

accomplished by our Association, and desire to show our appreciation of the evidences of esteem and encouragement which have been extended, yet no thought is more gratifying to us than the conviction that, in years to come, we shall have been found to have added our full quota to the triumphs and achievements enjoyed by the medical profession of America.

ADDRESS OF WELCOME.

BY J. H. ELDRIDGE, M.D.,

OF EAST GREENWICH, R. I.,

The Oldest Member of the Rhode Island Medical Society.

Having reached that bad eminence—the oldest in fellowship of our State Society—an honor which I share with my friend Dr. Turner, who will address you this evening, the Chairman of our Committee of Arrangements has assigned to me the very pleasant duty of greeting you, gentlemen of the American Medical Association, and giving you a cordial welcome in behalf of the profession of Rhode Island on this, Fortieth Annual Meeting, which you have done us the honor to hold in this State.

It goes without saying, that this is a very small State in point of territory. The most extravagant diminutive can hardly convey an idea of its proportions to those of you who come from without the limits of the New England States. We must also admit that the soil in many parts is barren, rough and unfit for cultivation, and in an agricultural point of view worthless. Nearly half its surface of one thousand square miles is in its primitive state of forest or brush-wood; and another large portion is covered by the waters of the bay.

With all this, which we ourselves see and must of necessity admit, and which must be apparent to the casual visitor, we have much in which we take a laudable pride. What nature has denied to us in some ways she has been lavish of in others. We are proud of the illustrious founder of our State and the inheritance of civil and religious liberty which we have received from him. We are proud of our historic record from the first settlement of the State, through all the wars, down to the present time, and of the heroic names which are associated with us and which belong to us. We are proud of this lovely city by the sea, of which so much will be told you by the gentlemen associated with me. We are especially proud of our Bay with its numerous indentations, islands, and headlands sloping everywhere green and fresh to the water's edge. We value very highly the great extent of shore bordering our tide-waters, measured by hundreds of miles, upon which we, the present natives, taught by the aborigines, have learned to depend for our chief supply of food, never failing, all seasons alike, the delicious bivalve of every kind everywhere abounding.

No visitor is permitted to leave this State until he shall have tasted this healthful, delicious food prepared in the primitive Indian way.

This shore privilege, as it is called, is an important feature in our Bill of Rights. All below high-water is public property. If in your efforts to reach this public domain by the nearest route, you should commit a trespass by crossing some private grounds, you may be assured you will only be mulcted in nominal damages—if the trial is before a jury, especially a Kent County jury.

We take an especial pride in our institutions of learning. Our Brown University, our Free Public School system, our Free Public Libraries, in every town—recognized and partly supported by the State, and everywhere doing a good work—continuing and completing what the free school has begun. Nowhere can all this be seen in better condition, more successful operation, than in this good town of Newport.

In our industrial enterprises, to which we are indebted for our prosperity and wealth, our cotton mills, our foundries and machine shops, where you can see the natural fibre—wool or cotton—wrought into the finished fabric; where you can see the construction of the most powerful stationary or locomotive engines and machinery of every kind.

Notwithstanding the poverty of the soil and the rough, rocky surface which so generally prevails, we have some specimens of fancy farming and fancy breeding; and also planting of forest and fruit trees, which plainly show what we might have done if we had earlier turned our attention to these important matters.

All this, and more which I might speak of, is so convenient, so accessible by land or water on either side of the bay, that, in the *horæ subsecivæ*, from the more important affairs for which you are assembled here, you will find abundant opportunity to visit and examine for yourselves.

Among the original settlers and founders of this State were a goodly number of physicians, or surgeons, as they were then more commonly called. Dr. Turner will give you a very full historic sketch of the most prominent of these men in the Rhode Island settlement. Other men of the same stamp, maintaining the same position in the Providence plantations, were associated with them. The respect and consideration which these good men could claim, and which was everywhere granted to them, has been transmitted through many generations of worthy successors, until we of this day are enjoying the goodly fruits thereof.

You have then but to announce yourselves as physicians, as members of this convention, as visitors, delegates from other States or other countries, to find everything opened for your inspection, and to be received everywhere with a cordial welcome.