

Duke of Montagu, admitted in 1717, and the Duke of Richmond, in 1729.

An interesting report of an inquiry into the accuracy of chemists and druggists in the dispensing of medicines from physicians' prescriptions has recently been presented by Dr. Seaton. Within the past seven months Dr. Seaton has sent fifty prescriptions to various chemists and druggists and, in conjunction with Dr. Otto Hehner, has analyzed the medicines obtained. In order to carry out the inquiry in a broad spirit and without incurring any charge of splitting straws by cavilling at insignificant inaccuracies, the authors of the report drew the margin of error at 10 per cent. over or under the amount of the active drug prescribed in each case, and the deviations of wider mark than this have been singled out for comment. Out of fifty examples this limit was exceeded in seventeen—that is, in thirty-four per cent., while in eight of these cases, or sixteen per cent., the error exceeded twenty per cent. of the active ingredient prescribed. Some of these errors, except inasmuch as they implied a culpable carelessness, were medically of no great consequence, but some few were serious from a medical point of view. In one case pills were ordered, containing mercury and hyoscyamus. Owing to carelessness, the mercury was so unevenly distributed through the dozen pills ordered that some contained a third more mercury than they should have contained.* In another case where corrosive sublimate was ordered the mixture contained one-third more than the prescription ordered. In a third instance where sub-acetate of lead was prescribed the mixture contained nearly sixty per cent. in excess. Of sulphate of iron there was found a deficiency of eighty-five per cent.

It is gratifying, however, to learn on reading further that the credit of the ordinary chemist is less assailed than may at first appear from the foregoing statements. Of the total number of fifty prescriptions thirty were made up at the shops of chemists and druggists, and among these thirty cases there were only two of serious error. At "doctors' shops," not yet obsolete rivals of legitimate pharmacy, two medicines were made up, one of which showed one of the gross errors already referred to. At the co-operative stores fourteen medicines were made up, which included three cases of serious error. Four prescriptions were submitted to a "drug company," and of these no less than three were inaccurately dealt with to the extent of more than twenty per cent. It would appear, therefore, that the public are safer in going to the shop of the ordinary qualified and registered chemist than in taking their prescriptions to the "doctor's shop" or to the co-operative store.

Professor V. Horsley has delivered an address on the "Brain Surgery of the Stone Age." Professor Horsley mentioned the fact that many of these apertures were in the part of the skull over the motor area, and thought that the operations were chiefly for traumatic epilepsy.

G. O. M.

DOMESTIC CORRESPONDENCE

BRANCHES OF THE ASSOCIATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL:

Dear Sir:—I have carefully read the letters which have followed the appearance of "Branch's" communication, and am rather surprised at the position which some of your correspondents have taken.

In his last letter (*JOURNAL* of March 6) "Branch" states that his object is "to increase the influence of the Association, and organize the profession;" while he distinctly deprecates any idea of abolishing existing institutions. The only point on which I am not clear is where he says that "a very large amount of red-tape would be taken away from the requirements for admission to the Association when respectable and reputable physicians desire to enter;" the object to be attained is organization, and the results which inevitably follow where that is successful.

I am in perfect accord with your correspondent when he writes: "If anyone can propose a plan which will be more acceptable to the majority than the Branch system, I will certainly not raise my voice against it; but I do not see that a plan is *necessarily* bad because it is imported from Europe." No scheme can attain the end in view that does not provide for an executive meeting when required; to which business and legal matters can be entrusted. There are other objects for the American Medical Association than the mere advancement of science; but so long as that body only exists practically at an annual session, these objects must remain in abeyance. Dr. Hamilton considers that all we desire would be gained by admitting the members of affiliated State Societies; while Dr. Baxter advocates a regulation whereby members of the regular profession can join the Association without presenting themselves in person for election. These suggestions are embodied in the amendment permitting membership by application, which has been in existence for nearly two years; yet the number of applicants during that period is hardly what might have been expected. This would seem to show that some incentive is needed, and that the real advantages and benefits of membership in the National Association should be brought home to the profession.

"State Society" deals indirectly with the question of finance when suggesting a method by which the transactions of existing Societies, if incorporated, could be published in *THE JOURNAL*. I cannot agree with him that the stricter application of the doctrine of "survival of the fittest" will, in the long run, be beneficial. It would damage *THE JOURNAL* to print many of the papers found in the annual volumes of transactions of our State Societies; yet I think that the publication of these very papers is most desirable. Their production involves considerable time and labor on the part of the writer, who is usually not facile; and it is but slight encouragement to better work if they are consigned to the waste-paper basket.

The whole question of finance is the great obstacle to encounter, and the most difficult problem to

settle. I do not advocate the abolition of existing institutions, though I should be sorry to maintain them if a more effective scheme of organization can be found. The position of a State Society under the contemplated change, if that Society became a "Branch," would remain precisely as at present, except that every member would pay \$5 annually to the treasurer of the Association; all their rights and privileges could be preserved, and their autonomy would be then, as now, complete. In any change which is contemplated, the same system of local representation would exist; and the profession in a given district would be *de facto* responsible for the ethical conduct and good standing of the members drawn from it. I cannot see how any of the "crooks and charlatans," whom Dr. Keller fears, would have any better chance of admission; while the salutary influence of the Association over them would be materially increased. "Illinois," whose letter contains very cogent figures, says "red-tape is thus reduced to a minimum, and yet there is no more probability of a bad man getting in than into one of our State Societies." This applies to the British Medical Association, and would be just as true of the American, if contemplated changes were carried out. A qualification for membership would still exist, and could be so arranged as to make some members personally responsible for the applicant. "Illinois" very properly deprecates what he terms the "holier than thou" sentiment. There are, in every community, physicians whose tendency to wander from the paths of ethical regularity, is unfortunate and marked. When these men are outside the pale of any medical organization, they are free; but once on the roll, it becomes possible to train and discipline them; and the punishment of formal expulsion for obstinate contumacy cannot be lightly regarded. I would always favor the largest possible membership for a Society in its district, believing that the best interests of the profession are thus more readily furthered.

An "Active Member" is the first correspondent who has formulated a definite scheme, and one which presents many excellent points.

The Triennial Congress is a good suggestion, and disposes of the inevitable clashing which would result between annual meetings of Branches and the National Association. Some plan on that basis would be most feasible, but further sub-division might be advantageous, especially in the more densely populated Eastern States. I do not concur with his suggestion No. 5, as I believe that once organized a Branch should have control of its own members, and their election; and that the qualification should be membership in a local Society.

"Medicus" lays down two purposes "to be aimed at" in any change which is to be made:

1. To so increase the numerical strength of the Association, as to make it, by virtue of its representative power, "the supreme authority upon all questions bearing upon the interests of medicine; and the professional and social deportment of its members."

2. "The advancement of medical science, and the collateral branches; and the elevation of the medical profession."

Both these purposes are to be kept in view, but the first is far more important. What the profession wants is thorough organization, and a permanent representative executive body.

Medical science is advanced in a general way by annual reunions, at which the rank and file of the profession are brought face to face with the great minds of the day; but save as an intelligent audience, it does not individually benefit them. Take the list of members at a State Society meeting, where one or two hundred are present; and see how few have papers to read, or cases to report, or will join in the discussions. The true source of medical cultivation is in the local society, which meets once or twice a month; when every member participates in the evening's proceedings, without that hesitancy which prevents many coming forward in the larger assemblies. Papers are read, cases reported, and criticism invited, while opinions are freely expressed, in a manner impossible except under these conditions. They promote harmony and good fellowship amongst the profession, maintaining its dignity, and defining its position, by following Art. VII of the Code. Nothing can supplant them, and any scheme which may be proposed will be strengthened by their incorporation as an integral part. Among the functions which the National Association performs, are those where matters of general professional interest are concerned; examples of which are well shown in an editorial in *THE JOURNAL* for March 6.

The profession wants representation, so systematized that when questions of vital moment and great public interest are involved it can meet the State or Federal Government, as an authoritative exponent of the wishes and opinions of its constituents. I believe that this purpose can in no way be so well served as by the establishment of Branches of the American Medical Association; and I think that the ends of medical science and medical policy will be best aided if these Branches are numerous, established in arbitrary districts, formed with due regard to the numerical strength of the profession in a given area, and meeting frequently, say three or four times a year.

Yours truly,

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Sacramento, Cal.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL:

Dear Sir:—I have been much interested in the letter published in *THE JOURNAL* of Feb 6, and signed "Branch," relative to the establishment of a more intimate relation between the various State Societies and the American Medical Association. The plan which "Branch" has so admirably and clearly presented in his letter is almost identical with one which I have for some time carried in my mind, and which, but for the unfortunate state of confusion and dissatisfaction now existing in the profession, I would have ventured to lay before the readers of *THE JOURNAL* some time ago. To me, and I dare say to many others, the adoption of a plan by which the State Societies may become more closely affiliated with the National Association seems to be the best, and I was about to say, the only way of bringing the profession