BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS THE LATE PROF. HENRY BRONSON, M. D.

By Dr. Stephen G. Hubbard—Read Before the New Haven Colony Historical Society, by Invitation by the Society, May 27, 1895.

The life and character of him in whose memory we are now assembled have peculiar claims to honorable mention by the wise and good in this community; and particularly among his associates in this society, of which he was one of the corporate members. He was known as a quiet, unobtrusive gentleman of high character and distinguished attainments—as a man of few words, but of direct and honest thought—and as an advocate of whatever he regarded as abstract truth.

He came to us in the full development of his intellectual faculties, at a time when he impressed all with whom he came in contact as a man of rare powers of observation—of broad and liberal views of public affairs—as a close and logical reasoner and a lover of equity. Touching this community and the state at so many points as he did, and leaving upon every side the impress of a noble character, the beneficial but unconscious influence of which still remains an active living force. I can but feel, Mr. President, that in accepting your invitating I have assumed a difficult but honorable and most pleasing duty in attempting to speak fittingly here of his great wisdom and of his many virtues.

Only words of discriminating eulogy will be appropriate to express my estimate of such a character.

HENRY BRONSON

was born in Waterbury on the 30th of June, 1804. He died in this city of the accumulated infirmities of age on the 26th of November, 1892. Like most of the boys of New England of that day, his early youth was spent in assisting his father in the cares of the farm, and in acquiring such an education as was afforded him in the common district school of the town, supplemented by tuition at the Hopkins Grammar school in this city. With these slender opportunities of acquiring knowledge he developed a remarkable love for letters, which continued through a long life, and caused him during the earlier years of his pupilage to expend for books all of his available resources.

At the age of seventeen or eighteen years, a period when most farmers' sons, unable to endure the rigorous climate and the severity of discipline administered to them, after which so few lived to be quoted as examples of the "survival of the fittest," he began to shrink in form, and to deteriorate in physical vigor. His health, never strong, became delicate, and the occupations of the farm grew more and more distasteful to him; so that, when the time came that he must choose for himself a calling for life, he fully realized that the ancestral acres had for him no charms.

His father, Bennet Bronson, Yale 1797, was a lawyer by profession in Waterbury, and was for many years a judge of the county court; he was also a large landed proprietor and a man of wealth and influence. Judge Bronson had already sent two sons to Yale college, both of whom died young, and it was the desire of his heart that this son would remain at home and take charge of the estate.

But the intellectual life of the son, so far from being satisfied in its demands by the attractions of a pastoral existence, longed for the mental stimulus and growth to be gained by professional study; and it was only after a critical analysis of his own powers, and a careful balancing of the arguments for and against his natural preference that he finally adopted for his ultimate pursuit the profession of medicine.

Well knowing his father's long-cherished hopes and desires that his son would become so much attached to country life that he would adopt agriculture as a profession,—and knowing also his father's natural intolerance of opposition to his wishes—and owing to his own native modesty and retiring disposition, being averse to meeting his father with a personal assertion of his own preferences in opposition to the settled plan of his family, he found himself in a most difficult and unpleasant position.

Under these circumstances he adopted the only course that seemed open to him, and it proved to be a wise one. He addressed to his father a long and dispassionate letter, opening to him his very heart; and offering for his consideration such weighty arguments and cogent reasons why it was the most desirable thing possible for him to study a profession instead of becoming a fixture upon the farm, that the father at once coincided in opinion with his son; and henceforth every facility for study which the times afforded was placed within his reach. From this day onward the entire current of the boy's thought was deepened, broadened, strengthened and refined by a definite aim in the work of his life.

The choice of a profession marks an epoch of the gravest importance in the career of any young man. It becomes insensibly to himself a point of departure as well as of convergence, of all the lines that enter into his future history, while hidden indications of native genius, warmed by the promethean fire, are silently assuming form and proportions which are eventually to illustrate and adorn his intellectual life. Thus it was that, in an hour the entire course of our friend's life was radically changed and intensified.

A judicious line of procedure was decided and followed, and in 1824 he entered himself as a student in the medical department of Yale college, under the instruction of such eminent men as Benjamin Silliman, Nathan Smith and Ives—these three gentlemen constituting at that date the entire faculty of medicine, by whom he was duly graduated with the class of 1827 as a doctor of medicine.

Doctor Bronson's first settlement as a candidate for professional employment was in West Springfield, Massachusetts, where he acquired considerable reputation, and in 1831 married Sarah Giles, daughter of Hon. Samuel Lathrop, a wealthy resident of that town, a lawyer and a member of congress. Her mother daughter of Mr. Lathrop married Rev. William B. Sprague, D. D., in 1815, one of the resident clergymen of Albany, N. Y., and a famous preacher of the day. It was probably this family connection that induced young Bronson to remove to Albany, where he was early invited to become a partner with Aldent March, M. D., then and until his death professor of surgery in the Albany Medical college, and the most celebrated surgeon in that portion of the state.

After his removal to Albany Dr. Bronson occupied his leisure hours by writing for the periodical press, articles upon a variety of topics more or less scientific in their nature, but written in a manner clearly indicating the versatility of his talents; while every production of his pen attracted marked attention and was regarded by the public as an earnest of the good things that might be expected from him.

As an illustration of his style of composition and method of reasoning at this early period of his career, and to show how these were admired by some of the best men of the profession outside of his native state, I append some notices by the medical press and extracts from letters by persons unknown to him. Dr. C. C. Yates, at that time an eminent physician of New York, thus addresses him in October, 1832: "I believe that I am indebted to your politeness for a philosophic essay on Medical Logic—(or as the writer of the letter has it, on "reasoning in medicine."

This paper I have read with much attention and improvement. Indeed, sir, I confess myself much interested in its perusal, and consequently I tender to you my acknowledgements. If that justice were rendered to your production, which in my estimation it deserves, it would place its author far above his compeers. I admired the language and the spirit of your late letters on the Cholera, although differing from me in some practical views, but I was not prepared to see so able a display of logical and argumentative powers as it manifested in this essay by one so young, and of necessity so inexperienced a candidate for medical fame.

I see in you the medical philosopher, but the unpopular practitioner—"Startle not at my prediction!

It is your creditable independence of mind, of thought and of expression that will probably subject you to the mortification of being excelled by the mean, the sycophantic and the ignorant in the acquisition of patients.

Nothing but some fortunate turn of circumstances, or an extensive family connection will enable a person of your standing to cope with folly and licensed quackery. Your paper has been literally used up. I have lent it until it has become dilapidated and obscurated. It is illegible. I wish you would oblige me by information where I can procure more copies. I want to send them both to England and France. I received from Boston your paper on disinfecting agents, and have transmitted it to the board of health of Savannah as part of my reply to a letter addressed to me by that body, asking for the best information to guard against and treat the cholera, should it appear among them."

*Our highest authority in the medical journalism of that day reviewed the pamphlet in terms of high commendation, and thus quoted freely from its pages: "We have been favorde by Dr. Henry Bronson, of Albany, with a small brochure on Medical Logic, of which we presume he is the author. It is an able production marked by sound reasoning, and is evidently the offspring of a cultivated mind. It should be as widely circulated as possible, being calculated to lead the public to a surer appreciation of medical science, and a more discriminating judgment of professional capacity.

The following extract will exhibit the object of the writer: "The conclusion," says the doctor, "to which we would bring our remarks is this. The only safety for the public on this momentous subject is to confine the practice of physic to men of truly enlightened and philosophic minds. But this can never be accomplished until the public at large are made more strongly to feel the multiplied and peculiar difficulties attendant on medical inquiries.

It is from enlightened public opinion alone that we can hope for the removal of what is an enormous evil in this country—the intrusion—(the admission) —of ignorant men of weak and unprincipled minds into the medical profession. Public opinion ought to check the facility with which degrees and licences to practice are granted in some of our medical institutions."

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*American Journal of Medical Sciences, May, 1832, p. 270.

How often are men taken from the plough or the anvil with only the bare rudiments of an English education, and in two or three years turned out upon society as the constituted guardians of the public health.

Such men in most cases could not sustain themselves for an hour either in the profession of divinity or of law. Their utter incapacity for philosophical investigation would be manifest to all; but, shielded by the mysteries of a profession which the public eye cannot penetrate, they, too, gain wealth and influence by the grossest quackery and imposition. If our remarks in this article, he says in conclusion, shall lead any of our readers to appreciate more highly the amount of mental discipline which ought to be demanded in medical practitioners, our labors will be amply repaid.

These pungent but truthful lines were written more than sixty years ago, in a spirit of righteous indignation over the existence of a monstrous evil which, even in that early time overshadowed all the colleges of New England, and threatened to become inherent in our entire system of medical education; nor has this danger wholly ceased, nor is it confined to medical colleges alone. I need not add that I refer to the great facility with which collegiate honors are acquired.

The descriptive force of his language was true then, and it is true to-day in numerous instances, but not universally; yet history repeats itself so often that these peculiar crimes against civilization, committed as they have been, without causing even a blush of shame, or much less the impeachment of the offenders, can neither be forgotten or forgiven.

So long as politicians are able to worm themselves into respectable and honest college faculties, and to carry with them the political caucus system, with all which that implies, such things will be repeated; and it ought not to be a matter for surprise, but for alarm, if men without any medical education or training have been able to purchase outright for silver coin, diplomas issued as the euphonious ritual still has it, "pro autoritate mihi commissa," by medical colleges claiming to be respectable—while recent events seem to demonstrate that others less scrupulous, bestow diplomas for considerations, that will not bear inspection, and for reasons far less honorable to themselves, but more injurious to the public, because they lead the public mind to form a lower estimate of the honor and ability of the profession at large than it deserves.

Dr. Bronson held for many years these opinions, based upon facts that had come within his own knowledge; and he was accustomed to say that "Men die, but institutions live! Men die and their histories may die with them. Institutions live! and their records never die, but, good or bad, they live forever!"

Thus, in the earliest periods of his professional life, as well as on all suitable occasions later, he earnestly contended for the prevalence of honest methods of admission to the ranks of the profession, and urged that examinations for degrees should be of such a character, and so conducted, that a diploma in medicine would pass current everywhere as a safe public guarantee that its possessor had been well instructed, and was reasonably well qualified to take into his hands "the care of the public health."

The year 1832 was distinguished by the most disastrous historical event that has characterized any of the years of this century, with the exception of the years of our civil war; for it was in the early summer of that year that our continent was first visited by Asiatic cholera.

The pestilence was brought to our shores from Dublin by an emigrant ship arriving at Quebec, having lost on the passage some forty persons by the disease. The survivors made their way to Montreal. As rapidly as the tidings could be spread by the fleeing people, the disease itself was carried along all lines of communication, until in every habitation, from the palaces of the rich to the hovels of the poor, the angel of death had set his seal.

At Albany, such was the confidence felt by her citizens in Dr. Bronson's peculiar qualifications for the investigation of abstruse questions in medical science, and such was the impression he had made upon that critical community, as a man of distinguished ability, that he was commissioned by several prominent gentlemen, at whose head was the mayor, and directed to proceed to Montreal, and other points in Canada infected with the pestilence, and availing himself of every opportunity to study the natural history of the disease—its modes of propagation—its treatment in the north, together with its results, and to report to the committee also, such hygienic measures as he would recommend as reliable preventives.

Inspired by a profound sense of his moral obligations to God, and to his fellow-men, he promptly accepted this call to duty; and bidding farewell to his young wife, and to all he held dear, he took his life in his hand and hastened to the death-stricken city that he might gather there new knowledge of an unknown and deadly pestilence for the benefit of his race.

I quote of the Montreal papers of the day of his arrival there, "that the brig Carricks, Hudson, master, arrived at Quebec from Dublin on the 9th, having lost during her voyage forty-two persons of a mysterious disease which after due investigation had been pronounced to be Asiatic cholera"—and the disease is now officially reported as existing in Quebec, where fifteen cases were reported on the 9th, and several deaths.

Dr. Bronson's first letter announcing his arrival was short, and was dated Montreal, June 21st,—he says, "I have now only time to say that I arrived here this morning. Such a scene of desolation as this city exhibits I never witnessed. Business is entirely suspended; the stores are closed and the streets deserted. Although this is a holyday with the Catholics, scarcely a human face is to be seen abroad.

The mortality in Montreal by the present disease is unexampled even in the history of the epidemic cholera. The number of cases officially reported is about 3,000, and the number of deaths at about 800."—"Many of the physicians, owing to sickness and excessive overwork, did not report at all on some of the most fatal days. Besides a great many have died whom no physician ever saw. The disease is now evidently declining. But few cases have occurred within the last twelve hours.

"Within the last forty-eight hours, however, a much greater proportion of those attacked have been of the higher orders and those of temperate and regular habits. Some very valuable lives were lost last night * * * * * I am now about to visit the emigrants' hospital where numbers lie ill of the worst form of the epidemic." This short letter will afford some idea of the actual conditions in such a crowded city as Montreal under the invasion of universal pestilence. During the prevalence of the epidemic and its progress through our continent, the important fact was observed that the inmates of prisons in this country and in Europe, who were absolutely cut off from contact with the outside world, were entirely exempt from the disease.

I was myself old enough to remember the fact that so fully was the condition of isolation accepted as the only preventive means possible against the cholera infection that in many instances men of the highest intelligence stood on guard over their domains, prepared to fire upon all intruders; while placards and watch dogs served as additional defences. But in their own families no deviation from the accustomed rules of diet, including the use of fresh fruits and vegetables from their own gardens, was permitted. For those who lived sensibly no change in diet or regimen was advised.

The skeptical mind of our philosophic friend refused to receive as facts, the unsupported statements of the crowd of observers who pressed forward, each with his bundle of facts, offering to prove that Asiatic cholera was not a contagious disease, but was only a flux common in the summer months, but void of all danger if checked in its early stage by some anodyne astringent nostrum. But another array of real facts, presented by so competent an observer as Dr. Bronson, brushed away this defective reasoning based upon false facts, and brought the profession and the people face to face with the all important truth that cholera was from the first moment a definite disease—sui generis—and not merely a diarrhea, which, if neglected, might become cholera—it was communicable—and therefore a contagious and infective disease, that was conveyed along the lines of public travel by persons and their baggage—was attended by strange symptoms never before seen, and terminated fatally and peculiarly in a few hours. I need not here go further into his statement of facts and reasoning before the Albany committee; but he improves the opportunity to disabuse the professional and public mind of the prevalent delusion that the chlorides of lime and soda are in any sense disinfectants—though they may be in some degree useful in dissipating foul smelling odors. We know, however, that they have no effect to mitigate the dangers of disease.

In September, 1832, Dr. Bronson published in the "Boston Medical and Surgical Journal," a very remarkable article "On the Chlorides and Chlorine as 'Disinfecting Agents' and as Preventives of Cholera", too long to use in this place. But it should be reprinted in a widely circulating journal.

I have room only for the following extract from a letter from Dr. Usher Parsons of Providence, to a gentleman in Boston. The letter was designed to show the inefficiency of the 'disinfectants,' and states that, "The sloop Hero sailed from New York on the 17th of July (1832,) with thirty passengers on board, and was quarantined at Newport eight days from her time of leaving that city. On the day of landing the passengers, four of them were immediately attacked with Asiatic cholera, and died in a few hours.

This vessel had five tons of best Scotch chloride of lime on board, shipped on the 14th of said month; any cask of which, the owner informs me, would give out through the staves sufficient gas to saturate the atmosphere of the vessel as effectually as would be done if the floors and decks were sprinkled with powder. Yet, with thirty such casks between her decks, this happens to be the only vessel out of the great number arriving with passengers from New York that has brought any person infected with the disease!" This statement, Dr. Bronson continues, must, methinks, prove of difficult digestion to the advocates of 'preventives.' It contains an argument which may serve any purpose but their's. It seems to prove that chlorine is not the specific, after all—that science is not always triumphant. It reveals a fact which may be justly regarded as an outrage on rational chemistry.

I do not forget, Mr. President, that I am not addressing a strictly professional audience; nor do I cease to remember with pleasure, that the people of culture who are accustomed to assemble in these halls are always interested in whatever pertains to scientific knowledge, particularly such as relates to discoveries in medical science, or concerns our bodily health, or the personality of those whose lives have been devoted to the work of ministering to the health of others.

I may assume, therefore, that in the endeavor to set before you some of the great qualities of our distinguished friend, neither the events of his professional life in their historical relations to the physical welfare of the world, nor some allusions to the obscure medical theories of the past could well be omitted.

Dr. Bronson loved with all the force of his moral nature the profession of his choice, and while standing ever ready to break a lance in its defense against the assaults of presuming ignorance, or the unblushing chicanery of the crafty, he was ever ready to instruct the one and enlighten or expose the other. He had a remarkable insight into the hidden mysteries of nature, which to many others was a sealed book, and beyond their comprehension. He had also very definite ideas as to the limitations of science and art in the treatment and cure of diseases. He was eminently successful in tracing out the hidden causes of disease, and in palliating their painful or disturbing effects, but I should add moreover, that he was accustomed to say that he did not know that he had ever cured anybody.

While he had an intelligent faith in the powers of a few medicinal agents to relieve the sympathetic disturbances of functions, caused by organic disease or other agencies, he had, in common with all the other great physicians of history, little or no rational faith in the power of drugs to cure disease. Freely admitting that recoveries from disease occurred under almost all forms of treatment in proportions somewhat similar, he could not, with all his candor, be an advocate of any exclusive system of treatment.

It had been said of him that on one occasion he received from a relative an urgent letter asking for advice in the case of a child sick with measles, and whose case, it was feared, the attending physician did not understand, because he was giving the patient a great variety of medicines at short intervals, and the child was becoming rapidly worse. Without stopping to discuss the merits of this or that pathy, for which he cared nothing, he took a large sheet of paper and wrote in the middle of the great page this prescription:

Take a white china cup
with nothing in it;
Turn the handle toward the
northwest, and give a
teaspoonful every hour.
The little patient will soon be well.

This was a plain illustration of a great truth contained in the aphorism seldom heard in those days, that "the majority of diseases are self limited—they come and tarry, and disappear according to natural law—if nobody interferes."

Let us pause for a moment and ask ourselves the question, what would be the condition of the human race to-day, if the rise and progress of diseases were not regulated by law, and what would doubtless happen to the world if every man were to become a law unto himself, and could, at will, turn the dial backward for two or three thousand years—before medical science was born—to the time when ignorance and tradition were almost the only guides. I very well remember the dawning of the brilliant light which followed that dark age, when men, entirely ignorant of the universal law that the majority of diseases are self limited, persisted year after year, for successive generations, in their willful, because unthinking blindness in compelling the defenseless sick to swallow a great variety of nauseous drugs, too often fatal in themselves, while they scrupulously denied to their patients the use of nature's great remedies, a cup of cold water and a morsel of bread. It would be interesting to describe to you, did the occasion permit, an hour's debate in which Dr. Bronson held the fixed attention of his audience, in his discussion of the question, "What have been the operation and the controlling influences of natural law, in the history and development of the human race?" During his remarks he spoke solemnly of the responsibility of those men, weak, well-meaning, but industriously ignorant, who closed their minds to the truth of scientific observation, and refused to welcome the light that was pervading the world. But the question reaches a magnitude and importance entirely too great for this occasion, though it affords us a glimpse of the natural scope and grasp of his cultivated mind.

The Albany letters of Dr. Bronson, of which I now present you with only the first one of the series of six, were immediately given to the press, and were copied by all newspapers on this continent, and in foreign lands. They constituted the earliest and most complete dissertation on the nature and treatment of Asiatic cholera then in existence, and written as it were, at the bedside, they furnished a graphic account of the unchecked march of the pestilence across the continent, studied and recorded under the careful observation of a most competent investigator. His views of the pathology and proper treatment of cholera were everywhere approved and adopted; and they gave direction to medical practice throughout the world, and in after years they were modified by the great advances made in therapeutic knowledge.

Unconsciously to himself, as I believe, the secondary, but more transient effect of these letters was to cause the name of Henry Bronson to become familiarly known to medical men wherever the pestilence gathered its victims; and if these events had occurred in the present generation, and if he had so chosen, he certainly would have received, as he would have merited, the highest civic and professional honors that could properly have been conferred upon him.

With his strong individuality, and his great force of character, and with his exceptionally high qualifications for maintaining an independent professional standing, it would only have been natural if he had soon tired of the secondary position he was then occupying.

However that may have been, it was not long after his return from Canada, and making his final report to the honorable committee that had sent him abroad, before we find him, at the urgent solicitations of his father, and of the leading citizens of his native town, returned to Waterbury. Here he easily held the foremost rank as a medical man of rare attainments, as he doubtless would have done anywhere, and began at once a country practice, large from the first, which rapidly became extended over a very wide field, and soon was counted as by far the largest in Connecticut, and probably in New England.

During the closing days of that year, 1832, Dr. Bronson was waited upon by a commission of medical gentlemen from Philadelphia, offering to him the flattering proposal to become president of the leading medical college there. The proposition was entertained and discussed. But after a conference of the most free and confidential nature, it was mutually concluded that the only apparent obstacle to his prompt acceptance of the invitation was his youth. He had only then completed his twenty-eighth year.

In the beginning of the year 1833 we find our young friend engrossed with the ardous labors of a country doctor, ambitious to perform to the fullest extent every duty that could properly be required of him.

His long rides on horseback, over the hill country of northern and western Connecticut, and over the line into Massachusetts, and up and down the Housatonic valley, in the intense heats of summer, and the severity of the winter's cold, were at first invigorating to his constitutional health.

But after a few years of such hard and unremitting discipline, to which were added the peculiar anxieties and wearisome details common to such a life, his health began to show signs of failure; and it was with reason feared by his friends and himself that, like his two brothers, one of whom was a physician, he was in great danger of falling a victim to that fell disease which annually has claimed as its own the most promising youth of New England. And we feel obliged to add to the influence of his incessant labors, and constant exposures to great extremes of temperature, the general impairment of his health and the weakening of the powers of resistance against disease, caused by his experience at Montreal, from which probably he never entirely recovered.

In the autumn of 1839 it became evident to himself and his friends that he would be compelled temporarily to relinquish his practice and seek recuperation in a milder climate. He left New York in November by a small sailing vessel bound for the Mediterranean, and after a long and uncomfortable voyage was landed in Genoa, very much improved in health. Spending the most trying months of the winter in Rome and Naples, visiting more than once such places of interest as Pompeii and Herculaneum ,he made the ascent of Vesuvius, going up to the very rim of the crater. His daily journal, kept for the pleasure of his family, is exceedingly full and interesting in its connected record of the usual series of incidental experiences met with by tourists, and indicates that he left behind him in Italy nothing unvisited worthy of recorded notice. Taking passage by steamer at Civita Vechia, he visited and critically explored Marseilles and Lyons, and passing slowly by diligence across France to Paris, he found himself in more congenial surroundings. Here he began again his pedestrian excursions, visiting and describing all the most noted churches, monuments and localities in Paris, especially those of historic interest. He visited here, as afterward in London, the hospitals and medical colleges and heard lecture some of the most celebrated medical men in each of these capital cities—visiting also libraries, museums and picture galleries and theaters—and his journal records most intelligent judgments of their relative value and importance.

As an illustration of the chaotic state of the so-called medical sciences in the last century, and even later, I may venture to say, without presuming to speak with critical exactness, that the majority of medical practitioners upon our continent, in every period up to the early years of the present century, have been incapable, through the absence of education, of reasoning closely and logically as to the causes and phenomena of disease. While the entire population were in accord with the doctors, and preferred to believe with them that diseases could be cured only by blood-letting—and by administering to the sick powerful and vile combinations of vegetable and mineral poisons, designed to shake to its very center, as they did, every organ of the body.

Within five or six years I have seen an elaborately written prescription of this sort, directing the combination of twelve active remedies, reaching almost a cubic measure in length, but of the extent of its range and of its destructive force no report has ever been made.

These were the golden days of faith in drugs, when polypharmacy was in the extreme of fashion, and the dispensing of medicines was a most profitable vocation. Most men in those early days were too illiterate and unable to escape from the grinding pressure of the laws of necessity long enough to acquire a scientific education; and those supposed to be capable of imparting such knowledge were few, and being mostly in the largest cities, they were inaccessible, and had themselves become only partially emancipated from the thraldom of false science, upon which no processes of correct reasoning could be based; so that we cannot wonder if men, ignorant of the great facts of human and comparative anatomy and physiology established by the Almighty, were for many generations unable to comprehend that other and greater fact, that under the unobstructed operations of the laws of nature, his creatures should be enabled in most cases to throw off the diseases of which they had become the victims, through their ignorance of those laws.

Nor is it surprising if, in the early days of darkness which have not yet entirely disappeared, the majority of medical men could not be convinced that a very large proportion of diseases, for the cure of which they were daily prescribing a multitude of very active and disturbing drugs, were in point of fact, self-limited, and would, under the operation of natural laws, disappear of themselves if the doctors were not in the way.

Neither were the people prepared to receive or to tolerate such a doctrine; and I am sorry to add that, even in the present generation, such is the degree of popular apathy or want of information that comparatively only a few among the most enlightened people anywhere are able to appreciate the vast difference there is between being cured and getting well.

Arriving at his home early in the spring of 1840, he reported himself to be in excellent health, and almost immediately resumed his daily routine of professional work.

With his remarkable powers of mind strengthened and heightened by his intimate acquaintance with books, and enriched by the experiences of foreign travel; and with a professional judgment matured in that best of all schools, ten years of country practice, supplemented by clinical study in European hospitals, and at the bedside, we can understand how eminently qualified he now was to assume the responsibilities of a public teacher of medicine.

As soon as he was fitted to fulfill these duties the place awaited his acceptance; and in 1842 his election as professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics, in the faculty of his Alma Mater, was hailed with great satisfaction by the medical professios in this and the adjoining states. His acceptance of the election, however, rendered it necessary for him to remove his residence to this city, where he made no effort to gain patients, but devoted himself wholly to his college work for ten years consecutively, when he resigned his professorship. Responding to repeated calls to resume his college duties, from time to time, he continued to instruct his classes until 1860, when his health again failing him, he spent the winter of 1859-60 in Barbadoes.

As a public teacher of medicine, Dr. Bronson was eminently successful in the work of interesting young men and aiding them to acquire as full knowledge of the dry details of his department of Materia Medica and Therapeutics as they were able to retain. His lectures were mostly written and were read slowly in a clear, distinct voice, and in an impressive, deliberate manner, and they were listened to with close attention. He also gave to his classes occasional lectures upon topics outside of his regular courses. They were almost unequalled in interest and instruction, particularly if he chose for his topic some one of the great fundamental principles of medical science. He was then at his best and showed the highest qualities of a great teacher; he needed the stimulus of a great subject to bring out the full exercise of his powers. Many men, however, may have excelled him as a teacher of the elementary facts of science. But as a writer upon medical topics he was very attractive. The society is familiar with the admirable and forcible style of his writing in the many papers he has read before it.

Dr. Bronson inherited many of the strong points of his intellectual character from his father; and so generally was this fact recognized by those among whom each of these remarkable men was well known that it has often been said that a sketch that would do justice to the father would be recognized as amply sufficient for the son. But in this estimate of the mental qualities of our friend, those who knew him well are unwilling to concur. While it was undoubtedly true that in the natural elements of his character, as well as in the structure of his moral and intellectual faculties he greatly resembled his father, having similar tastes, and upon many questions arriving at similar conclusions from the same points of view, and in some instances drawing the same conclusions by the same course of instantaneous, or intuitive logical deduction, and to a degree cherishing the same excellent opinions of his own infallibility of judgment, to which he had much better reason than most men to lay claim; certain it is that his powers of perception and analysis were more subtle and acute, and he possessed in a greater degree those mental traits and that spirit of devotion to a definite purpose and end, which enabled him to pursue successfully the lines of historical inquiry marked out by his father, affecting more or less closely large numbers of families, composing one of the wealthiest of the wide-spreading industrial centers of our state. He was by nature a historian; and any one led by motives of curiosity or of personal interest to examine critically the recorded history of Waterbury will, I think, be surprised by the evidences of the laborious personal investigations to ascertain necessary facts, and so far as was possible by persistent efforts, to gather them personally and from the original records.

To say nothing of the gathering of historical facts, the labor of acquiring the traditions of a countryside through half a dozen populous manufacturing towns, and the preparation for the press of the biographical sketches of a large number of business men, was great and exhausting when added to the already heavy burdens of a busy physician. The history of Waterbury forms a compact volume of six hundred pages, with thirty portraits, and many local views engraved on steel, and was in itself not a small undertaking for one who could devote to it his entire time; but when we consider the very extended research required to trace out the natives of Waterbury who had removed to other states, we can form perhaps a just estimate of the relative magnitude of the labor expended upon even so small a work, carried on as it was under the pressure of public duties, as well as of professional and other literary labor.

That this arduous work was continued under very discouraging circumstances, while it daily grew upon his hands, was evident to those near enough to observe; and they could but admire and wonder at the courage and perseverance with which, under so many difficulties, he completed his self-imposed task.

I have been familiar with a considerable number of histories of towns and counties in New England, but I know of none with the same limited scope that are more valuable than this. Indeed, I may say without fear of contradiction, that the beneficient influences upon a New England community of such a chronicle of the facts and opinions that were coincident with the laying of the foundations of society, and which in future generations shall mark in its successive editions the changes of an advancing civilization, cannot be over-estimated.

Not by any means the least important of the historical work accomplished by Dr. Bronson was the interesting series of historical and biographical papers pertaining to the medical history between December, 1872, and October, 1876, comprising one hundred and fifty pages of Vol. II., including the professional histories of eight members of the New Haven Medical association. He says in a prefatory statement that in the following papers, "I have aimed to put in an enduring form much valuable and often perishable material gathered several years ago from many sources—records, manuscripts, documents and letters, old newspapers, traditions and living witnesses." "In their preparation I hoped to make an acceptable contribution to general history, and at the same time render a special and much needed service to the medical profession."

"Before the Revolution there was not much intercourse between the different sections of our country. A limited coasting trade along the Atlantic border brought the commercial classes in the maratime towns into frequent contact; but the benefits of this intercourse scarcely extended to the interior. Each colony—in many instances each town—was to a large extent an isolated community. But the war, which broke out in 1775, brought with it great changes. It excited the wildest passions; introduced selfishness, corruption, vice, misery, and what, in his estimation, was the worst of all the consequences of war, a deluge of paper money." But, he adds, "certain advantages flowed from it."

The medical profession of the state highly appreciated the medical histories of Connecticut, as prepared for us by Dr. Bronson, in the very valuable notices of prominent physicians in our early days, and read from time to time before this society, as well as other papers on the same general subject, printed in the proceedings of the Connecticut Medical society. They still continue to be read as classics by all the medical men of the state, whose tastes incline them to preserve the historical literature of their profession; but unfortunately, owing to the very limited edition that was published, these papers being out of print, are no longer obtainable.

Speaking further of the "days of the Revolution," and the formative stages of the medical profession in those turbulent times, he says, "Large bodies of men were gathered from every quarter and associated for military purposes; and to supply them with food and clothing, arms and equipments, an extended internal trade was required. The sections near and remote were for the first time brought face to face, and bound together in desperate endeavor for a common object.

"Men who had before been strangers became co-workers and personal friends. Though the standard of morality was debased, they learned well the advantages of union, of combined effort and social intercourse which they were slow to forget. The accomplishments which individuals in high positions possessed became by contact and the magnetism of superior natures common property, and reproduced their like.

"Emulation was excited and society enlightened, and in a certain sense improved and refined.

"There were in the army a few accomplished and many respectable physicians and surgeons who witnesser and shared the benefits of united effort—of familiar professional intercourse—and who, when peace returned, feared the disintegrating and depressing influences of isolation. It was to prevent this disastrous result to a fine body of medical men, who had largely contributed to the success of the colonial armies in the field, and the independence of these United States among the nations of the world, that our army surgeons resolved themselves into county and state organizations to promote professional excellence, as well as to maintain for the benefit of the whole country, the nucleus of what they saw was to become one of the learned and most useful professions upon our continent."

As a writer upon finance and political economy, Dr. Bronson's opinions have always been received with great respect wherever they have become known.

He was an advocate of hard money. His father also was a local authority on financial questions, and established the first bank in Waterbury, of which he was always the president during his life; and many of the Bronson name in this and other states have acquired renown as financiers, or as editors of financial journals and leading newspapers outside of New England.

Dr. Bronson has read before this society several papers upon financial topics, which have been published in its archives, and have attracted wide attention, and I have high authority for saying that these papers, or any one of them, would be sufficient to establish a brilliant reputation for any writer upon financial questions.

I need not remind the society that in 1863 he read before this body, at convenient intervals, a very remarkable series of papers, having for its title, as a completed publication, "A Historical Account of Connecticut Currency, Continental Money and the Finances of the Revolution," pp. 192—forming about one-half of the first volume of the society's transactions.

(Continued on Tenth Page.)