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A Footnote to the Publication of Peter Smith's *Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* (Cincinnati, 1813)

Richard J. Wolfe

ONE of the most curious and shadowy figures of early American medicine was the Reverend Peter Smith. Farmer, preacher of the Gospel, and self-proclaimed Indian herb doctor, Father Smith (as he termed himself) labored for many years in the Miami country of southwestern Ohio as healer of bodies as well as saver of souls. The Reverend Peter Smith is known today only in local legend and through his publication in 1813 of a medicinal formulary entitled *The Indian Doctor's Dispensatory, Being Father Smith's Advice Respecting Diseases and Their Cure; Consisting of Prescriptions for Many Complaints; and a Description of Medicines, Simple and Compound, Showing Their Virtues and How to Apply Them*. In the one and only edition of this work, the second materia medica published west of the Allegheny Mountains and the first medical book issued in the state of Ohio,¹ the author extended his already lengthy title with the note that it was "designed for the benefit of his children, his friends and the public, but more especially the citizens of the western parts of the United States of America." Printed by Browne and Looker at Cincinnati in 1813, the book was lost to posterity for the better part of a century, being known only through

¹ The first medical book as well as the first materia medica published in what was then referred to as the western country was Thomas White Ruble's *The American Medical Guide for the Use of Families, in Two Parts. Part 1st. A Materia Medica, Being a Treatise on All the Most Usefull Articles Used as Medicine, Including Those Which Are the Produce of Our Own Country. Part 2d. Therapeutics, or The Art of Curing the Various Diseases of the Human Body . . .* (Richmond, Ky., Printed by E. Harris for the Author, 1810). The only recorded copies of this work are found in the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Md., the University of Chicago Library, and the Library of the St. Louis Medical Society.

reference to it in other authorities on American materia medica,² until a copy of it accidentally turned up at Toledo in 1897.

John Uri Lloyd, pharmacist, plant chemist, drug manufacturer, novelist, enthusiast for the history of pharmacy and botany, book collector, founder of the library of botany, pharmacy, and materia medica in Cincinnati that bears his name, and rediscoverer of the aforesaid copy of *The Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* in 1897, tells, in the introduction to his facsimile edition of that work, all of the scant details that then could be learned about Father Smith's life and work.³ Lloyd cited as the source of much of his information one General J. Warren Keifer of Toledo. General Keifer's mother was the daughter of Peter Smith, and it was in Keifer's home that Lloyd discovered the copy of *The Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* that he re-published in 1901. Other facts are given by Smith himself in the semi-autobiographical Preface of his book and in the book itself.

Briefly, Peter Smith was born in New Jersey on 6 February 1753, the son of Hezekiah Smith, who was himself an Indian physician.⁴ Educated at Princeton,⁵ he married Catherine Stout, a New Jersey girl,

² For example, in the "Critical Table of the Principal Authors and Works Cited" in C. S. Rafinesque's *Medical Flora; or, Manual of the Medical Botany of the United States of North America . . .* (Phila., Atkinson & Alexander, 1828-30, 2 v.), Smith is mentioned (v. 1, p. 21) thus:

"PETER SMITH, the Indian Doctor, Dispensary, Cincinnati, 1813. A guide for Empirics, some medical facts; but it is difficult to ascertain to what species they apply, no descriptions nor figures, nor correct names are given."

³ *Bulletin of the Lloyd Library of Botany, Pharmacy and Materia Medica*, No. 2, *Reproduction Series*, No. 2 (Cincinnati, 1901). The entire *Bulletin* is devoted to Smith and this work. In his introductory statement here Lloyd says that he had searched in vain for a copy of Smith's dispensatory for twenty-five years and tells how he finally came upon one at Toledo in 1897. Since then, five other copies have appeared. These six copies are all located today in public collections, as follows: The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, and the Lloyd Library of Botany, Pharmacy and Materia Medica, all in Cincinnati; the Newberry Library, Chicago; The New York Public Library; and the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts.

⁴ Lloyd states that the exact location of Peter Smith's birth was a place in New Jersey named Wales; he learned this fact, probably, from General Keifer. Such a place is not located on current maps or in modern gazetteers, nor could it be found on or in earlier ones. The fact that Peter Smith was at least a second-generation Indian physician is worth noting, for it frequently happened that such knowledge was handed down from one generation to the next.

⁵ Peter Smith's name is not entered in catalogues of Princeton graduates, nor is there any record of his attendance at the University in manuscript or archival records there. The matter cannot be determined with certainty at this time, for

in December of 1776. Peter Smith received some early instruction in medicine at the hands of his father. Smith tells us how he also became acquainted with the works of Benjamin Rush, William Buchan, S.A.A.D. Tissot, John Brown, and other writers on the physic of that day, as well as with the writings of the seventeenth-century English astrological physician, Nicholas Culpeper. He further describes how he acquired medical information from physicians in New Jersey and in other locations where he subsequently resided, in Pennsylvania, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Ohio. Smith called himself "Indian doctor" because his practice relied much on herb, root, and other remedies known to the Indians, though he did not confine himself to botanical remedies alone.⁶

Peter Smith spent his early adult life wandering, initially down the eastern coast of the United States, from New Jersey to Georgia. After a brief residence in Georgia, he turned inland, trekking through Tennessee and Kentucky and eventually into Ohio. Lloyd relates, from General Keifer's descriptions founded on family tradition, how Smith took his family on horseback — wife, babies and all — through the wilderness and through territory still infested with Indians, preaching the Gospel and practicing medicine on the way. Peter Smith was a Baptist and held strong antislavery opinions. It was the latter which caused him to desert his Georgia home and travel westward through Tennessee and into Kentucky. Finding that Kentucky, too, had become a slave state, he migrated to Ohio, settling first near Cincinnati about 1794 and afterwards, in 1804, moving to a small, poor farm further in the wilderness. Little else could be learned about his life and work, except for the following facts: he farmed, preached, and continued to minister as a physician to his neighbors; he took a trip to Philadelphia in the summer of 1811, presumably in search of additional medical knowledge; and he died on his farm on 31 December 1816.⁷

records of early Princeton non-graduates are incomplete owing to fires in Nassau Hall in 1802 and 1855.

⁶ In the Preface of his *Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* Smith states (p. x): "I call myself an *Indian Doctor*, because I have incidentally obtained a knowledge of many of the simples used by the Indians; but chiefly because I have obtained my knowledge generally in the like manner that the Indians do [*i.e.* empirically]."

⁷ Lloyd also makes reference to a cousin, Hezekiah Smith, D.D., of Haverhill, Massachusetts, who will be mentioned later. Attempts to locate letters and documents relating to Peter Smith in public collections have produced almost nothing. Syracuse University, for example, was reported to hold letters written by him. Inquiry, however, determined that these pertained to another Peter Smith, who was

Peter Smith belonged to, and in some ways is representative of, a sizable group of medical practitioners in early America that is frequently alluded to but little documented or understood: he was a minister-physician who combined his religious calling with the more pragmatic and mundane profession of attending to the corporeal ills of his flock. Practicality provoked this dual professionalism, which stemmed from the early days of the English settlements of North America, to which few men of physic emigrated. As few trained physicians came to America during its colonial period, it became the lot of men of education, and in particular ministers, to attend to the sufferings and ills of the populace. (This custom was especially deep-rooted in New England.⁸) The need for and use of such substitute physicians is one of the main reasons why medicine in early America did not follow usual European traditions and paths but rather evolved independently along less theoretical and more practical routes. In America, it was necessity rather than an organized profession which created the masters.

American medicine was distinctive from the start not only because of this idiosyncrasy but also because much of the practice of many of these early minister-physicians depended upon the use of herb, root, and botanical substances that had been borrowed from the Indians. While such "Indian physicians" (or empirics, as they were called) evolved as a natural product of the American environment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they began to be dislodged and displaced, many of them moving southward and westward along with ensuing tides of migration, towards the end of the eighteenth century and in the decades following, when the supply of "regular" physicians increased in the East and these began to professionalize and to take on

born in 1768 and was associated mainly with the central New York area (and was the father of the abolitionist Gerrit Smith). The Cincinnati Historical Society has only one manuscript relating to Smith, an indenture between him and John Cleves Symmes, dated 9 July 1796, and relating to the transfer of land to Smith at that time.

⁸The role of ministers and clergymen in early American medicine has been noted frequently. One commentator, the late Dr. Henry R. Viets, observed in his *Brief History of Medicine in Massachusetts* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930) that medicine was transferred to New England by ministers, partly trained as physicians, and the lowest classes of medical men, the barber-surgeons. The ministers and other men of education served the sparsely populated settlements fairly well, while the more adventuresome barber-surgeons did the minor surgery. Many ministers and men of education coming out from England in the early days read or took courses in anatomy and other medical subjects in preparation for or in anticipation of this dual role abroad.

the customs and trappings of European medicine. Indian physicians came to be looked upon generally as "irregulars," and they confined their practices for the most part to rural and frontier settlements where regular physicians were less likely to be found. Here they engaged in a form of popular or folk medicine and in a sense probably performed useful services much as female midwives did in the absence of trained practitioners.

While it is impossible to assess the impact or success of Peter Smith's *Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* at this time, it seems reasonable to conclude that it found extensive use among the settlers of Ohio, Kentucky, and adjacent regions of the American midwest, in spite of the fact that only a half-dozen copies of it are known to exist today. It was the kind of work that was designed to serve as a "do it yourself" book for everyday household use; consequently, it was a book of the kind that is literally "used to pieces." Few copies of such works are ever destined to survive. Peter Smith's simple booklet of 112 pages consists of a recital of all of the prescriptions and remedies in his medical armamentarium, followed by a listing of diseases, injuries, and bodily ills for which they were adjudged efficacious. Intending it thus for popular consumption, its author couched its text in plain, everyday language and eschewed the use of botanical names, giving plant names in the common terminology of the time and region. *The Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* undoubtedly realized the popular and utilitarian goals for which its author intended it, and it must have brought Smith some local notoriety. Lloyd mentions that "the name was familiar during the writer's boyhood in Kentucky. It lingers yet about Western domestic medicine, and is occasionally seen in orthodox medical print." However well known Father Smith may have become, his reputation and fame were obviously local, confined to those regions of Ohio and Kentucky where he, his book, and his mode of medicine found employment.

A curious incident relating to Smith's attempt to disseminate his work beyond his own limited sphere has recently come to light among the manuscript and archival records of the Massachusetts Medical Society. This episode is shown through a letter which Smith sent to the Society in 1813, proposing the publication of an edition of his book in the East. In the letter and the contractual instrument which he included with it, information is to be found on several heretofore unknown details about Smith's shadowy life, as well as evidence of the

zeal with which he combined his religious and medical roles.⁹ Smith penned his letter in response to an advertisement that he had seen, probably one reprinted in Ohio from an earlier advertisement in a Boston newspaper, about the Boylston prize dissertation that had been solicited in 1812 or 1813.

Early in 1803 Ward Nicholas Boylston, a wealthy merchant of Boston and grand-nephew of Zabdiel Boylston, the introducer of small-pox inoculation to America in 1721, entered into an agreement with Harvard University whereby he would provide an annual gift of one hundred dollars for the following purpose. The University would appoint a committee of men skilled in medical subjects who would choose topics to be advanced. These would be announced publicly, and individuals would be invited to submit dissertations on one or more of them. Contestants submitting theses of the highest order would be awarded part or all of the stipend, depending upon the number qualifying in a given year. Boylston was especially interested in the advancement of the medical and chemical sciences and had previously, in 1800, given the University an anatomical and medical library bearing his name, and an endowment to add to it.¹⁰ The first Boylston

⁹ These documents were transferred in 1973 from the Society's vaults to the Boston Medical Library in The Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, where they have since been sorted, inventoried, and catalogued. The Countway's classification number for this particular item is B MS c 75.4. Smith's letter was written on a piece of foolscap paper (13 1/4 x 16 inches) which was folded in half to form two leaves. Smith wrote his letter on the recto of one leaf and his contract or letter of agency or agreement on the recto of the other. The sheet was then folded several times into the shape of a modern envelope, was sealed, and was addressed to Lemuel Hayward, Esqr., M.D., Boston, Massachusetts. Post Office endorsement indicates that it was mailed on 29 November 1813 (for twenty-five cents) and that it was accompanied by a pamphlet, a copy of his book. The sheet is watermarked "Miami" on one half and "W & Co" on the other, showing its manufacturer to have been Christian Waldsmith, Ohio's second papermaker, who was active between 1810 and 1816. (See Dard Hunter's *Papermaking in Pioneer America* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952], Chapter 18, for information on this earliest maker of the Cincinnati area.)

¹⁰ The complete records of Boylston's negotiations with the University in 1800, as well as the minutes of the Boylston Prize Committee between 1804 and 1858, are contained in a copybook which is preserved in the Harvard Medical Archives (classified as DE 10, v. E1). The Harvard Medical Archives are also contained in the Countway Library. Boylston's initial letter to the University in this regard, dated 20 May 1800, indicates that his gift of the Boylston Medical Library and his later munificences arose from a pride he felt in the work of his great uncle, the inoculator Zabdiel Boylston, and in the endowments made to the University by his late uncle, Nicholas Boylston. Boylston's initial gift to Harvard in 1800 con-

Prize was awarded in April 1804, to Dr. James Mann for his dissertation on cholera infantum. The Boylston Prize Committee was appointed annually by the Corporation of Harvard University, but its members were usually, for the most part, the same individuals from year to year. These were mainly Harvard professors or Harvard graduates. The Committee met in the hall of the Massachusetts Medical Society, and while the Society had no official connection with the prize, members of the Prize Committee were officers or acknowledged friends of both Harvard and the Medical Society. Consequently, something like an interlocking directorate connected the two. From 1810 until 1815 Lemuel Hayward served as chairman, and during these years membership consisted of John Warren, John Brooks, Thomas Welsh, Aaron Dexter, Josiah Bartlett, and John Fleet, with one or two others rotating on or off and with James Jackson soon becoming another permanent member.

Each year the Committee chose three subjects to be investigated and described. Announcement of the subjects as well as of the prize offered was published in local newspapers (which, in the tradition of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century journalism, led to re-publication in newspapers around the land). In April 1812, the Committee, which consisted of Drs. Hayward, Warren, Welsh, Dexter, Brooks, Bartlett, Spooner, Fleet, and Jackson, solicited dissertations on the following topics: 1. On epilepsy, its variety and the mode of treatment of each. 2. What substitute can be had for leeches &c.? (this question had been asked the previous year but had not been answered satisfactorily). 3. On the medicinal uses of carbonic acid gas. In April 1813 the topic relating to carbonic acid gas was again put forth, and the two other subjects were concerned with the criteria for determining the use of mercurials in cases of phthisis [tuberculosis] and the reciprocal changes which take place in the blood and in the air during the process

sisted of 1,110 medical volumes of selected authors assembled mainly by Dr. John Nichols of London, together with a number of anatomical plates and preparations of John Nichols' father, Francis Nichols, late Professor of Anatomy at Oxford. The collection was officially named the Boylston Medical Library in 1803. While Harvard now had a proper medical collection, and one adequate to the times, it was woefully out of place, since the medical faculty and most of the medical profession were located in Boston, eight miles away by wretched road. And in 1810, after Harvard's medical department moved to Boston, it fell into disuse. For the background on this collection see Joseph E. Garland's *The Centennial History of the Boston Medical Library* (Boston, 1975).

of respiration. The advertisement for either the 1812 or the 1813 prize — the matter is ambiguous — came to Peter Smith's eyes in the wilderness, and he wrote (in his own hand) the following letter in response:

Nov. 25, 1813

Gentlemen:

It was th[ro]ugh an advertisement respecting the prize question for last year that I learned your names, and that you were a committee, I suppose, for the medical Society. Thinking it probable that you may yet be in that connection and trust I make free to trouble you, with my humble attempt intitled the Indian Doctors Dispensatory, together with a letter authorizing the reprinting it in your parts, should it meet your approbation. It will be at your disposal. Any one of you may give it the proper aid — or let it be silent. I consider it rather as a clergyman's Book for I am of that calling myself. I had a relation (that is a cousin) in your quarter of America — Hezekiah Smith D.D. of Haverhill — with him I might have rested the fate of this Book had he yet been living.¹¹ I have always belonged to the same religious society that he did, and have been in the same calling near forty years. I expect now in the course of things I am not long for this Life — and tho' I send this little piece into the World, with hopes of doing good to mankind respecting their bodily health, believe me Gentlemen, the interest of the Redeemer and the salvation by him is infinitely more important in my view. O that you may all be sharers in that good part.

I have always lived since I was a Minister of the Gospel in the new, or back part of the country, have raised a large family, who are all in credit, and in moderate circumstances in life. But I have had very little assistance to enable me to serve the publick, but have always lived by my own means. I have never thought my circumstances such as to enable me to give either of my sons a liberal education (and I have five sons) but my youngest son whose name is Jacob, I consider to be a genius — and would take learning most willingly — he is now in his 17th year. If the subject of my Book would assist me a little in my decline in life. And should providence give me health in any good degree, I propose to continue in the good work of the Gospel, while I have a breath to praise or pray.

If some one of you will write to me by post your attention I hope will be gratefully acknowledged.

¹¹ Hezekiah Smith, whom Lloyd mentioned, bore the same name as Peter Smith's father, who was his uncle. This cousin of the Indian physician is documented briefly in Frederick L. Weis's *The Colonial Clergy and Colonial Churches of New England* (Lancaster, Mass.: Society of the Descendants of the Colonial Clergy, 1936), p. 189. Born on Long Island in 1737, this Hezekiah Smith graduated from Princeton in 1762. (Perhaps family legend incorrectly attributed this relative's Princeton education to Peter.) Settling in Haverhill, Massachusetts, he spent most of his life as Minister of the Baptist Church there, dying in 1805. Weis notes that he served as chaplain during the Revolutionary War and held higher degrees from Brown University, of which he was a Fellow.

Tho' a stranger to any of you I am with sentiments of respect

Your most obedient

Peter Smith

To the Committee
of the medical Society of Harvard University
supposed to be — Lemuel Hayward, Esqr., M.D.
John Warren — John Brooks — Thomas Welsh —
Josiah Bartlett — William Spooner — John Fleet
and James Jackson

Should you write to me, please to direct to New Boston post office, on Mad River, Champaign County State of Ohio to the care of *Saml. Smith*

In the hope, or expectation, that his proposal might meet with the Society's approval, Peter Smith appended a letter of agreement to his dispatch. This specified in quasi-legalistic terms the conditions that he, the author, placed upon the publication of his book. This addendum, though brief, provides further insights into Smith's psychology and character. It stated that

These presents do witness that I Peter Smith of the county of Champaign and State of Ohio (author of the Indian Doctor's Dispensatory) do hereby appoint and authorize Mr. Lemuel Hayward Esqr. M.D. of Boston, State of Massachusetts, (together with the following Gentlemen — John Warren, John Brooks, Thomas Welsh, Josiah Bartlett, William Spooner, John Fleet & James Jackson being a Committee appointed by the Corporation of Harvard University &c., jointly or any one of them) to be my Agent (or Agents) — to publish an Edition or Editions of this Book, sent herewith entitled the Indian Doctor's Dispensatory or Father Smith Advice &c. — and to vend and dispose of them at Discretion — provided always that sixteen and two thirds cents be reserved to him the author, and his heirs, free of all deductions, as a subsidy for his copy right on each copy of Book when sold — to be transmitted by post in a post bill, that will be received in any bank [several words crossed out and illegible] near the City of Washington — eight cents and one third being to reward the Editor (for each copy) for selling, collecting, transmitting by post and other expenses and trouble — 25 Cents being my extra demand from the purchaser ¹²

¹²In the "Advertisement" section preceding the Preface of his *Indian Doctor's Dispensatory*, Smith makes much of the fact that in setting the price of one dollar on this work he has priced it twenty-five cents above what would be common then for a book of its size. This extra premium, he goes on to explain in a semi-apologetic vein, is paid for in the preservation of health or the recovery from disease that it bestows; moreover, it offers but small compensation to its author for his labor and observations of fifty years. This extra premium of twenty-five cents had some special significance or purpose to Peter Smith, and he retained it when writing up this business agreement for the possible re-publication of his work in the East. One

and that the said Editor is to cause this certificate or letter of agency to be entered and recorded in the publick Notary for the place where he resides — As also for each Edition, he (the Editor) is to enter the number of coppies of the intended Edition (from time to time) — and the Register or clerk is hereby a[u]thorised to settle with the said Editor, at the expiration of each year — for the coppies sold and the money transmitted as above directed — for which the Editor is to pay the Clerk his fees, out of his own part — And the said Lemuel Hayward — or any one of the above named, acting herein, is hereby authorised to transmit and convey this right of printing, to any printer, or other person or persons who will execute the publishing of this book on the above mentioned terms — And the said Lemuel (or other of the before named) acting is im- powered hereby to do all things, respecting the said book, (consistent with the above) as really and entirely as tho I were present in my own person. In con- firmation hercof I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed my seal
Novbr. 1813

Peter Smith

Seal

Witnessed by me
Danl. Symmes
Eth. A. Brown

N.B. This Letter of Agency written with my own hand and sent by post, attached to a copy of the said Book is to be considered every way valid, tho' lacking the usual formalities of a power of attorney
Peter Smith

This incident did not have a happy ending. Within the five decades preceding the publication of Peter Smith's *Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* a new era had opened up for medicine in America. In such a scheme the work of an empiric had no part.¹³ After the middle of the eighteenth century American medical students traveled to Edinburgh

gets the impression, from his advertisement in the book as well as from his communication with the Massachusetts Medical Society, that he was trying to raise money in his old age, perhaps to aid his family while he still had time. And since it was unusual for empirics to publish their treasury of secrets, this motive may have prompted the 1813 publication of *The Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* in the first place, though it is possible that he also may have wished to see his valuable store of remedies outlive him.

¹³Smith's explanation of his philosophical orientation, quoted in footnote 6, constitutes a pretty fair definition of an empiric physician of that time. Empirics were held generally in low repute. In the Introduction to his *Medical Flora* (1828), Rafinesque, when discussing the different classes of medical practitioners of that era, had this to say about empirics (v. 1, pp. iv-v):

"27. The EMPIRICS are commonly illiterate, ignorant, deceitful and reserved: they follow seerer or absurd mode of practice, or deal in patent medicines.

"28. They include the *Herbalists*, vulgarly called *Indian* or *Root Doctors*, and the *Steam Doctors*, who follow the old practice of the natives, the *Quacks* or dealers in Nostrums, the *Patent Doctors*, the *Prescribers* of receipts, the *Marabouts*, &c."

and London and other centers of European education and culture in increasing numbers, where they studied chemistry and botany as well as anatomy, physiology, and materia medica. Many were exposed to geology, mineralogy, and the natural history of man as well. Such organized instruction had been transferred to the major American urban centers by the end of the century, and these subjects constituted the curricula of the new medical schools, where most professors were European-trained. In addition, public hospitals had been established for the purpose of clinical training, or, in the case of Boston, were about to be founded, as were medical societies, journals, and other aspects of organized scientific effort. The decade that witnessed the publication of Peter Smith's book of simple remedies was beginning to see greater numbers of Americans going abroad for doctoral or post-doctoral instruction, particularly to Paris to partake of the great advances that were being made in research and clinical training there. Thus, by 1814, science and organization had pervaded American medicine, and the profession — for it was becoming a profession by now — was all too eager to leave behind the fog of folk and popular medicine that had beclouded it for a century and more. Clearly, Peter Smith was outdated and outmoded with respect to the publication of his book of simple folk-remedies in one of the major centers of the East, fossilized, so to speak, and an embarrassing relic of the practice of a less happy period and milieu. It is little wonder, then, that the men appointed to examine the worth of his proposal penned the following endorsement to it:¹⁴

The Committee to which was referred the consideration of a work presented by the Revd. Peter Smith of Miami, Ohio, and entitled the Indian Doctor for approbation of the M. Medical Socy. and for their recommendation in case of publication, beg leave to report that having attentively examined the said work, they have found it to be composed principally of inert popular recipes, without order or management expressed in coarse and vulgar language and by no means calculated to advance the interests of medical science or to demand the sanction of the Society.

June 1814

Aaron Dexter
John Gorham

The two individuals comprising this committee appointed to appraise Smith's proposal were the first and second professors of chem-

¹⁴ Countway Library, B MS c 75.3.

istry at the Harvard medical institution. They represented the new medicine and the new scientific viewpoint with which medicine was cloaking itself. Their use of the term "medical science" toward the end of their brief report expressed this new viewpoint: that medicine was a science and made use of the tools of science in increasing ways and numbers. Peter Smith was not heard from again, nor is there any record that the Society communicated its decision to him. Nor is his book preserved among the Society's collections, which over the years have been transferred for the most part to the Boston Medical Library, now in the Countway complex. Indeed, no copy can be located today in any library in Boston.

In spite of the "medical science" that was being advanced and promoted in the East, domestic and folk medicine continued to constitute a large and important part of American life of that period, particularly on the southern and western frontiers. Just as William Buchan's large work, *Domestic Medicine*, had served as a major resource in the American home for approximately sixty years following its initial American publication by Robert Aitken of Philadelphia in 1771,¹⁵ as did John Wesley's *Primitive Physic* to a lesser extent,¹⁶ books such as Thomas W. Ruble's *The American Medical Guide for the Use of Families* and Peter Smith's *The Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* continued to have their place in contemporary American life, in spite of what was occurring in the East. These formed important aids for American households that were too poor or too far removed to make use of the services of regular physicians, who in many cases were mistrusted because of their heroic practices or were held in low repute. In fact, a book was soon to be published, John C. Gunn's *Domestic Medicine, or Poor Man's Friend in His Hours of Affliction, Pain, and Sickness*, which was to have an influence in "western" life comparable to the effect and popularity that Buchan's earlier book had in the East. This first appeared

¹⁵ This was published in America in more than three dozen editions between 1771 (two years after its initial London publication) and 1830, with an American edition appearing in Philadelphia as late as 1853. This might best be described as a period counterpart to our modern Dr. Spock, though designed for the use of the entire family and not restricted to pediatrics alone.

¹⁶ Wesley's book, first published at London in 1747, appeared in nearly three dozen editions, most of them British, before 1830. At least a dozen of these were published in America through 1814. For a description of this work and its influence, as well as for a checklist of probable editions before 1860, see G. S. Rousseau's "John Wesley's *Primitive Physic* (1747)," *HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN*, XVI (1968), 242-256.

in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1830 (with a dedication to Andrew Jackson, the common man's President), and it went through dozens of editions over the next half-century. Other works on domestic and folk medicine, including even Indian medicine, continued to appear from time to time and in various places; James W. Mahoney's *The Cherokee Physician or Indian Guide to Health, As Given by Richard Foreman, a Cherokee Doctor* (Chattanooga, 1846) is but one example.¹⁷ In fact, as late as 1858, Dr. Reuben Greene published in Boston (of all places), in connection with his Indian Medical Institute, a pamphlet entitled *Indianopathy, or Science of Indian Medicine!*¹⁸ While American medicine was becoming more and more scientific and was beginning to form itself into the profession that we know today, it is clear that the road to this state was bumpy and filled with potholes in the form of quackery, irregular systems (botanic and eclectic medicine, homeopathy, etc.), and popular health movements by the score. In addition, for the greater part of the nineteenth century more physicians continued to acquire their training at the hands of preceptors than in medical schools, where standards were uneven and frequently low. Thus, Peter Smith was not entirely naive or altogether lacking in sophistication when he penned his 1813 proposal to the Boylston Prize Committee of Harvard University.

While this episode may have had an unsatisfactory ending for Peter Smith, it affords us a close glimpse of at least one minister-physician and, additionally, one practicing Indian medicine. Through his 1813 communication we get some idea, albeit an imperfect one, of the living and feeling creature that once was Peter Smith and some sense of the

¹⁷ A third edition of this work was published in New York City as late as 1857. This book, like Smith's before it, was written in everyday, unscientific language and, additionally, contained Indian names for maladies and medicines. It reversed the order of Smith's work, and Ruble's treatise as well, giving the section on therapeutics first and concluding with the materia medica. This work, according to its title page, "contains descriptions of a variety of Herbs and Roots, many of them not explained in any other Book, and their Medical Virtues have hitherto been unknown to the Whites. To which is added a short Dispensatory."

¹⁸ Whether coincidental or not, the list of the Board of Officers and Board of Managers of Greene's Indian Medical Institute, as given in this pamphlet, includes the names of a proportionately large number of ministers. The booklet also advertised a periodical publication to be issued by the Institute entitled the *Indian Arcana*, this to be edited by the Rev. Geo. C. Bancroft and to be devoted to illustrations of Indian life, religion, medicine, customs, and the like, and "designed to gather from the past and present, material that shall serve as a monument to perpetuate the memory of the Red Man."

religious and humanitarian ideals that motivated him. While no other details about him are available, one cannot help but feel that he must have died a happy man two years later, in spite of his lack of worldly gain. And it may well have been with himself in mind that he filled out the title page of the one and only edition of his *Indian Doctor's Dispensatory* with the following bit of doggerel verse:

Men seldom have wit enough to prize and take care of their health until they lose it. — And Doctors often know not how to get their bread deservedly, until they have no teeth to chew it.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

S. F. D. HUGHES, Assistant Professor of English at Purdue University, wrote his dissertation at the University of Washington in 1972; the title was "Áns Rímur Bogsveigis: Two Nineteenth Century Icelandic Metrical Romances."

CORA E. LUTZ has retired from teaching and librarianship, but not from scholarship; her *Schoolmasters of the Tenth Century* was published by Archon Books in 1977, and *Essays on Manuscripts and Rare Books* (1975), a collection of her articles, includes one that was first printed in the January 1974 HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN.

SELMA A. MURESIANU, a graduate student and Teaching Fellow in English at Harvard, won the William Harris Arnold and Gertrude Weld Arnold Prize in 1977 for her essay, "Thackeray the Artist."

JEFF WASSERMAN, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is writing a dissertation entitled "The Historical Development of Post-Elementary Education in Wisconsin, 1840-1890," and his published writings include an article on the history of independent colleges in Wisconsin, in the 1978 *Transactions* of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Letters.

CAROL KLEINER WILLEN earned her doctorate at Harvard in 1978; her dissertation was on *La Coquette punie*, and included an edition of the play. Since 1976 she has been a Lecturer in French at Case Western Reserve University.

RICHARD J. WOLFE is Joseph Garland Librarian and Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts in the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine; his published works include *Secular Music in America, 1801-1825*, a three-volume bibliography published by the New York Public Library in 1964, and a revised and enlarged edition of *A Bibliography of Ship Passenger Lists, 1538-1825*, also published by the New York Public Library (1965).