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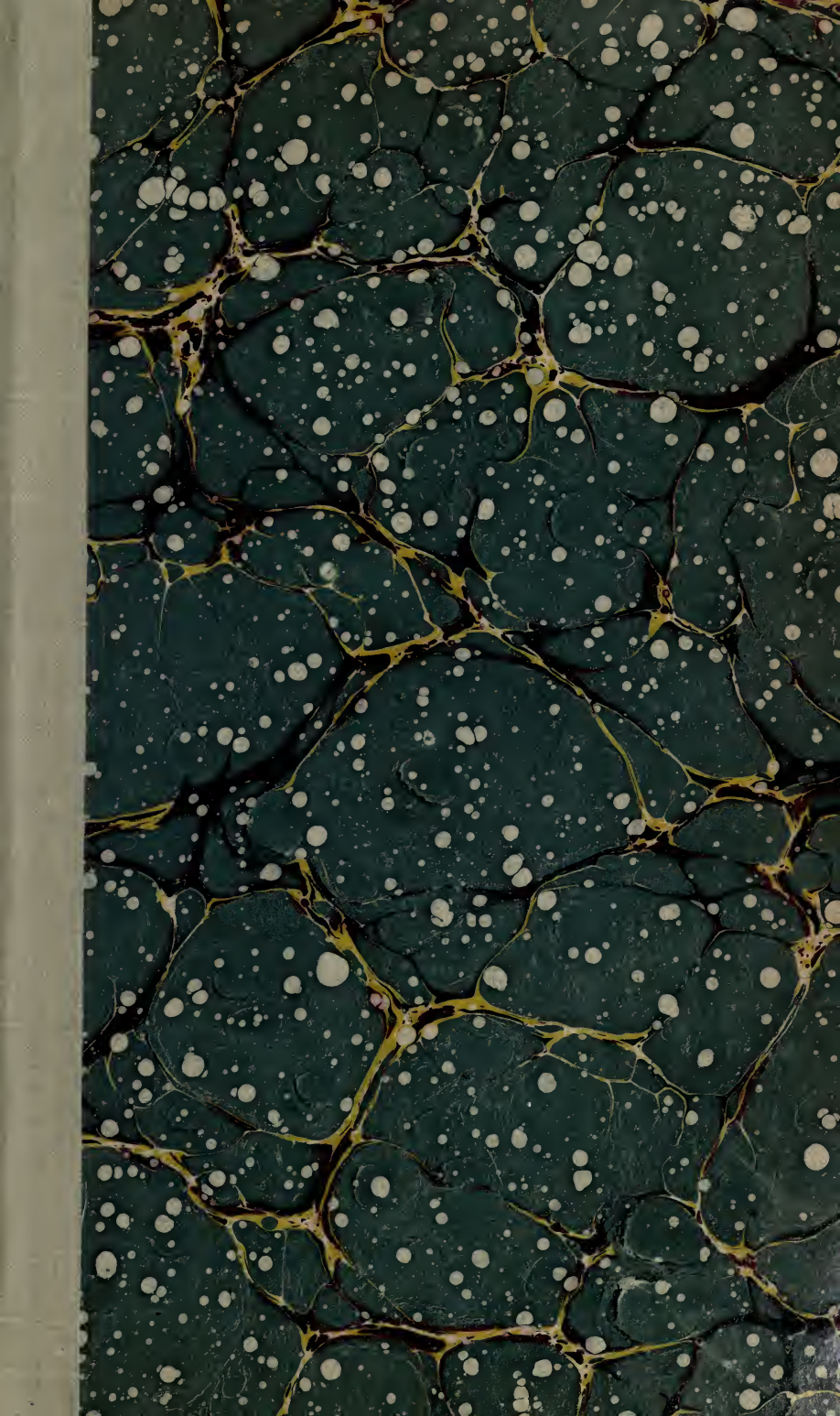
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Report of the Committee to Investigate the Comparative Value of the First Degree in our American Colleges.

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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE
COMPARATIVE VALUE OF THE FIRST
DEGREE IN OUR AMERICAN
COLLEGES.¹

SECOND REPORT—THE PRESENT REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND
SOME SCHOLASTIC IRREGULARITIES GROWING THEREFROM.

Your committee planned to prepare a single preliminary report that would enable it to formulate a fair standard for the educational value of the course leading to the first degree, as a proper preparation for entering on the study of medicine. This report was presented to you at Chicago last November, but it falls short of its purpose. The subject is more complex than it appeared at the first, and there are other questions which must be considered before any standard can be defined.

Thus, any scheme suggested must be workable; it must adjust itself to the existing order. Consequently, a precise statement of the existing conditions dominating the educational order preparing a physician must be formulated. Your committee does not know any better method to place this before you than to quote extensively from an article in the January, 1906, Bulletin of the University College of Medicine of Richmond, Va., prepared by Dr. William R. Miller, the Proctor. The whole article is worthy of careful reading.

Every state in the Union has legislated to a greater or less extent for the regulation of the practice of medicine. That every doctor in the United States has, therefore, a more or less direct personal interest in the character of some of these regulations is quite evident to the most casual observer, but that the direct personal interest of any one doctor necessarily extends beyond the confines of his own state will not be so readily recognized without further reflection and investigation.

Let us proceed, therefore, to a consideration of this phase of the subject by taking up for comparison the medical practice acts of a few of the states and observing how some of the regulations are of such a character as to operate quite powerfully, not alone on their own citizens, but on those of every other state. But while doing this let us bear in mind the one potent fact that *doctors do not, nor will they ever, invariably locate for practice in their native*

¹ Presented to the American Academy of Medicine, Boston, June 2, 1906.

state. * * * * * Let us remember, then that these provisions apply to all comers from whatever state, and that no young man who aspires to be a doctor can ever be absolutely certain in what part of the United States conditions of opportunity or health may finally lead him to locate.

The Laws.

1. Texas provides for an examination in certain specified branches of medicine.

2. Virginia provides for examination of all applicants who shall produce diplomas from some medical college chartered by the state or territory in which the same is situated.

3. Pennsylvania provides for examination of applicants presenting satisfactory proof of possession of a competent common school education and of a diploma from some legally incorporated medical college of the United States.

4. Illinois provides for proof of graduation from a "Medical college or institution in good standing as may be determined by the Board."

* * * * *

5. Michigan provides for examination of applicants having a diploma "from a legally incorporated, regularly established and reputable college of medicine within the states, territories, districts and provinces of the United States * * * * * having at least four years' course of seven months in each calendar year, as shall be approved and designated by the Board of Registration in Medicine: provided that such applicant shall have, previous to the beginning of his course in medicine, a diploma from a recognized and reputable high school, academy, college or university having a classical course or shall pass an examination equivalent at least to the minimum standard of preliminary education adopted and published by the board."

* * * * *

From the laws of these five states one can obtain a fair view of the development of the idea that the state should exercise police supervision over the practice of medicine and we can by comparison, also, see how the laws of one state may operate almost exclusively within its own borders, while those of another state may, and actually do, so operate as directly to effect citizens of every other state.

[After showing that the medical student must fit himself for the greater requirements or he cannot be recognized as a practiser everywhere in the country, he continues:]

Every medical student in every state, whether cognizant or ignorant of these laws, is therefore required by them to make his choice, whether he will tie himself down to a limited field [by only complying with the lesser requirements of his own state] or be free [by taking a course to meet any requirement.]

Each medical college in every state is obliged, with a full knowledge of the circumstances before it, to choose its course, whether it will require more of its students and thus render them free, or require less and thus bind them fast.

All other schools will also be affected, from the primary up, because sooner or later they will be called upon to decide whether or not their courses shall be so shaped as to qualify such of their students as desire to enter upon the study of medicine under these regulations at the proper time.

From this it will be seen that the *act of a single legislature on this subject may have almost as far-reaching authority as an act of congress* would have and that every member of the medical profession may be and, in fact the candidates for membership in it are directly and personally concerned in every step taken for the regulation of the practice of medicine anywhere, whether by legislature or State board.

* * * * *

It is a fact that this movement for an educated medical profession *has been recognized by legislation of some character in every state* and we have seen that a *kind of uniformity as to its extent* has been determined practically for *all the states* by the far-reaching legislation of a *few states*.

This latter fact has not been generally accepted, however, and there is great confusion in consequence. The interests involved are great and the leaders of the movement are now struggling with the problem of how to secure a recognized uniformity through some source which will command confidence in its wisdom and fairness, and thus meet with universal acceptance and cooperation.

* * * * *

Americans are sure to resent legislation that is forced upon them by those who are not their own chosen representatives and it is true that many who would be in sympathy with advanced regulations as to education of doctors if enacted by some legislative body to which they acknowledge allegiance or if brought about by some influential voluntary association whose motives they understand, now regard the far-reaching legislation of some states with little enthusiasm if not with actual resentment.

This undesirable and unphilosophical condition has arisen, in part at least, from the predominance of the commercial idea in guiding the educational system of our land. During a period in the history of our country when there was an inflation of values and the speculative spirit ruled, physicians became infected and made use of the same methods in organizing and conducting medical schools. It must be recognized that there have been medical schools organized for purely commercial ends; that in some of these, those methods of the shop and the market characterized as shrewd, have been employed. Then other schools have fought fire with fire until the stamp of the college—the diploma—was looked upon with suspicion and the boards of examiners set about to force men to be honest and honorable by law. The result is

the present inelastic and unphilosophic scheme as made manifest by Dr. Miller.

It would not be fair to place all the blame for the low standard of medical education on the conditions just stated. Indeed these are but contributing causes. The trend of educational methods opened the way to permit these causes to be operative. Some one has said that the insufficient endowment of our schools and colleges has been a blessing, for it compelled them to keep in touch with the people and to furnish such instruction as the people demanded. Whether a blessing or not, the statement accurately describes the force impelling much of our modern educational methods.

Your committee does not deem itself competent to pass judgment upon these methods and will produce expert testimony. Prof. Frank H. Wood, in an address on the "Problem of Commercialism in the Church," before the Auburn Theological Seminary,¹ says:

There are two points of view from which one can regard the modern movement toward the elective system of education. So far as the movement towards elective means appealing to the human spirit, it is good. But so far as the elective system is based upon pure utilitarian motives, it is vicious. Incidentally, the commercial value of the so-called commercial subjects has been entirely overestimated. The spirit that would direct the young to education for commercial purposes, has brought this commercialism into our lives. The fathers are at fault, the boys must study something in practical use.

This thought of *practical* has narrowed the curriculum for medical studies and must be guarded against in any suggestion of coordinating the college with professional studies.

Prof. Hugo Munsterberg, of Harvard, well says in his suggestive volume on "American Traits," "No amount of information can be substituted for training."² In the long race, those who enter our profession trained will outstrip those who, possessing greater information, have not the training, and this thought must be always uppermost. We are tempted to quote more at length from another chapter in the same volume (p. 58ff.). After speaking of the elective system as the result of two tendencies, 1. "The desire to adjust the school work to the final purposes of the indi-

¹ Auburn Seminary Record, March 10, 1906.

² Page 91.

vidual in practical life, which means beginning professional preparation in that period which up to this time has been given over to liberal education." And 2. "The desire to adjust the school work to the innate talents and likings of the individual," and, commenting on these tendencies, he continues:

Neither tendency stands alone in our social life. In short the one fits the mercenary spirit of our times, and the other fits its spirit of selfish enjoyment. From the standpoint of social philosophy, mercenary utilitarianism and selfish materialism belong together; everywhere do they grow together and everywhere do they fight together against the spirit of idealism. * * *

The argument which urges the earliest possible beginning of specialization is thus a natural one, and the conviction that the struggle for existence must become more difficult with the growing complexity of modern life may encourage the view that the remedy lies in professional training at the expense of all other education. * * * But even if I shape my school according to such schemes, do I really reach, after all, the goal at which I am aiming? Does not the utilitarian spirit deceive itself? And even if we do not acknowledge any other standpoint than the mercenary one, is not the calculation very superficial? The laborer in the mill may be put, sometimes, by the cruelty of the age of steam, in a place where his personality as a whole is crippled, and only one small function is in use; but the higher the profession, the more nearly is the whole man working in every act, and the more, therefore, is a broad general education necessary to practical efficiency. The biologists tell us that the play of animals is a biologically necessary preparation for the struggle of existence, and that in a parallel way, the playing of the child is the wise scheme of nature to prepare man in some respects for the struggle of life. How infinitely more necessary for the battles of manhood, though seemingly of no practical use than such play, is the well-planned liberal education!

The higher the level on which the professional specializing begins, the more effective it is. * * * Moreover, we are not only professional wage-earners; we live for our friends and our nation; we face social and political, moral and religious problems; we are in contact with nature and science, with art and literature; we shape our town and our time; and the experience is common to every one, to the banker and the manufacturer, to the minister and the teacher, to the lawyer and the physician. The technique of our profession, then, appears only as a small variation of the large background of work in which we all share; and if the education must be adapted to our later life, all these problems demand a uniform education for the members of the same social community. The division of labor lies on the outside. We are specialists in our handiwork, but our heartwork is uniform, and the demand for individualized education emphasizes the small differences in our tasks and ignores the great similarities.

It would not be difficult to add similar opinions from others

whose point of view is that of the educator, but this must suffice as it enables us to formulate our propositions.

In the discussions of the proper preparation for the practice of medicine; the necessities of the preliminary education should be separated entirely from the requirements of the technical preparation.

Note the distinction is emphasized as to the discussion of the subject. Nature's classification seldom divides by a geometrical line; there is a blending at the edges, and in practice, the sharp delimitation may not be possible. In the discussion, however, unless the distinction is made absolute, a confusion of ideas is apt to result.

Again, and of equal importance:

A liberal education depends more upon the way in which a subject is taught than upon the subject itself.

It is possible to permit a wise selection, and give some freedom of choice in choosing subjects to be used for mental development. The choice depends more upon the mind of the instructor than the desires of the pupil. But the knowledge of facts incidentally acquired in the culture course may directly assist in the subsequent professional study.

It must be kept in mind also, that under proper conditions and with a skilled teacher, the technical presentation of professional subjects may, incidentally, contribute to mental development. Consequently, development can be continued by the technical studies. *But this can be done only at the expense of the proper presentation of the technical study.* The student suffers fully as much by the use of technical studies for development, as he does by using development studies presented from the technical point of view. This does not mean that a knowledge of facts may not be acquired during that educational period devoted to mental development which will be practically useful in the subsequent period of applied instruction; nor that the mind will cease developing after the preparatory educational processes have ceased. But here, as elsewhere, that which is properly prepared is capable of the most perfect end product.

The curriculum of our medical colleges to-day, with a very few exceptions, require elementary chemistry, biology and physics in the first year. There is no use to discuss whether this is desira-

ble: it is a fact that we cannot alter. As a consequence it is not necessary to insist upon a study of these subjects in the preliminary course. It may be just as well to make use of other subjects to broaden the student's horizon and to give him a greater adaptability among men.

If these propositions are true, and we think they are demonstrable, then the universities in our land, and by universities we mean those large institutions of learning which have one or more professional departments in addition to the college department and the post-graduate work in the same studies taught in that department. We think that these universities should be the guardians of the American educational system, and be careful to maintain the line of demarkation in its academic distinctions. The plan adopted by a number of institutions, which permits the academic student in his senior year to elect the studies of the medical department and receive his bachelor degree after completing a year of his medical studies, is an infraction on this general principle which appears to have been devised under the pressure of expediency. The plan devised by some other universities of two years' medical preparatory study in the academic department, then a bodily transfer to the medical department and the granting an A. B. degree in the middle of that course, seems also to be unwise from a scholastic standpoint. It is granted that a youth with two years' college training is better fitted to study medicine than with none at all and this effort is commendable. The proverb—to call a spade a spade—has respectable antiquity, for it is attributed to Aristophanes. It does not seem to have been followed in this granting a degree in arts for two years' college work plus an indefinite and indeterminate quantity, while other students are required by the same college to give four years' work for the same degree. The standard of value seems to be ill defined and represents a condition that would not be tolerated among honorable business men in affairs of commerce.

Your committee recognizes the necessity of limiting the time in education of a physician and is of the opinion that the courses should be so arranged as to consume less time than at present, certainly for bright students. It admits that the question is a difficult one but believes the problem can be solved if it be care-

fully formulated and presented to expert educators, and that the proper solution will be free from the defects indicated in the plans now in vogue.

We also recognize that the rights of the college, with no university affiliation, should be considered. Not that these institutions should stand in the way of progress, but their place in the history of our land; their present position of usefulness to the country; their value to thousands who need their training and can receive it in no other way; these and other conditions demand a careful study of all that effects their prosperity in the study of any general educational plan. In this connection we quote with approval from President Eliot's last report:

An important aspect of this matter [the possession of a preliminary degree in arts or science by students in the law or medical departments of universities] is the fact that the strongest support any university can give to the preliminary degrees in arts and science—its own or those of other institutions—is the requirement of such a degree for admission to its professional schools. There would be no question about the future maintenance of that peculiarly American educational institution called a college, if the universities of the country would require an A.B. or an S.B. for admission to all their professional schools.

These are some of the conditions in our educational world today and some of the evils. We do not care to attempt a solution; that must come from expert educators. We suggest, should this report meet your approval, that you order it to be sent to a number of educators with a request for opinions and suggestions and that a report be drafted upon the replies and presented to you at the earliest opportunity.

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