

A public lecture on medical ethics, and the mutual relations of patients and physician.

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Merrill (A.P.)

A PUBLIC LECTURE

ON

MEDICAL ETHICS,

AND THE

MUTUAL RELATIONS OF PATIENT AND PHYSICIAN.

DELIVERED BY APPOINTMENT OF

THE MEMPHIS MEDICAL SOCIETY,

AND PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE SOCIETY.

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ALLEGY

THE ALLEGYAN SOCIETY

ALLEGYAN SOCIETY

LECTURE.

Among all the varied improvements in the mechanism of modern society, none have been productive of greater results than that of systematic association. By this means the mental as well as the bodily labors of individual men, have been so aggregated, that the feeble efforts of many, and the powerful exertions of some, acting in well arranged concert, like the different members of a numerous and well disciplined army, are made to produce results in a given cause, which could not have been obtained from the labors of a much larger number of persons, operating as mere isolated individuals. Besides the advantages to be derived from a skillful division of labor, there are in such associations, many and various high purposes accomplished by the influence of mental collision, as well as by mental cultivation, among men of thought and study; and by the mysterious power of mind over mind in eliciting dormant energies into full action, and in stirring up the deep fountains of the soul to a sense of the important purposes of its creation. Science, religion, education, commerce, and politics, have often received the benefits of such association, the extent and importance of which baffle human calculation. And it is no mean evidence of its power for good, that it has so often proved to be powerful for evil also; the remedies for disease which are most active and efficient for healing purposes, in the hands of skillful physicians, may become poisons of the direst import when administered by charlatans.

In no other department of human progress, however, has this principle of association been productive of more varied and important results, or been made more prolific of human good, and human happiness, than in medicine. These benevolent influences manifest themselves all around us. From the numerous little infirmaries in our cities, which bring only a small amount of associated medical talent and learning to bear upon the protean forms of disease there seeking relief, to the large hospital establishment, in which the different departments of the healing art are practiced almost as specialties, the physician, surgeon, optician, &c., having their distinct wards and patients; from the small preparatory school of medical instruction, where only a few pupils receive the rudiments

of professional education, to the more advanced medical college which numbers its classes by hundreds; from the little village medical society, where only some half-dozen physicians meet together at stated periods to exchange views and opinions, relate experiences, and investigate facts, up to the academy of medicine, and the national medical association, we find the same principle operating in the advancement of the researches of science, in the improvement of the healing art, and in the extension of the sphere of human benevolence.

In unison with the objects and purposes of other and kindred associations, the Memphis Medical Society has been formed with a view to harmonize and improve its members, and to contribute its quota, however small and unpretending, to the advancement of medicine and its collateral sciences. These sciences are, and ever have been, progressive. Unlike the great science of astronomy, the principles of which are fully settled and established beyond the hope of change, and most of the truths of which, that come within the sphere of our comprehension, are already known—unlike the law as a science, the principles of which are known and established—unlike religion, which bases its principles upon the indisputable truths of divine revelation—and unlike mathematical science, which deals in known facts of incontrovertible demonstration—unlike all these great subjects of human study which occupy so large a portion of the genius and labors of men, medicine, both as a science and an art, is yet in scarcely more than an inchoate condition, presenting scope and verge of study and enquiry enough to occupy the highest capacities and powers of the human intellect in their improvement and perfection, for many centuries of time to come, if not indeed forever.

It is safe to consider all the truths and principles of science, and of art, in whatever relation they exist, as of divine origin. So far as they are yet known, their perfection is evident to all men, and therefore undisputed. But we are not always able to perceive the reason of many of the truths of nature and of science, or, in other words, why God should have ordained them just as he has; why, indeed, they should not have been otherwise. Whenever any one of these truths becomes known, however, we can no longer doubt its entire fitness and perfection, and its harmony with other truths in connection or correspondence with it; showing not only the harmony and beauty of creation, but the wisdom and benevolence of the Divine Mind. The discovery of Newton, that the power of gravitation is in direct proportion to the mass of matter, and in inverse proportion to the squares of the distances of bodies; and that of Dalton, scarcely less important, that the elements of matter enter into chemical combination with one another always in fixed proportions, which are ascertainable; are both examples of the

ability of man to discover and illustrate the hidden truths and principles of God, and to convert them to the uses and the enlightenment of his rational creatures. No doubt these and other great scientific truths which have become known to man, might have been very different from what they really are, and still answered the purposes of Creative wisdom; but we must take them as we find them, for they are fixed and unalterable, and, withal, so perfect that no human mind can conceive of a change for the better.

And such are the truths and principles which lie at the foundation of medicine, which is acknowledged to be the broadest and most comprehensive of all the sciences. It is sometimes said of it, disparagingly, that it is an inexact science; but it is this very feature which recommends it to the study of the first minds in the world. It is inexact because in its comprehensiveness it embraces much that is not yet known; but it is progressive, and its fundamental truths and principles are not likely to be any the less fixed and definite, because they have not all yet been discovered. Being the work of Divine power, they were all, doubtless, established, like those of astronomy, chemistry and mathematics, with the beginning of time, and, like them, they will remain unchanged and unchangeable to the end of time, equally perfect and immutable. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the principles of physiology, the nature of disease, the causes and remedies of disease, all come under the control of fixed and natural principles, which are just as true to their several purposes, and just as unvarying in their operations, as are those which govern the revolving orbs of heaven, or the chemical combination of the atoms of matter in their due proportions. This being conceded, the great object of our profession is to discover these truths and principles, to study their character and influence, to distinguish facts from conjecture and hypothesis, and to apply the knowledge thus obtained to the relief of human suffering, and to the prolongation of human life.

The better to enable men to accomplish these objects, the advantages of association have been sought for, in various forms and under various names, throughout the civilized world. In both Europe and America, these associations embrace the highest order of talent and of learning; and under their auspices, as well as by individual effort, thousands of men, holding the first rank in the scientific world, have been laboring, shoulder to shoulder, for ages, in the improvement of medical knowledge and practice. The goal of all their laborious efforts is, the greater perfection of medical science, and the benefits resulting to the human race. And these benefits are sufficiently important, and sufficiently evident, to enable us to boast of the extraordinary results of the past, and at the same time to promise more extraordinary results

in the future. In no other departments of human learning and enterprise, has so much been effected for the amelioration of the condition, and the extension of the period of life, of our suffering and dying race; nor have any other departments employed the same amount of intelligence, labor, and self-sacrifice, in their improvement.

It would hardly seem unreasonable to suppose that such labors, of such men, for such noble purposes, would have escaped all condemnation and distrust; but the history of the past, and our own observations of the present, prove it far otherwise. Association for these benevolent objects, has been met by associations in direct opposition to them, and individual effort has constantly encountered individual denunciation; so that it has ever been necessary for this learned and philanthropic profession to contend with active opposition, and the subtleties of ignorance and superstition, as well as with the great difficulties naturally appertaining to the subject of inquiry. Associations of influence, from the number and activity of their members, and individuals of great adroitness and ingenuity, have constantly assailed the profession, by the promulgation of partial and exclusive systems of practice; some contending that all remedies for disease should be derived from one of the kingdoms of nature, to the exclusion of the others; some limiting the means of curing disease to a very few, and even to a single remedial agent; some denouncing the use of remedies, the value of which has been tested by the experience of ages; some contending for the sole employment of external measures, and some insisting upon the exclusive use of such infinitesimal quantities as to preclude the possibility of physiological effects. No extravagance has been found too great for the adoption of followers—no absurdity too deep to secure adherents. Ignorance and superstition, following the lead of learned, aye, sometimes, pious and clerical folly, have plunged thousands upon thousands into the ranks of opposition to science and intelligence, and hecatombs of the dead bear witness to the disastrous results.

In the midst of such impediments and discouragements, we find this noble profession standing firmly for ages, upon the broad platform of truth; urging forward their scientific investigations, without turning either to the right hand or to the left; maintaining the right with high resolution and firmness of purpose; neglecting no good because it is advocated by charlatans and nostrum-venders, and advocating no error in subserviency to station, ignorance, or prejudice. Aspersion, detraction, and misrepresentation have fallen upon the buckler of the profession, only to rebound in the face of its enemies; and it stands to-day, all the world over, just where it stood a century ago, excepting only the vast advances

made towards substantial improvement, battling for the cause of truth, and for the catholicity of science.

To preserve these high characteristics of the medical profession, and to contribute something to the advancement of science, are the main objects of the Memphis Medical Society. Without that harmony and concert of action which springs from unity of design on the part of individual members, it must be evident there would be little hope of success; and therefore it has been deemed advisable that no one should be admitted to membership, unless he profess to belong, unqualifiedly to the profession of medicine, condemning the practice of charlatanry in all its forms, and recognizing the obligations imposed by the Code of Ethics. The following, therefore, have been adopted as articles of its constitution:

1. "All graduates of respectable schools of medicine, of good moral character, and willing to adopt the Code of Ethics of the American Medical Association, and scrupulously to adhere to its teachings, may become members of this society."

2. "No individual shall be considered eligible to membership in this society, who divides responsibility with a known empiric, or associates with any such in consultation, or practices with nostrums or secret patent medicines, or who exposes, vends, or advertises such medicines, either in his own name or that of another. And, should any individual, after his initiation to membership, be found guilty of any of the foregoing offenses, he shall be expelled from the society."

I may be permitted to explain here, that it is not for any invidious purpose that this, and other societies in our profession, have thought proper to give so distinctive a characteristic to their organic laws, but because of the absolute necessity that the profession of medicine should be preserved intact, from the vast variety and number of irregular and exclusive forms of modern charlatanry, to which the least appearance of encouragement, and even toleration, cannot be given, without falsifying the great principles upon which the profession is founded. It must be evident to all, that a profession which adheres so emphatically to the general principles of science, cannot consistently affiliate with either individuals or associations advocating any of the partial or exclusive doctrines of the day, or with those who, for private advantage, withhold from the profession and the public a knowledge of useful discoveries, or who, in their own vain conceits, choose to ignore the value of past researches and experiences in medicine, as attested by eminent men who have gone before us.

Deserving of personal respect though a man may be, he no sooner, by his conversation and conduct, places himself within the sphere of any system of practice which is in any degree antagonistic to legitimate medicine, than he forfeits all claims to being con-

sidered a member of the profession, and must be excluded from such associations. If he insists upon confining his researches for remedies to either the vegetable, animal, or mineral kingdom, exclusively, it is in evident violation of that liberal rule of science which seeks the means of good wherever, in the broad fields of nature and of art, it appears likely to be found. All observation and analogy lead us to conclude that a beneficent Providence has provided in the vast storehouses of nature, the proper materials for curing the diseases to which mankind are subject. For these it becomes our duty to make diligent search; and if we refuse to look for them, or to use them when presented to us, except they are derived from a single source to which our partialities may have happened to be specially directed, it is an unwarrantable restriction of the chances of success, if not an impious distrust in the beneficence of God; and we necessarily cut ourselves off from communion with those whose principles deter them from setting bounds to Divine mercy, or to human benevolence. Should any one chance to make a useful discovery in medicine, or by dint of ingenuity and skill be able to invent improvements in surgical practice, which promise usefulness to suffering humanity, and refuse to give the world the full benefits thereof, he necessarily, by such act of selfishness, places himself without the pale of a profession which has for its object the good of all mankind. Or, should men arise, whatever their genius and mental capacity, who profess to know, intuitively, more than has been discovered and taught by great numbers of men of equal genius and capacity in all past ages, and who refuse to profit by the vast accumulation of scientific knowledge and experiences, the work of many generations of such men, they, of necessity, by such manifestations of absurd self-conceit, exclude themselves from fellowship with a profession whose great objects and purposes are, the acquisition of knowledge and the advancement of science, to which ends a teachable disposition is an essential pre-requisite.

Unlike many of the associations instituted among men, for ostensibly benevolent and useful purposes, the medical profession and its associations have no secrets. Whatever is known to any member is not only promulgated to all the rest, but to the world at large, for the full benefit of mankind; and every new discovery in medicine, or its cognate sciences, is proclaimed even in its inception, that the scrutiny of the whole medical world may be directed toward it, to ascertain and determine its value. In this respect, indeed, the practice is the same among men of high attainments in all branches of science. They do not hold back and disguise the truth lest some other may step in and secure to himself some of the honors and advantages of the discovery. This is the low employment of quacks and nostrum dealers. When Leverrier

had determined, by his wonderful labors and skill, that there must be another planet outside of Uranus, and was enabled even to designate the very section of the vast expanse where it must then be looked for, he did not wait with any selfish motive to secure the honors of the actual discovery of the planet to himself, but at once announced to the astronomers of the world the conclusions he had arrived at, enabling others, in fact, to obtain the first glimpse of this new comer into the Solar System.

Such is the uniform practice, also, in liberal medicine. Every member of the profession is expected to keep himself well informed of all new discoveries and improvements, which the current medical literature, both standard and periodic, enables him to do, if he devote the same attention to his profession that astronomers do to astronomy, or even politicians to politics. Physicians are thus compelled to become hard students for life; and if they do not keep pace with the profession in its progress, or choose to devote their attention to some particular branch, neglecting the others, they cannot keep themselves in a condition as regards professional information, which will qualify them for the most successful practice. Each and every member of the profession, moreover, is under some obligation to contribute, as it may be in his power, to the common stock of learning and information of the whole. And neither of these requirements—that of gaining, and that of communicating information—can be so well subserved in any other way, as by association with fellow members of the profession, making the duty of all physicians clear and unquestionable, to unite themselves with associations and societies such as this, whenever it is in their power to do so. Without this, they can hardly perform all their responsible duties to the profession, the public, and themselves; nor can they expect to keep themselves clear from the suspicion, either of a conviction of incompetency to compete with their fellows in frequent interchanges of professional thoughts and opinions, or of a lurking sympathy with some of the errors of charlatanry which are so common in the world.

Thus engaged and associated, and for such high and noble purposes, it is important that the intercourse of physicians among themselves, should be regulated by the loftiest principles of honor and decorum. Without this, indeed, a concert of action, and a unity of purpose, commensurate in any degree with the dignity of design, could not be secured. As every one thus engaged and associated is presumed to be a man of honor—a gentleman—the rules of intercourse among themselves are necessarily those alone, which suggest themselves to the minds of men of correct principles and honorable character. But it has been deemed advisable to embody such views in the form of written law, and such is the Code of Ethics of the American Medical Association, which this

society has adopted, and all the provisions of which each member pledges himself to obey. With the character of these provisions every physician here present is presumed to be familiar, and I need not, therefore, descant largely upon them. But the occasion may be embraced to remind members, that it is a reproach of our profession, that there are such frequent disagreements in medical opinion among them, and occasional want of courtesy in personal relations and intercourse. These things are to be deplored, but in the observations made upon discrepancies in opinion among physicians by the non-professional, due allowance is not apt to be made for the difficulties of the subject, growing out of the extent and variety of professional study, the multiplicity of forms of disease, and the variety of the modes of practice leading to like results. Physicians are often supposed to differ, and, indeed, to hold opinions diametrically opposed, when the disagreement is only in reference to the means to be employed for the accomplishment of a given practical result.

Many of the professional discourtesies which do so much injury to physicians, and interfere with their usefulness, have no better foundation than these unimportant distinctions in practice, and which the ill-disposed are always willing to turn to a bad account. It, therefore, behooves us to guard against such influences, by practicing towards one another the utmost degree of liberality and forbearance. This is not only right in a moral point of view, but is, in all cases, most conducive to respectability and success. In no department of life is the trite maxim, so long acknowledged, and so little observed, *honesty is the best policy*, more constantly verified, than in the lives and conduct of physicians. If a little temporary advantage is sometimes secured by illiberal conduct towards a brother practitioner, by efforts to depreciate professional or moral character, or by habitual self-exaltation, such advantage is always more than counterbalanced by the reactions which follow in the second thoughts of listeners; and such conduct, in point of fact, is only to be met with in those, who are conscious of the possession of small grounds of self-reliance. It is not more feasible for physicians to command permanent success in business by detraction, self-laudation, and idle boastings of success, than for the merchant and mechanic, while, by virtue of their membership of a liberal and learned profession, the disgrace which attaches is much greater.

The province of the physician, properly considered, is one of high purposes and aims. While he is constantly required to become the witness of human suffering, and to exercise the warmest of human sympathies, there is a constant duty imposed upon him of resolution, deliberation, and self-abnegation, as well as of close observation and study. He must learn and continue to learn the

laws which govern the functions of health and of disease, and in his search for remedies for disease, his range of inquiry must be unlimited. Guarding himself as with an armor of steel against the influence of prejudice and superstition, and expanding his liberality and judgment, to embrace all the provisions of nature for the wants and necessities of man, he seeks for remedies in the whole catalogue of plants which the earth produces, learning the advantage of using their proximate principles and of limiting the vastness of the variety, by selecting particular plants as the representatives of classes. Arranging, combining, and compounding, these form the basis of his principal and most powerful remedies. But not content with this, he penetrates deep into the recesses of the earth, explores the mountain ranges of everlasting rock, disembowels the vast deposits of primeval vegetation as they exist in the coal formations, reaches the long arm of science within the volcanic craters, and draws the mineral solutions from the close neighborhood of central fires which are unapproachable by man. Stopping not here, we find him plunging into the very depths of the ocean, drawing thence the plants whose delicacy of texture, and deep iodine tints, matured amid the perpetual surges of the briny deep, astonish not more by their variety and beauty, than by the remedial and nutritive agencies which they present to us. The whole range of animal life, also, whether it be upon the land or beneath the floods, is made to contribute its share towards relief. The air we breathe, the gases which we dare not inhale, the light which comes to us so plentifully from the sun, the heat pervading all nature, the electric, the galvanic, and magnetic fluids, even the sounds which reverberate upon the ear—all nature, and nature multiplied and diversified by art—furnish him with material for the cure of human disease. He studies for himself, and learns from the observations of others, in what manner all of these materials, thus provided, may be used separately, or in combination with one another, and for the production of the greatest amount of good, with the least amount of injury, to the human race. Disguising nothing from public and professional scrutiny, and holding himself more ready to learn than to teach, he brings up to the medical association the facts and observations which he has collected, contributing the whole freely to the common stock of knowledge, entering into the discussion thence resulting, and then returning to his labors with a reinforcement to his knowledge and skill, and, thus encouraged and fortified, resuming his researches with renewed energy and zeal. This is the true physician. His mental energies thus trained and disciplined, his benevolence fostered and encouraged, he is prepared to combat the evils of disease, in whatever forms they may appear.

Now, it must appear evident that the duties and services of

physicians, as thus feebly and imperfectly set forth, justly entitle them to certain reciprocal attentions and courtesies on the part of those who employ them. The Code of Ethics advises, that "the first duty of a patient is to select no person as his medical adviser, who has not received a regular professional education. In no trade or occupation do mankind rely on the skill of a self-taught artist, while in medicine, confessedly the most difficult and intricate of the sciences, the world appears to think that knowledge may be intuitive." Every person has an undoubted right to the selection of his own medical attendant, but there may be good reason to question, whether, in view of the difficulties and intricacies of medical science, he is not culpable who selects any other for himself or friend, than one of good habits and sound judgment, who has had every advantage in qualifying himself for the proper performance of his responsible duties. The selection being made, it is a matter of undoubted policy to adhere closely to one physician, who soon possesses the advantage of becoming acquainted with the peculiarities of constitution, habits, and predispositions of those whom he attends, affording him an important advantage in giving professional advice. And it is an obligation of equal importance to both patient and physician, that the latter should be called in at an early stage of the disease, even although it may appear to be of a trivial character. This is particularly important during the prevalence of violent epidemic diseases, as fatal results frequently supervene from the neglect of slight indispositions; and it is often the case that malignant diseases can only be arrested by treatment in their forming stage.

It is not less the right of every person to change his physician at will, and few physicians will object to such changes, whenever there is any want of confidence in their skill. But on account of the advantages before alluded to, which the attending physician has acquired from experience and observation, it should always be considered a decision of too great importance to be made hastily, and particularly during the progress of a case of serious disease. But whenever the decision is made, justice and courtesy require, that the attending physician should be promptly informed of it, even although he may not be at the time in actual attendance. In the consideration of this matter, it is difficult to separate the relations of physician and friend. Indeed, the uniform and necessary result of repeated and continued medical services is, to blend the two relations into one, the principal advantages of which accrue to the patient, or family, and these are advantages which should not be estimated lightly. Few persons are aware of the amount of patient labor and research, bestowed by conscientious physicians upon the ailments and infirmities of families which they have long had in charge, and whose confidence has been so fully secured,

that the responsibility of medical treatment falls exclusively upon a single individual. And, what is of greater consequence still, few persons can properly estimate the disadvantages resulting from dividing and frittering away this responsibility, by such displays of indifference and lack of confidence, as are to be inferred from the habit of calling in other physicians, and any physician at random, as whim or caprice may dictate. Such persons have but too good reason in the long run, to distrust the efficacy of medical skill, because the course they pursue is by no means calculated to secure it.

It sometimes happens that a physician is called upon to prescribe for the patient of another in an emergency, and that one is occasionally consulted on account of the absence or sickness of the attending physician. In both these cases proper courtesy, and the Code of Ethics require, that the patient should be surrendered to the attending physician, just as soon as he is prepared to take charge of it. To do otherwise, indeed, would imply a change of physicians, which should not occur upon so slight a cause. Consultations, to which no right-minded physician ever objects, should never be determined upon without a conference with the attending physician upon the subject; and no physician can consider himself well used unless this courtesy be extended to him. Nor is it courtesy, or for the interest of the patient, that consultations be required between physicians and those practitioners who confine themselves to any of the exclusive systems in vogue, even although it were not expressly forbidden by the Code of Ethics. Harmony and concert can hardly be expected between such, for one party, looking for the means of relief in all the productions of nature and of art, might be expected by the other to circumscribe his remedies to one particular province of nature, or to confine his selection to a single remedial agent of no greater efficacy than water, or to concede the truth of certain superstitious influences, or, worse than all, to depend upon the palpable absurdity, that remedies which are known to be incapable of physiological influences, are potent agencies in the production of pathological changes. A properly qualified physician can never harmonize with any such, and it is no disparagement to those who practice these strange systems, as men and citizens, that these consultations are refused, any more than it is to the character of an artizan that consultations with him are declined. Nor is the case made better by the systematic efforts of irregular practitioners, to degrade the medical profession to the level of the *isms* and *pathies* of the day by applying to it the absurd soubriquet *allopathy*, which is repudiated by physicians. A profession which has engaged for ages, a vast array of the ablest minds the world has produced, cannot thus be degraded by a mere trick of charlat-

anry, except, perhaps, in the estimation of charlatans themselves and their abettors.

The mission of the medical profession is not only remedial but preventive. Hence the Code of Ethics has designated certain duties of the profession to the public, having reference mainly to prevention, as follows :

DUTIES OF THE PROFESSION TO THE PUBLIC.

1. As good citizens, it is the duty of physicians to be ever vigilant for the welfare of the community, and to bear their part in sustaining its institutions and burdens ; they should also be ever ready to give counsel to the public in relation to matters especially appertaining to their profession, as on subjects of medical police, public hygiene, and legal medicine. It is their province to enlighten the public in regard to quarantine regulations ; the location, arrangement, and dietaries of hospitals, asylums, schools, prisons, and similar institutions ; in relation to the medical police of towns, as drainage, ventilation, &c., and in regard to measures for the prevention of epidemic and contagious diseases ; and when pestilence prevails, it is their duty to face the danger, and to continue their labors for the alleviation of suffering, even at the jeopardy of their own lives.

2. Medical men should also be ready, when called on by the legally constituted authorities, to enlighten coroners' inquests and courts of justice, on subjects strictly medical—such as involve questions relating to sanity, legitimacy, murder by poisonous or other violent means, and in regard to the various other subjects embraced in the science of Medical Juri-prudence. But in these cases, and especially where they are required to make a post mortem examination, in is just, in consequence of the time, labor and skill required, and the responsibility and risk they incur, that the public should award to them a proper honorarium.

3. There is no profession, by the members of which, eleemosynary services are more liberally dispensed, than the medical ; but justice requires that some limits should be placed to the performance of such good offices. Poverty, professional brotherhood, and certain public duties referred to in section one of this chapter, should always be recognized as presenting valid claims for gratuitous services ; but neither institutions en owed by the public or by rich individuals, societies for mutual benefit for the insurance of lives or for analogous purposes, nor any profession or occupation, can be admitted to possess such privilege. Nor can it be justly expected of physicians to furnish certificates of inability to serve on juries, to perform militia duty, or to testify to the state of health of persons wishing to insure their lives, obtain pensions, or the like, without a pecuniary acknowledgement. But to individuals in indigent circumstances such professional services should always be cheerfully and freely accorded.

4. It is the duty of physicians, who are frequent witnesses of enormities committed by quackery, and the injury to health and even destruction of life caused by the use of quack medicines, to enlighten the public on these subjects, to expose the injuries sustained by the unwary from the devices and pretensions of artful empirics and imposters. Physicians ought to use all the influence which they may possess, as professors in colleges of Pharmacy, and by exercising their option in regard to the shops to which their prescriptions shall be sent, to discourage druggists and apothecaries from vending quack or secret medicines, or from being in any way engaged in their manufacture and sale.

Physicians are seldom backward, or unwilling, in the performance of these duties to the public. Against their own pecuniary interest though it be, to preserve the public health, it is remarkable that in all cities they are first and foremost in this labor of love. Without being endowed with higher degrees of human sympathy than other persons, they are brought to witness the ravages of disease, and frequently fatal disease, when and where it might be

easily prevented; and hence the effect to stimulate the natural benevolence of the heart, to overcome the influence of mere selfish considerations. Under similar influences the profession are in the constant performance of gratuitous services, the amount of which, in all our principal cities, is ascertained to exceed all other charities. Here in Memphis, the cost of medicines and the value of medical services to the poor, not to mention other contributions which constant appeals to human sympathy extort from physicians, very far exceed all else that is done among us in the name of charity. The public has no special claims to this, for it is not more our business to leave our beds of a cold and boisterous night, and go to render gratuitous services at great risk of health, and sacrifice of comfort, in some hovel of poverty, than it is the business of our neighbors, the merchants, the lawyers, and ministers of religion. These are burdens that might, and should be, equalized. It is the business of every community to provide for its own poor, and nothing is more feasible, than for those who cannot render services in kind, or prefer the enjoyment of personal ease and comfort, to purchase the services of others with money; and this is the only true and equal plan of proceeding in such cases. A physician's medical knowledge and skill are his stock in trade, and his time is money, not less than the time of the merchant. For the services he performs, he has the same claim for compensation, as the grocer for his pounds of sugar and coffee; and if the public require the one or the other for the suffering poor, every consideration of fairness and honesty requires, that they should pay for them, and every public which seeks, by the force of circumstances, by working upon human sympathy with objects of distress, to extort either mode of relief from individuals, must incur the odium, not of cruel neglect of its poor only, but of being the unworthy recipient itself of charity.

In regard to the importance of preventive measures, it is conceded by physicians everywhere, that a considerable portion of the mortality in cities could easily be prevented by the adoption of sound sanitary precautions, founded upon the results of observation and the researches of science. This is a very interesting subject of inquiry to all who are, have been, or wish to be connected with city government; for if persons volunteer to become conservators of the public health, without either the ability or disposition to do what is proper to prevent disease and mortality among their constituents, there must be some sort of accountability connected with it, which is worth inquiring into. And it is a matter of some interest, also, to us who have to submit as private citizens, to the government of men elected to office. For it is a question of health and life, as confronted with disease and death; and without attempting to compare the rate of criminality, it is of little consequence

whether we and our families are hurried out of the world by acts of direct violence, or by the acts of public policy which places at our doors the causes of disease and death. My life may be of small value to me, or to others, but no one has the right to deprive me of it, either by wheedling me into places of danger by loudly proclaiming security, by undermining my health by poisoning the food I eat, the water I drink, or the air I breathe, or by the use of the bludgeon or revolver, and if I am not protected against all these dangers as far as practicable by the laws, I derive poor compensation for those concessions which the laws require of me.

During the former organization of this society, repeated efforts were made by it to render essential service to the city by improving its healthfulness and reducing the rate of mortality. The statistic statements put forth with a view to show a necessity for action, represented a large city mortality, while that at the hospital for a series of years, had been greater than any other in the world. No attention whatever was paid to these representations of the society, or the suggestions for improvement. You have seen that the Code of Ethics requires physicians to give counsel to the public in relation to medical police, hygiene, and legal medicine, but here it is neither asked for nor regarded when offered. The code declares it to be the province of physicians to enlighten the public in regard to quarantine regulations, the location, arrangement, and dietaries of hospitals, asylums, schools, prisons, &c., in relation to the police of towns, as drainage, ventilation, etc., and in regard to measures for the prevention of epidemic and contagious disease. But all these things are done in Memphis, when done at all, without medical advice, and an abundance of men are found who are nothing loth in assuming the responsibility. Is a Board required to manage, or to locate and construct a hospital? Men are sought for and appointed without the least regard to medical qualification, some of whom were never within, and never expect to be within, the walls of a hospital, and the mortality resulting is shocking to humanity. Is a prison to be constructed for city purposes? Every principle of prison architecture, hygiene and discipline, approved by the experience of generations past, is violated in its arrangement, and we have a perpetual nuisance, where the want of air and light, the want of security, the facilities for moral corruption, and the agencies destructive to health, render it a reproach to civilization. Streets are graded, drainage obstructed, vegetation destroyed or prevented, and nuisances to health accumulated without a word of advice, asked for or heeded, from the only class of people in our midst who have made such things a study. Contagious and epidemic diseases make their appearance among us, run through their natural course, destroy many lives, and then disappear, without even an inquiry as to preventive measures.

For the sake of appearances, we have a Board of Health, and many people are deluded with the idea that some benefit is or may be derived from it. But it is merely nominal, and so intended; for the utmost care is taken to withhold from it every shadow of power, and sometimes years pass by without a meeting, although publications are made signed officially by its secretary, which are wholly unauthorized, and often disapproved by members. The Sextons report through this nominal secretary a tolerably correct statement, perhaps, of the number of deaths, but these reports possess no reliability in reference to the diseases which cause them. And these are the services your Board of Health renders the city. If it has sometimes ventured the expression of an opinion, such expression has been either neglected, or been promptly rebuked by official authority. And now, after six months' deliberation concerning its reorganization, we are virtually told, that the Mayor and Aldermen are unable to select six physicians out of the whole number in the city, to organize such a Board of Health, as can even be trusted with the power to appoint its own secretary!

I beg you to consider, gentlemen of the Society, that I do not recur to these things as discouragements, but rather as incentives to future exertions. Memphis contains, as compared with other cities, its full proportion of medical talent and learning. Fatal diseases are not more fatal in the hands of physicians here, than are the same diseases in all our principal cities. Those terrible epidemic scourges of modern times, cholera and yellow fever, have been treated even more successfully in Memphis than in most other places. Scarlatina and cholera infantum, under enlightened counsels among us, are comparatively harmless. Our surgery compares favorably with New York and Philadelphia. The diseases of women are in no other place managed more successfully. And our medical teaching, and contributions to medical literature, command the respect and admiration of the profession. It is not becoming in us, under such circumstances, to suffer discouragement at the frowns and sneers of ignorance and prejudice. On the contrary, as ours is a noble profession, engaged in the pursuit of the loftiest benevolence, we should consider the path of duty not only a plain one, but as one boldly to be pursued, in spite of all obstacles.

The burden of my counsel is, therefore, that the members of the profession add to the weight of their individual influence by steady and well-concerted, associated action. By this means they will be able to accomplish great things for this young and growing city. The associated opinions of such a body of men, in reference to subjects closely allied to professional learning, must ultimately become public sentiments; and the health of our citizens and reputation of our city, will receive the benefits which

the present state of science and knowledge can afford. You will be enabled, in spite of all present opposition, to extend the legitimate influence of the profession to all hospital establishments, asylums, prisons, and school-houses, and shield their inmates from the health-destroying and life-destroying regimen so common to such places. Under your vigilant eye, it will not be in the power of public authority to accumulate the causes of disease at the doors of any of our citizens; the people will be warned of the approach and appearance of epidemic and contagious diseases, and receive suitable advice as to the policy of submitting to, or fleeing from their ravages: the sick poor will not be permitted to die in our midst, under the cool refusal of public charity by unprofessional city officials; people at a distance will receive assurance of the actual sanitary condition of the city, and not be deterred from visiting it by idle and unfounded rumors; and immigrants will be assured of greater security by living under the influence of honest, enlightened, and scientific counsels. But in no one respect will the people be more substantially benefitted by your consultations, than in the protection which they will extend to the rising generation. Rescuing the tender infant from the hands of quacks and nostrum-venders, it will be protected in the enjoyment of nature's provision of food, air, light, and warmth, shielded in its progress from the blighting influences of preventible diseases, and secured in those advantages of mental and physical training which are founded upon reason and science. Following this, the most interesting part of our population, into the school-room, the labors of this society will save them there the mental and bodily bondage which impair functional vigor, and which distort and deform the body, the effect of which does not end with death, but is felt by succeeding generations.

I have thus, gentlemen of the Society, hastily presented to you, under great disadvantages as regards myself, some of the reflections suggested by the appointment with which you have honored me, to make you an address. I trust they may have an influence in inducing you to consider the true dignity of our profession, and the importance of the requirement of the code, to render it useful to the public, and honorable to ourselves.