

proposed change in the tester the standard would be lowered about ten degrees.

A committee was appointed by the Sanitary Convention held at Lansing, March 19 and 20, to consider this subject. The committee consisted of Frank Wells (ex-President of the Michigan Pharmaceutical Association) chairman, H. D. Bartholomew, C.E., (ex-city engineer) and Professor David Howell, Superintendent Lansing city schools. April 2, this committee went before the Senate Committee on State Affairs, and gave a verbal account of the results of their investigation, which was, in brief, that the test ought not to be lowered; that the "Foster Cup" was unreliable and ought not to be substituted for the Michigan State Board of Health tester; that if substituted for the Michigan State Board of Health tester it was equivalent to lowering the test by about ten degrees.

By a vote of the Board this report concerning illuminating oils was ordered published, together with a resolution to the effect that there is not now sufficient evidence of the safety of such illuminating oils to warrant the lowering of the test now required for illuminating oils in this state. This resolution was adopted unanimously.

The Secretary read the report to this Board by SURGEON GEORGE M. STERNBERG, U.S. Army, now at Johns Hopkins University, on his

EXPERIMENTS ON LOWER ANIMALS IN FEEDING AND IN MAKING INJECTIONS OF CULTURE-FLUIDS OF POISONOUS CHEESE

with the view of learning the nature and source of the poison.

DR. VAUGHAN made a verbal report of his CHEMICAL EXPERIMENTS WITH POISONOUS CHEESE. He had certainly secured in a crystalline form a small quantity of one poison from poisonous cheese which would produce in man symptoms common to cheese poisoning. There might be other poisons in poisonous cheese. He had not yet fully studied the poison he had obtained. It gave reactions like those of a ptomaine. It was probable, he thought, that butyric acid had something to do with the sickness caused by cheese; there are different kinds of butyric acid, and the absence of the odor of rancid butter would not prove the absence of butyric acid.

The subject of

SANITARY SURVEYS OF PREMISES

in cities and villages was thoroughly discussed. It was thought best that the blanks used should be uniform, but that each city or village should provide its own blanks. The committee was directed to make a sample blank to be recommended for such work, and be sent with a resolution, which was adopted as follows:

Resolved, That the Michigan State Board of Health earnestly recommends to the boards of health of the cities and villages in Michigan that they make a sanitary survey of the territory under their jurisdiction, on blanks of which a sample

is sent herewith; and to adopt such measures as the sanitary surveys may prove to be necessary to place the cities and villages in a good sanitary condition.

Upon ballot for president of the Board for the ensuing term of two years, DR. JOHN AVERY, of Greenville, was reelected.

It was decided to demand from health officers of all villages

WEEKLY REPORTS OF SICKNESS

under their observation.

Under the law requiring the approval by this Board of text books on physiology and hygiene, and the effects of alcohol, etc., before they are used in the schools of the state, the Board approved the following-named book: "Elementary Physiology and Hygiene.—The Human Body and Its Health. A Text Book for Schools, Having Special Reference, Etc." By William Thayer Smith, M.D.

The following-named books were conditionally approved for use in the schools, with the qualification that they contained errors which should be corrected: "Practical Work in the School Room. Part I.—The Human Body." By Sarah F. Bucklelew and Margaret Lewis; "The Essentials of Anatomy, Physiology, and Hygiene. A Text Book for Schools and Academies." By Roger S. Tracy, M.D.

DR. VAUGHAN reported that he had attended the meeting of the State Dairymen's Association, at Grand Rapids, as a delegate of the Board, and talked to the meeting on the subject of cheese poisoning, especially in regard to his discovery of the poison.

DR. VAUGHAN also gave an account of the work of

THE COMMITTEE ON DISINFECTANTS

appointed by the American Public Health Association. He is a member of the committee and, as such, has done considerable work, and had attended a meeting of the committee in Baltimore. He thought the report of the committee, when published in full, would be a very valuable document in practical public health work. The preliminary report of the committee is just published.

DOMESTIC CORRESPONDENCE.

PLACEBOES AGAIN.

DR. MURDOCH'S REPLY TO THE AUTHOR OF
"THE PHYSICIAN HIMSELF."

D. W. Cathell, M.D., Author of "The Physician Himself":

DEAR DOCTOR,—Many thanks for your letter of April 2; its publication in the JOURNAL enables me to reply through the same channel, and also gives me an opportunity to speak of other matters contained in "The Physician Himself," wherein I differ with you.

I have so fully expressed myself upon the subject of placeboes in the address published in the JOURNAL of March 28th, that it is only necessary now to refer to the case of Willie Brown; and as this letter may be seen by some readers who did not see your letter, I here reproduce the history of his case as given by you, "*verbatim et literatim*": "I was recently called upon to treat Willie Brown, a stout twelve-year-old boy, one of whose companions had died of traumatic tetanus. The patient had become so overshadowed with a dread of that disease that he was abstracted from everything that formerly occupied him, had become wholly unable to study his lessons, had quit school and spent most of his time in thinking about his affection, and was in constant fear that he might get a scratch or wound, and—lockjaw.

"His family and friends had exhausted their arguments and assurances before I saw him, and I soon found that mine were equally unavailing, the patient continuing to weep and grow worse. Finally his father, an intelligent gentleman, suggested that I give him something or another that he would regard as a preventive of the disease. I presented to him thirty or forty of the very globules referred to in the criticism (mint water or anything else would have answered equally well), with instructions to swallow one at exactly 8 o'clock, morning and evening. His mind was at once relieved, and before all were taken, his thoughts had turned to other subjects."

Now, my dear doctor, of course you did not think that Willie would have traumatic tetanus, or any other form of tetanus. Your only object in giving the placebo was to quiet the apprehensions which he had, that he *might* receive a wound, and that if so, he *might* have traumatic tetanus. Now, it does seem to me that in a boy, twelve years old, of average intelligence, you might have been able to quiet his nervousness without resorting to this procedure. The only reason which I can conceive of for failure to convince him by words of the groundlessness of his apprehensions is the probability that you could not secure his confidence. The idea of giving him some medicine you say was first suggested by his father. I am inclined to think from this fact that the father had been in the habit, as many parents are for the purpose of accomplishing their ends, of practising little deceptions upon Willie ever since he had been a baby, and that Willie had at last found him out and withdrawn his confidence from the governor. Many parents are in the habit of deceiving their younger children in this manner: perhaps a nauseous dose of medicine is to be given, the parent will say, "Now, my dear, open your mouth and take this, *it is good, tastes nice*," and when the confiding child has opened its mouth, the villainous compound is poured therein.

Nor are these little tricks always confined to the parents. I have seen doctors, who when

about to lance an abscess, or boil, for a child, say, "Now, my child, I am not going to hurt you, just keep still, and *you will not feel it*," and when confidence was secured the sharp knife was thrust into the quivering flesh. I have watched the effect upon children who have been treated in this manner, and the pain and mortification of having been imposed upon by those in whom they have trusted was as evident as the physical suffering which they had endured. You can deceive children in this manner a good many times, but you have constantly to be devising new means of deception, and there comes a time at last when all confidence is withdrawn. Now, of course I do not know that Willie Brown was a boy upon whom such tricks had been played, but the giving to him of a sugar pill at just 8 A.M., and 8 P.M., for the purpose of warding off an attack of traumatic tetanus before he had received a scratch, was a step in this direction.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive."

I can but believe, that if you had been honest with this twelve-year-old boy, you would have been able to quiet his nervousness on account of his apprehensions in regard to the lockjaw. And that if you were not able to convince him that his fears were groundless, there must have been something the matter with his head which required more for its cure than a No. 35 homœopathic globule. If Willie is a sharp boy, he may soon get hold of a copy of "The Physician Himself"; and then you will need to resort to some other deception, or your occupation in the Brown family, at least so far as Willie is concerned, will be gone.

But enough of Willie Brown. I have other objections to the teaching contained in "The Physician Himself" than the fact that it advocates the use of the placebos. The spirit of its teaching is to give too great a prominence to appearances. The young physician is there taught how to *look*, and *act*, and *seem*, but he is not taught how to *be* a doctor. The *suaviter in modo* is everything; the *fortiter in re*, nothing. As one instance, let me quote from the book, page 19:

"Take care to be neat in your personal appearance; above all else wear a clean shirt and clean collar; for if you dress well people will employ you more readily, accord you more confidence, expect a larger bill, and pay you more willingly. You never heard of a bank swindler, or a confidence man, or a gambler, or a counterfeiter, or pseudo-gentleman of any kind, who dressed shabbily or appeared coarse. Such people are all students of human nature, and no matter how abandoned they are, no matter how tarnished their characters, or how blackened their hearts, they manage to hide their deformities as with a veil from all but the few who know their true characters, by assuming the dress and manners of gentlemen. Now, if genteel dress and polished manners can do so much for such fallen

specimens of mankind, how much greater influence must they exert for those who are truly gentlemen and members of a lofty profession. Clean hands, polished boots, neat cuffs, gloves, fashionable clothing, cane, sun umbrella, all indicate gentility."

Now it does seem to me that such teaching as this is rather calculated to belittle the medical profession than add dignity to it. I do not object to your telling the young doctor that he should always keep himself neat and clean (although he should know this before commencing the study of medicine), but I do object to the *reasons* which you give for his doing so. His reasons for so doing are not the same as are those of the bank swindler, the confidence man, the gambler, the counterfeiter, or the pseudo-gentleman; nor are they even because people will employ him more readily and pay a larger bill. Of all the reasons given, not one is the true one. The physician should dress like a gentleman, not because it will make him *look like* a gentleman, but because he *is* a gentleman. He should be neat and clean, not for the purpose of imposing upon anyone, but in order to preserve his own self-respect, and that he may not carry infectious germs from one patient to another. When the physician ceases to be a gentleman and becomes a loafer or swindler of any kind, let him dress the character which he takes:

One more objection to the teaching of your book, and I have done. On page 75 you say: "Do not lend yourself too freely to other physicians and surgeons; never make a habit of playing second fiddle by giving chloroform, etc., in surgical cases. If you go and do some secondary part in a surgical case you will be looked upon as a lesser light to the one you assist; and you will take a position of neither honor nor profit, and will reap nothing but responsibility." This, I contend, is not good advice. On the contrary, I think that the young physician who is the most ready and willing to assist his older professional brethren will be the most respected, and will reap the richest harvest in both honor and reward. How, I would ask, are the young men who are soon to take the places of their fathers to familiarize themselves with the more difficult obstetrical and surgical operations if they do not first learn to assist, and thereby see how the operation should be performed? The opportunities of witnessing the more difficult surgical operations upon the living subject are not so frequent that any young surgeon can afford to neglect them, if he desires to perfect himself in his art. He should esteem it an honor when called upon to assist an older practitioner. Scattered all over our land are excellent surgeons who only became competent to play *first* after they had played second fiddle.

There are other objections which I have to your book, but this letter is already too long. Whatever you may think of me for writing thus plainly, I hope you will give me the credit of having an honest purpose. Your book has had

a wide circulation, and has been strongly indorsed, and while there are some excellent suggestions in the book to young men just entering the profession, there are others, in my opinion, which give erroneous ideas of the profession, its duties and responsibilities. Some of these errors are so great that I cannot permit them to go unchallenged. Very truly yours,

J. B. MURDOCH, M.D.

Pittsburgh, Pa., April 16, 1885.

BOOK REVIEWS.

TRATADO DE OPERATORIA QUIRURGICA, por EL DOCTOR D. ANTONIO MORALES PEREZ, Catedrático de Número (por unanimidad de votos en la Oposicion) de Anatomia Quirúrgica, Operaciones, Apósitos y Vendajes de la Facultad de Medicina de Barcelona; ex-Alumno interno, por Oposicion, de la Facultad de Granada; ex-Primer Ayudante Médico, por oposicion, del Ejército de Cuba; etc., etc., etc. Con un Prologo del EXCMO. SR. D. JUAN CREUS Y MANSO, Senador del Reino; etc., etc. Ilustrado con numerosos grabados. Tom. 1 and 2. Pp. 751-755.

TREATISE ON OPERATIVE SURGERY, by D. ANTONIO MORALES PEREZ, M.D., etc., etc. With an introduction by D. JUAN CREUS Y MANSO, M.D., etc., etc. Illustrated with numerous engravings. Vols. 2. 8vo. BARCELONA. 1881.

The author introduces his work with a graceful review of surgery since the time of Ambrose Paré, and shows that, while engaged in the weightier matters of surgical theories and practice, he has not neglected the literary legacies of our predecessors. It is with no little pleasure that we notice Dr. Perez' work. Spain has not kept pace with other European countries in the tremendous strides toward exactitude in medical science, and we are glad to notice such evidence as this work gives that she is awakening to a sense of her duty to humanity. The author shows a most intimate acquaintance with the current surgical literature of the day, and few, if any, writers who have contributed anything to surgery of late years, are passed by in silence. He utters a plea for clinics, dissections of the cadaver, and surgical experiments, as being the only path to success in surgery. By these means only can we familiarize ourselves with operations, with surgical anatomy, and attain the mechanical skill which every operator should have.

Chapters I-XXV inclusive are devoted to a consideration of the general principles of surgery; the different anæsthetic agents, means of obtaining good results after operations, the various antiseptic agents, etc., etc. Surgical ischæmia and the different apparatuses for producing it, prominently Esmarch's bandage, are fully discussed. Though the author uses the bandage frequently, he is careful to state that it may be injurious under certain circumstances. He also