conservatives" get together to screw down the brakes once more on the wheels of progress. Our fellow creatures—urged on by the heretics—have even tampered with the Word of God, and now we are enjoying the tenth revision of our English Bible. How dare they!

I am in favor of a code of ethics—a revised code, or a new code, but not the Percival code as it now stands; and I am certain that I voice the sentiments of nine-tenths of the profession of California. Not alone is it a little clique in New York State thinking about the matter of revision, as intimated by my venerable friend from Kentucky, but the whole United States is in it. And if a rational, business-like code is not adopted in this year of grace 1893, death and evolution will finally get in their work and the goal will be reached. But if not reached finally the member from Kentucky need have no fears of being crowded on his little "roost" whereon slumbereth the "conservative elect."

But give us a code that will harmonize the profession from Maine to California, from the Lakes to the Gulf, and make for us a great, grand, American Medical Association.

Yours in F. L. and C.,

A. C. SIMONTON, M.D.

San Jose, Cal.

To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION:

Dear Sir:—I like the *tone* in which Dr. Edward Jackson presents his objections to the Code of Ethics of the American Medical Association, but I do not see the *force* of his objections. What I have to say on this subject I do not wish to be considered as applicable to him.

His line of reasoning, however, would apply to all moral codes, written or understood. It is true that we all know of cases where members of this Association, and of our local societies have violated that part which forbids regular physicians to consult with quacks and irregulars, and we are as familiar with similar or even grosser violations of the moral law by members of society and of churches, which certainly do not warrant abandonment of all standards of morals. As in one case so in the other the violator may not be punished—in the American Medical Association no provision is made for his punishment—but in both he suffers in the estimation of that part of the profession who do respect and observe honorable rules, and, in some degree, by that part of every community whose good opinion all honorable men desire, just as violators of other moral laws do.

I knew, twelve years ago, a graduate of one of our best medical schools, once a professor in a respectable school himself, who not only consulted with homœopaths, but defied his society. His name was struck from the roll of the State society, and he took his place among homœopaths of the most illiterate class, and is there to-day. He took this course for the shekels, as I think most such men do.

I believe it was crazy King George who said, "Ego sum Rex, super grammaticus." Are not some of our brethren on such exalted terms with themselves that they are satisfied to be a law unto themselves? two-horse doctors, as they say in the wild west, in contradistinction to he of the "one-horse shay," albeit both came with equal honors from the same medical school. Some of these gentlemen are never seen in our medical societies, and I fear that hostility to our Code is, if not confined most to be found among such.

Who can suffer from the operation of a Code of Ethics but the galled jade who winces, and whose withers are *not* unwrung? and how are the young doctors to know what is due to themselves, their brethren, and the public without some authorized standard? Let us improve the Code if we can, but let the improvement be such as will elevate our noble profession.

F. W. T.

## BOOK REVIEWS.

DISEASES OF INEBRIETY FROM ALCOHOL, OPIUM, AND OTHER NARCOTIC DRUGS: ITS ETIOLOGY, PATHOLOGY, TREATMENT, AND MEDICO-LEGAL RELATIONS. By the American Association for the Study and Cure of Inebriety. 8vo, pp. 400. Price, \$2.75. E. B. Treat, 5 Cooper Union, New York.

This is the title of a handsome volume of four hundred pages of compactly printed matter. Dr. T. D. Crothers, the editor of the *Quarterly Journal of Inebriety* is the compiler.

The book is partly a compendium of some of the more important investigations of the American Association for the Study of Inebriety—extending over a period of more than twenty years. The arrangement of the material, which has become voluminous, is the work of Dr. Crothers himself. As Dr. C. has been the secretary of the Society ever since its foundation, he is peculiarly fitted for the task of sifting, arranging, and collating the facts and principles involved in the undertaking. The original investigations of the author and compiler of the work are very considerable, and they materially enhance its value.

The volume contains some account of the inquiries of "Mason, Day, Crothers, Mattison, Mann, Hughes, Searcey, Wright, Davis, Sheppard, Morris and many others in this country—as well as of Peddie, Kerr, Clouston, Carpenter, Ridge, Richardson and others abroad."

The book is filled with an almost innumerable array of facts and deductions of the highest order of interest and importance. It reads like a romance, by reason of the newness and brightness of its contents. The work is concerned, not so much with the open exhibitions of inebriety, as it is with the principles of science and biology which make inebriety possible—which in fact make it common and intractable. It also points out, either directly or by implication, the applications of these scientific principles to the facts of inebriety—to their prevention as well as their removal.

Thus the work insensibly leads the mind of the reader to first principles—to causes rather than to phenomena; and it irresistibly impresses upon it the great truth that inebriety is not alone the work of individuals immediately implicated, but that it is strictly a disease—diverse in its origin, and boundless in its tendencies. In short the lesson is inculcated that inebriety has claims upon the attention and labor of good citizenship everywhere. A definite analysis of the work in a brief notice is manifestly impracticable. It will no doubt be extensively read.

T. L. W.

GEOGRAPHICAL PATHOLOGY. An inquiry into the geographical distribution of infective and climatic diseases. By ANDREW DAVIDSON, M.D., F.R.C.P. Ed. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

The plan and scope of this work is somewhat novel, but none the less useful, treating as it does of the geographical distribution of infective and climatic diseases. Charts are introduced to illustrate the characteristics of these affections in the different countries in which they are found to exist. The rapid growth of sanitary and climatic resorts is an immediate result of accumulated wealth, which in turn enables invalids to take advantage of quick and comfortable methods of transit for the purpose of obtaining the best facilities and treatment that medical skill and climate can give.

The ailing and sick are naturally guided in their course by their medical advisers, for whom this work is a mine of valuable information. The author has carefully compiled and formulated a vast amount of knowledge that is of interest and that can only be elsewhere obtained with an expenditure of much time and labor.