CHAPTER XXII.

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

JACOB H. GALLINGER.[1]

The first settlers of Concord were more concerned about their spiritual than about their physical welfare, and no physician accompanied them to what was then a frontier settlement. For about fourteen years the community was without a family doctor. Such ailments as afflicted the settlers—and their hardy out-of-door life made them few—and such accidents as occurred, were treated with the simple remedies of the fireside. If there was consultation it was with the neighbors, who bestowed kindly sympathy if they could not suggest a medicine to give relief from pain or stay the waste of disease. In those early days the practice of obstetrics was wholly in the hands of women; and it was not until the beginning of the present century that it became a regular branch of the medical profession. In this community, as in others, some experienced woman attended at child-birth, and acted as nurse and doctor when illness came upon the family; and her ministrations and advice were the neighborly acts of kindness which the settlers freely gave to one another.

There is a tradition that the first physician on the soil of Concord was a Dr. Henry Rolfe, who came here in the summer or autumn of 1726 and spent the winter with one David Uran in a block-house built by them on the spot where Captain Benjamin Emery afterward resided. Bouton, in his history, refers to Henry Rolfe and Richard Uran as spending the winter here and suffering from the cold and want of suitable provisions, and that they were relieved by friendly Indians. It is supposed that he returned to Massachusetts in the spring, and there is no evidence that he ever came back. The same tradition reports him to have been the father of Benjamin Rolfe, who took so conspicuous a part among the first settlers.

Dr. Ezra Carter, the elder, was the first physician to settle in Concord. He came here from Salisbury, Mass., where he studied medicine with Dr. Ordway, and he was at that time about twenty-one years of age. Concord then had a population of about two hundred and fifty inhabitants, and as there were settlements in Bow and Canterbury it is quite likely his practice extended to these towns. Like

[1] I am indebted to James O. Lyford for the gathering of data for this article. J. H. G.

other physicians of the early settlements of New England he combined farming with the practice of medicine, and shared with the pioneers the hardships and deprivations of their isolated life. A summons to the sick-room found him cultivating the fields, planting or harvesting his crops, gathering from the adjacent forest his firewood, collecting the indigenous plants of the neighborhood, from which, with the productions of his botanical garden, he compounded many of his medicines. Every physician of those days was his own pharmacist, and his botanical garden was as much a part of his equipment as the drugs he brought from the centers of trade in the colonies. The late Dr. A. H. Crosby of Concord, in speaking of the environments which surrounded the physician of the eighteenth century in the frontier settlements, says that "many of the indigenous plants were very easily gathered, and were so carefully prepared that not even the extracts, tinctures, and elixirs of the same plants from the hands of the manufacturing pharmacists equaled them in therapeutic effect." Even as late as the time of Dr. Peter Renton, who came to Concord in 1822 and remained here until 1845, the botanical garden was a part of the country doctor's outfit.

Dr. Carter made his trips to patients on horseback where this was possible; and if called to an outside settlement, he was compelled to pick his way on foot through the woods by means of spotted trees. He became early identified with the public affairs of Concord, and served frequently as moderator, town clerk, and selectman. He was made a justice of the peace, and in this capacity settled many of the differences and disputes of his fellow-townsmen. In his character as a peace-maker he was quite as distinguished as in his profession. Whether from this cause, or that the title of justice of the peace was considered to outrank that of doctor, the old-fashioned gravestone which marks his grave in the North cemetery has his name engraved thereon:

"EZRA CARTER, ESQ."

He was universally beloved for his kindliness of manner and charitable disposition. His ready wit and genial disposition made him a welcome visitor in the sick-room, and he gave practical demonstration of that concise definition of the healing art once given by a medical student, "The act of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease." Like his contemporaries in other frontier settlements, he did a trade and barter business with his patients, taking pay for his services in beef, pork, homespun cloth, farm implements and an exchange of labor, for the early settlers had but little money. Yet he seems to have accumulated some property, and about the time of his decease, having in mind the trials and hardships of the settlers, filled out

receipts for all poor persons indebted to him, and gave directions in his will that they should be given to those concerned, immediately after his death. He died September 17, 1767, at the age of forty-eight, having been in practice here twenty-seven years. During that time Concord had tripled in population, an enumeration ordered by the general assembly the year of his death showing seven hundred and fifty-two inhabitants.

Whether Dr. Carter had any contemporaries in practice here during the latter part of his life is not clear. A Dr. Emery is mentioned as being in Concord, and he is classed in chronological order in the New Hampshire Repository after Dr. Carter. The only known facts about him are that he was in Concord for a short time, and removed to Fryeburg, Me., where he died.

The immediate successor of Dr. Carter was Dr. Philip Carrigain or McCarrigan. He was the son of an English physician who settled in New York, where Philip was born. The son was taken in his youth to Haverhill, Mass., where he studied medicine with Dr. Brickett. He came to Concord in 1768, and is said to have possessed extraordinary skill and decision in the management of cases confided to his care, and to have risen to eminence in his profession. He was distinguished as a surgeon; but surgery in those days was very far from being the exact science it is at present. It was long before the time of anesthetics and improved instruments, the ordinary saw of the carpenter and any sharp knife being quite a complement of tools for amputation. One of Dr. Carrigain's successful cases is related by Dr. Bouton as showing his decision, good judgment, the fertility of his resources, and the crude methods of the times. Richard Potter, while logging in Loudon several miles from home, had his leg severely crushed between a log and a standing tree. Several doctors were sent for, and the majority of this council decided that amputation was useless as Potter was sure to die. Dr. Carrigain dissented from the opinion of his colleagues, and after the others had left, cut the leg off at the knee. Finding the saw he had brought with him rather dull, he sent a quarter of a mile to the nearest house for a sharper one, and with this finished the operation. The bone was left bare and smooth, and in order to make the skin heal over the stump Dr. Carrigain ordered New England rum heated and poured slowly over the wound while he picked and roughened the bone with an awl. Mr. Potter, fortunately, was insensible during the operation, but he recovered and lived nearly half a century, dying at the ripe old age of eighty-four. At another time Dr. Carrigain amputated a finger at the scene of accident with a mallet and chisel, and then dressed the wounded hand.

The early town was remarkably free from epidemic diseases, but was twice visited by smallpox in the last century, the first time in 1775, and again in 1793. But there were only three fatal cases as the result of both visitations. During the Revolutionary War the smallpox frequently appeared in various sections of the country. This was probably owing to the free communication with Canada, where the disease prevailed, and to the intercourse of the people with the army, where it was quite common. In some instances it was supposed to have been brought into the country at the instigation of the British.

The next physician to settle in Concord was Dr. Ebenezer H. Goss, who came here in 1769, or 1770, and married a daughter of Reverend Timothy Walker. He held a commission as surgeon under General Stark for a brief period during the Revolutionary War; but because of a disagreement between him and his commander in relation to the management of smallpox cases, he resigned and returned to Concord. He continued a resident of Concord as late as 1785, but sometime thereafter removed to Maine, where he died at an advanced age.

A contemporary of Dr. Carrigain and Dr. Goss was Dr. Peter Green, whose practice here covered a period of fifty-six years. He was born in Lancaster, Mass., October 1, 1745, graduated at Harvard college, and began medical practice in the place of his birth. He came to Concord in 1772, and lived and died in a house directly opposite the present city hall, on the site of the residence of Henry Robinson. He was both physician and nurse in critical cases, preferring to administer his medicines with his own hand. All too frequently his services were solely labors of love, for he was both moderate in his charges and neglectful of their collection. It is said of him that notwithstanding the custom of the time of multiplying doses and of administering a great variety of medicines, his practice was distinguished for the simplicity of his remedies.

The close of the century witnessed but three additions to the medical profession of Concord, but the stay of these was only temporary. Dr. Richard Hazeltine was examined by the New Hampshire Medical society for license to practice, and his certificate bears date March 6, 1794. He opened an office in his father's house, and his advertisement is found in the *Courier* of November 8, 1794, from which it appears that in the intervening time he was in the employ of Dr. Carrigain, with whom he studied. Nothing further of him is known.

Dr. Samuel Adams, a native of Lincoln, Mass., came here about 1796. He removed from here to Wiscasset, Me., and thence to Boston, where he had a reputable practice for a number of years, and finally to Cincinnati, where he died.

Two years later Dr. G. Gridley settled in Concord and married the daughter of David George. After residing here a few years he removed to Newburyport, Mass., and afterwards to Candor, N. Y. Dr. Gridley was celebrated while here for his successful treatment, by means of the "Gridley plaster," of the indolent ulcer on the lower extremities then commonly known as "sore legs," which proved in his day so vexatious to the medical profession.

The first twenty-five years of the nineteenth century witnessed the coming of several physicians whose reputation was more than local, and who contributed by their skill and learning to the advancement of the profession. Dr. Zadoc Howe was in Concord from about 1802 to 1814, and afterwards settled in Billerica, Mass. He was succeeded by Dr. Thomas Chadbourne, who married a daughter of Dr. Peter Green; Dr. Moses Long settled in the East village in 1813, and remained in Concord until 1824; Dr. Peter Renton, a Scotchman by birth, settled in Concord in 1822, and removed to Boston in 1843 or 1844; Dr. Samuel Morril, the brother of Governor David L. Morril, came here in 1819, remained for a number of years, and held many offices; Dr. Richard Russell was here three years prior to 1824, and afterwards practised in Wakefield and Somersworth, in which latter place he died; Dr. Elijah Colby practised in the East village from 1823 to 1838, and Dr. Ezra Carter, the younger, a distant relative though not a direct descendant of Dr. Ezra Carter, the first physician of Concord. He came to Concord in 1825, and with the exception of two years spent in Loudon practised at the capital until his death. Dr. Josiah Crosby was here from 1825 to 1828, when he removed to Manchester.

Concord early in this century became the permanent meeting place of the New Hampshire Medical society, which was incorporated by the legislature in 1791. The history of this society would make a volume by itself of most interesting and racy reading; and with its growth and work many physicians of the capital have been identified. The story of its early struggles for existence is almost pathetic reading, so little was its object understood by the public and its advantages even by members themselves. The attendance for many years was small, the arrearage of dues large, while the disciplining of its members for non-payment of dues, non-attendance, and unprofessional conduct was undertaken with fear and trembling. Yet the medical profession of the state to-day owes more than it can tell to the valiant few who held together under most discouraging circumstances, meeting year after year at great inconvenience to themselves, and laboring for the advance of knowledge among themselves and for the extirpation of the charlatan and the quack.

Drs. Green and Carrigain, while not charter members of the society, were voted into that organization at its first regular meeting, and to the mission of the society both were devotedly attached. Its formation antedated the establishment of Dartmouth Medical school. At that time very few of the physicians of the country had the advantages of training at a medical school, for such institutions were few in number. The medical student passed no examination for admission to practice. He usually apprenticed himself to some doctor of the neighborhood, residing at home during the first two years of his studies, going to recite to his tutor once a week or once a month, as was most convenient. During the third year he rode with his preceptor to observe his practice and to further qualify himself for his profession. If he made his lodging with the doctor, he took care of the doctor's horse, ran his errands, did the chores of the family, assisted in compounding medicines, answered the night bell, and at social functions in the doctor's family stood at the door and announced the guests. He studied according to his inclination, and, at the end of the prescribed time, established himself in some town as a physician and surgeon. "He was indeed fortunate," says the late Dr. A. H. Crosby, "if he was not ordered to move on by the selectmen;" for in those days the town fathers were empowered to warn any improvident individual out of town, if they had reason to fear that he was likely to become a town charge. One of the first medical students examined by the society was Dr. Hazeltine of Concord, referred to earlier in this chapter.

At that time very few physicians had libraries, and one of the objects of the New Hampshire Medical society was the accumulation of a library whose books could be loaned to its members. The difficulties encountered in raising funds to purchase books were only exceeded by the struggles afterward made to keep track of them. The early records of the New Hampshire Medical society are largely taken up with discussions and votes to secure attendance of members, the return of books borrowed, the payment of delinquent fees, and to prevent the organization from lapsing through indifference. Dr. Peter Green, who never exacted a fee of a patient when it would occasion the least embarrassment, and who would attend a case of obstetrics six miles from home for the munificent fee of fifty cents, was frequently up for discipline for the non-payment of dues. Once the society voted to take in payment of his delinquent dues such books of his library as were not duplicates of its own, and with a self-sacrifice worthy of the highest tribute this philanthropic physician parted willingly with the best of his treasures, obtained originally by depriving himself of the comforts of life, that the society might be maintained.

In 1827 Dr. Thomas Chadbourne and Dr. Josiah Crosby, both of Concord, resigned from the society because members were not living up to the by-laws in reference to consultations with unlicensed practitioners, of whom two were reported in Concord, one in Hopkinton, one in Deerfield, one in Chichester, and two in Pembroke. The resignations were not accepted, but were the subject of debate at several annual meetings. In 1830 Dr. Chadbourne returned to active membership in the society.

Temperance was a topic of frequent consideration at the meetings of the society. As early as 1823 the treasurer was authorized to pay all bills connected with the meetings of the society except those for "spirits and provender." In 1824 the following resolutions were adopted:

Resolved, That the practice of depositing medicines in stores, taverns, and grog-shops, with directions to the common people for their use, is not only pernicious to the health and morals of society, but derogatory to the character and reputation of the physicians.

Resolved, That we disapprove the encouragement held out to the public through the medium of pompous advertisements that the daily use of bitters is conducive to health; and we consider the facility with which Stoughton's Elix. Spec. Bitters, etc., may be procured at country stores one of the most direct means of inducing habits of intemperance (the bane of society) of any within our knowledge.

To prove its faith by its works, the society by vote held its meetings at a temperance hotel at the capital, and complimented the proprietor of the Phenix, Mr. Dole, for the "noble stand he has taken in favor of temperance in banishing all kinds of intoxicating liquors from his house."

In 1848, seven years before the first prohibitory statute of New Hampshire was passed, the New Hampshire Medical society adopted this resolution:

Resolved, That this Society regards the evils which result from the use of alcoholic drink as an occasional or habitual beverage as a sufficient cause for the passage of laws that shall operate as a prohibition to their sale except for medicinal, mechanical, and chemical purposes.

An attempt was made in 1819 to establish a medical school at Concord. The projector of this enterprise was Dr. Alexander Ramsey of Fryeburg, Me., who from 1808 to 1823 delivered lectures on anatomy and physiology at the capital and other towns of New Hampshire. He brought with him an anatomical museum, and upon being made an honorary member of the New Hampshire Medical society presented it with some of his anatomical works and plates.

He had the reputation of being a man of ability and learning, but some of the notices of himself and his work which he caused to be published indicate an erratic mind. There was published by Hill & Moore, in 1819, an address and anatomical prospectus by Alexander Ramsey, M. D., in which he claims to have founded the "notions of physiology, medicine, and surgery on dissected facts" at the College of Edinburgh, his native city. In 1802 he sailed for America. He says that at various periods of his life he was invited to fill the anatomical chairs of New York, Dartmouth, and Brunswick Medical colleges. He outlined a course of study to be pursued under his instruction at Concord, and to be completed in Boston. He intimated that the laws of New Hampshire had something to do with the completion of his lectures in Boston. This address was prepared at Richard Bradley's in Concord, and bears date of November 30, 1819. This was, however, incidental or preparatory to his main object, the establishment of a medical school at Concord.[1] He so impressed himself upon contemporaneous physicians that serious consideration was given to his proposition. He first broached the project of a medical school to the New Hampshire Medical society, and a committee was chosen to take into consideration his proposal, and to invite members of the legislature to listen to his lecture. The legislature was expected to aid the enterprise with an appropriation. The committee and the legislature listened to the doctor, but nothing came of the hearing. As the society met only once a year, the doctor submitted his proposition to the Center District Medical society, also a Concord institution. A committee was appointed to attend the doctor's lecture and report. The committee reported in favor of the doctor's plan as highly conducive to the advancement of medical science in Concord, and recommended that the district society suggest to the general society the propriety of petitioning the legislature to incorporate the New Hampshire Medical society, or a part of it, into a college of physicians and surgeons, with power to confer degrees. The report was signed by Drs. Job Wilson, Samuel Morril, Moses Long, Thomas Chadbourne, and Josiah Whittridge, most of whom were, or became, physicians of Concord. The New Hampshire Medical society took no further action, and nothing came of the project. At the annual meeting in 1820, on the suggestion of Dr. R. D. Mussey, a professor of the Dartmouth Medical school, visitors from the society were elected to attend the examinations of the medical students at Hanover, and report their observations to the society. It is not improbable that the faculty of the Dartmouth Medical school became alarmed at the prospect of a rival school at

[1] Address of Dr. George Cook.

Concord, and sought thus to defeat it by identifying the New Hampshire Medical society with the medical school at Hanover. Dr. Ramsey became discouraged and removed to Parsonsfield, Me., where he died in 1824. Had a medical school been established at the capital, it is quite probable that its proximity to the legislature would have secured for it state aid, and that ultimately the one at Hanover would have been united with it. The legislature has once within its existence voted an appropriation of five thousand dollars to the Dartmouth Medical school, largely through the influence of Concord physicians.

Although no chartered medical school was established in Concord, the custom of taking medical students into the family or office of physicians continued here until long past the middle of the century. Dr. Peter Renton, who during his sojourn in Concord was regarded as a skilful physician, usually had one or more students connected with his office. His contemporaries in Concord were more or less favored in this respect, for the necessity of exact training was not then felt to be as important as now. In 1836 Dr. Timothy Haynes, who had settled in Concord, informed his friends and medical brethren that he "had opened anatomical rooms on Main street, where he would devote a large share of his time in demonstrating anatomy to students, and making anatomical preparations for his museum." He invited all of his friends, the profession, farmers, and others anxious to promote the science of medicine, "to procure specimens of natural history, curiosities, deformed animals of all kinds, and forward them to him, or give information by letter; all favors of this kind will be gratefully received, acknowledged, and reasonably compensated." The next year he acknowledged in the newspapers the receipt of valuable specimens, and says that about one hundred had been procured,—some of them not inferior to any in New England. In the same advertisement he announced that surgical operations will occur before his class, and that "advice to the indigent is without charge." As late as 1844 Dr. Haynes advertised that he "continues to give instruction in anatomy and surgery in the brick block on Main street," and he gives a list of the operations that have been witnessed in the past three months.

In 1845, Drs. Chadbourne and Buck announced their "anatomical dissertations," and that their rooms will be open November 1st, and materials furnished for any number of students during the winter; "daily examinations and demonstrations will be given."

Late in the same year Dr. Charles P. Gage advertised that he had made arrangements for giving instruction in various branches of medical science to medical students, and that he had abundant mate-

rial for the scalpel. Advertising for students seems to have been discontinued about this time, although, as before remarked, the practice of admitting students to doctors' offices continued here until a much later date.

If Concord did not secure a medical school, it was not without notoriety in the attempt made to make it the headquarters of a system of medical treatment which for a quarter of a century flourished with varying success in all parts of the country, and which in its various ramifications and outgrowths led to some radical changes in the old school of medical practice. This was known as the Thomsonian system, and its author and patentee was Samuel Thomson, who was born in Alstead, N. H., February 9, 1769. As a boy he resided in a sparsely settled district, a distance of several miles from the nearest country doctor, and the neighbors were largely dependent in case of illness upon the ministrations of some kind "Mother in Israel," who treated them with roots and herbs. Thomson early became interested in watching these women as they were called to his own family and those of the nearest neighbors and, when quite a young man, took up doctoring, as other young men of his day and later picked up trades without serving any apprenticeship. He was led to take a particular interest in the wild plants he found growing in the fields and pastures, lobelia inflata, a species of tobacco plant, being the chief remedy in his pharmacopœia. This he used as an emetic. He also experimented with steam baths, and had a preparation of hot drops for internal application for the cure of colds, the reduction of fevers, etc. After several years of practice confined to his own neighborhood, he became a traveling doctor and visited other parts of New Hampshire and localities in Vermont, Maine, and Massachusetts. In 1813 he obtained a patent for his system of practice which secured him the exclusive right to use certain medical preparations. He published a pamphlet giving an account of the principles and practice of his system, with directions for using his medicines. These, with the right to use the preparations according to his direction, he sold for twenty dollars a right. Every family purchasing one of these rights could from that time forward forever dispense with the services of a physician. "Fevers, rheumatism, pleurisy, consumption, cancers, and broken bones were all to yield to this new method,"[1] and the patient was to be made whole again. Thomson's name became a household word, and many disciples sought his instruction.

Among these was one Benjamin Thompson, a native of Andover, this state. He came to Concord in 1834, but does not appear to have

[1] Address of Dr. A. H. Crosby before N. H. Medical society.

been related to Samuel Thomson, for the spelling of the surname was different. Where he became acquainted with his preceptor, or how long he served with him to observe his practice, if he did at all, are not known; but in 1832, having established an infirmary in Boston, he advertised it in the *New Hampshire Patriot*. Two years later his coming to Concord was heralded by a column advertisement in the same paper introduced by the following:

Salus populi est suprema lex.

To the whole of the United States in general and to the worthy and independent citizens of New Hampshire in particular, in the name of common sense, Amen.

The advertisement best tells the story of his bombastic advent, and from it the following excerpts are taken:

Deplorable and highly reprehensible ignorance, joined to proverbial laziness and heartless peculation, are the known crying sins of the regular medical faculty. Regular indeed may they well be called, for they regularly either kill with the lancet or poison with mercury more than one half of their unfortunate dupes. . . . Many important letters from regular poison doctors craving most humbly to become partners of Dr. Benjamin Thompson will be exhibited to the good citizens of Concord. Dr. Thompson is well aware that the medical hornets will immediately leave their holes to swarm about the banner of Thompsonianism. This banner, however, will be found hornet proof, calomel proof, and M. D. proof. . . . A favor he will value taken from their hands is that some one deputed by the medical society of New Hampshire meet a Thompsonian in public debate in Concord on the several claims of mineral poisons and botany. Should the New Hampshire faculty back out, as Dr. Thompson is much afraid they will, on the ground that their nominee cannot meet any other than a regularly graduated physician, he begs leave to address words of consolation to that nominee thus: "Fret not thy gizzard."

Thompson purchased the house and adjoining grounds, now occupied by Benjamin A. Kimball, and established there a Thompsonian infirmary. This house was built in 1825 by Sampson Bullard,—the keystone disclosed by alterations since made giving the date of its erection. It has since been greatly enlarged and changed. It was used as a residence and business office by Mr. Thompson, and was connected with other buildings built by him by a bridge which formed an arch over the driveway leading into the grounds.

Mr. Thompson appears to have met with immediate success. His infirmary was well patronized, and before a year he was obliged to enlarge his establishment. In September, 1835, the *New Hampshire Patriot* contained a prospectus of the Concord Botanic Infirmary, as it was then designated. From all that can be learned the description