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NATIONAL AND MUNICIPAL RELATIONS OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.*

BY PROF. WILLIAM PEPPER, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

The movements of the medical profession in this beautiful city of Cleveland and in the northern part of this great state of Ohio must naturally attract widespread attention. Under any circumstances such would be the case, and it is doubly true when these movements are, as at present, so conspicuously in the direction of the greatest interests of the community and of the profession. The members of your society, Mr. President, have conceived their duty in the true sense of those weighty words of Bacon: "I hold every man a debtor to his profession * * * to be a help and ornament thereto."

This is an age of organization and co-operation. The conditions of individual life change less radically and less rapidly than do those of organized society. The struggle for existence; the burden of passion and sorrow and sin; the unreasonable hopes of vanity and the painful dispersion of illusions; the yearning for affection and applause and the unsatisfying share allotted to most,—these remain the destiny of selfish individual man. Only to those who can free themselves from the domination of self, and who can in some measure become absorbed in the larger conception of the community, do the advancing years bring gifts of peace and of healing

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for the self-inflicted wounds of life. High office and great power prove Dead Sea fruit until we learn they are only opportunities for willing and lowly service. Wealth is found a burden until the truth becomes clear that it is a trust to be administered for the good of society. Is it not a growing conviction of these facts that must impel to the countless combinations into which we, poor, restless, helpless units, enter in search of the larger, stronger and more abiding and satisfying life which is found here only in association?

To none are the wisdom and the happiness of altruism so manifest as to physicians ; and I think that to this fully as much as to the charms of scientific study is due the fact (for such my intercourse with men and women has taught me to believe it) that physicians are the most contented and the happiest class of mortals.

At no period in the history of medicine have physicians failed to be the earnest advocates of every measure to promote the sanitary welfare of society. Instances of obstinate conservatism or of ignorant prejudice are indeed to be found. One recalls the bitterness with which Lady Wortley Montagu inveighed against the London doctors of her day for their determined opposition to inoculation—an opposition which she persisted in regarding as based on the most mercenary selfishness. She contended that they refused to sanction the new practice only because they foresaw it would so greatly lessen the amount of small-pox which at that time, as you know, was almost constantly prevalent in epidemic form. But one must also bear in mind the inherent dangers and defects of inoculation, and, on the other hand, the swift and triumphant reception of Jenner's immortal discovery of vaccination, if we would judge fairly the attitude of the profession. I can myself recall with a strange feeling of amazement and self-distrust the cruel treatment I saw accorded to that great man and dauntless pioneer, Washington Atlee, who was shunned as an Ishmaelite by the leading men of Philadelphia, in the early days of ovariectomy. Well may we ask ourselves whether we, in our turn, harbor any class prejudices or refuse to recognize any new epoch-making truths merely because opposed to our personal feelings or to our imperfectly informed opinions.

Upon the whole, however, I believe that the true attitude of the medical profession has come to be appreciated and honored by the

world. Devotion to great public interests; the extension of tolerance to opposing views; the death of dogma and pretentious mystery; the splendid growth of scientific truth—these are the influences which are advancing the position and power of the profession to a point far higher than it ever occupied before. In all ages medical men of exceptional genius and force have exerted vast personal influence on public opinion; but, as with all personal authority, the effect has been short-lived. *In verba magistri jurare*; the infallibility of this, that and the other great school and eminent teacher: so it went from Aristotle to Harvey. Since then the reign of facts; the dethronement of all authority in things natural save that of nature; the substitution of the instruments of precision of the laboratory for the hair-splitting logic of the schools: and inevitably comes with this a clear-eyed worship of nature, a larger tolerance of individual differences of opinion, a recognition of the trifling value of such differences in comparison with the grandeur of truth and the vast mass of our own ignorance. Even in theology the age of religious intolerance draws to its close; the last chapter of its ghastly annals is being written, and it is no longer traced in human tears and blood. The noblest and most encouraging occurrence of this century seems to me to be the marvellously rapid spread of the illuminating doctrines of Darwin, and their incorporation in the thought and speech of the world, and in the very teachings of the churches.

The old intolerance, against which the Renaissance had to contend, blazed out on the first announcement of this grand generalization; but the speedy abandonment of the struggle against scientific evidence proved how shorn are its powers of opposition and how helpless it will ever be hereafter to hamper the freedom or retard the progress of human thought. Future ages will point to the triumph of Darwinism as the crowning intellectual achievement of the nineteenth century.

It is not necessary to remind this audience of a single one of the great triumphs which mark the onward march of medical science in the recent centuries. Vesalius and Pare, Harvey and Sydenham, connect themselves with Bichat and Laennec, with Hunter and Jenner, with Pasteur and Lister, with Virchow and Koch, and the torch of

genius is passed down the line of these immortals and lights up the ages with the splendor of their achievements. But it is sad to reflect upon what has been done as contrasted with what might have been. The dense ignorance of rulers and masses on scientific questions; the slow progress of sound, useful education among the people; the huge claims of imperialism and of militarism; the wanton waste of luxury, have retarded research, have left but paltry sums available for the diffusion of knowledge, have hindered the embodiment in legislation and in actuality of much that would help the healing of the nations. The sad divisions in the ranks of the medical profession and the absence of proper organization are also largely responsible for the scant attention paid to the claims of science and of preventive medicine. Surely we must cherish strong hopes that ere long some fair and honest way may open to unite all true-hearted medical men in the common cause of studying nature, of seeking truth, and of relieving the sufferings of humanity. And if we must still wait for the day when all sects in medical practice shall be absorbed and united in the spread of rational and scientific medicine, there can be no excuse for any delay in the pressing duty of the hour—the duty of organizing for the prevention of disease. When the International Medical Congress met in Philadelphia in 1876 the address on “Hygiene and Preventive Medicine,” delivered by the distinguished Bowditch, himself a pioneer in sanitary science, was one of the most impressive utterances on that important occasion. The review he gave of the work of the previous century in this country in sanitary science was not flattering; but with the fine enthusiasm which marked that gifted man he predicted the immediate opening of the grandest epoch yet seen in the history of medicine. His closing appeal must be quoted: “Our present duty is organization, national, state, municipal and village. From the highest place in the national council down to the smallest village board of health we need organization. With these organizations we can study and often prevent disease.” Much had been accomplished, it is true, in preventive medicine before 1876, when Bowditch spoke; but it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the progress in the past twenty years has been greater than in the preceding twenty centuries.

When the day arrived on which we needed no longer to depend on general arguments as to the value of cleanliness, and the probable importance of quarantine and isolation in checking the mysterious spread of epidemics, but when we could point to the true, only and specific cause of deadly diseases, our position before the community and the duty of the community toward preventive medicine were changed radically. It is almost impossible to grasp the full significance of such simple statements as these: About one-fifth the entire human race perishes from tuberculosis; tuberculosis is inseparably connected with and demonstrably dependent upon a specific minute organism; there are various causes which tend to make our bodies accessible to the invasion of this parasite, but if there were no tubercle bacillus there could be no tuberculosis; the conditions which favor the development and the diffusion of these bacilli and those which, on the other hand, tend to destroy them, are capable of accurate study. In these few words are presented the most important subject of human interest. What does it matter in comparison if a famine carry off its thousands or tens of thousands or if cholera destroy its thousands and paralyze the commerce of the world for a season? These are indeed grave troubles; they also come under the same rules of scientific study as does tuberculosis. But such calamities, although their abrupt and tragic nature makes them impressive, are mere trifles as compared with the ravages of tuberculosis, which are indeed so universally prevalent, so apparently resistless and inevitable, that for ages men have acquiesced as though it were a Divine dispensation. Remember also that it is not alone the human race which is crushed by this burden. Our domestic animals are terribly prone to its attack. Vast pecuniary loss results; and, far worse than this, the entire community is in constant and urgent danger of infection from the tainted products of tuberculous animals. It is not necessary to deepen the darkness of this picture by alluding to the ravages of acute infections such as diphtheria and typhoid fever. Truly one may exclaim: The times of their ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to arouse and to unite in the struggle against these foes which go so far to destroy the safety and the happiness of human life. In what single household of this land are there not bowed heads and

stricken hearts, and at the threshold the Angel of Death to carry away our fairest and our dearest, after months of helpless wasting misery, or after only a few hours of fierce agony?

I know of the good work done by this Medical Society of Cleveland, and how bravely and strongly you did your duty by this community when grave danger of an invasion of Asiatic cholera threatened our land. I know, therefore, that I appeal to those who already agree with me when I urge the most determined and united efforts to secure from our municipalities, our state legislatures and our national government a full recognition of the priceless service preventive medicine is ready to render to the race. It is by medical men and by specially trained health officers that these services must be performed. It is already recognized that every village must have its board of health, every county its sanitary organization, every state its general staff of health officers and its central bureau from which the sanitary work of the entire commonwealth may be supervised and co-ordinated. The time has come when the magnitude of the interests at stake, and the vast progress in certainty of knowledge and in accuracy of method make it imperative that preventive medicine shall be officially represented in the highest councils of the nation. Quarantine against the invasion of infectious diseases from without our territory is far from being the whole, or even the most important part, of the labor which will fall under the Department of Public Health. Quarantine is indeed of immense importance, and all of us are glad to testify to the admirable efficiency of its administration by our Marine Hospital service. There is good reason to hope that the organization of the Pan-American Congress has brought about conditions highly favorable for the more extended and successful study of the problems of international quarantine and for the effective employment of the remedial measures that may be decided upon. The more difficult questions before us pertain to the enforcement of the principles of preventive medicine within our own territory, and against diseases which are indigenous among us. It is certainly with no intention of urging any special mode of securing this essential result that I venture to allude to the subject now. I know that it brings up the large questions of state rights and of over-centralization. I know that it involves a

suspicion of desiring to interfere with the work now so well done by the Marine Hospital service, which is included in the Treasury Department. But when we reflect that the field to be covered includes the infectious diseases of our crops and of our domestic animals, as well as of human beings; that the avoidance of the pollution of water-courses, and of the contamination of the food-supply is inevitably involved; that the necessity of uniform methods of study, of registration of data and of publication of results is obvious; that the existence of effective machinery to transmit information promptly and to secure co-operation at various and possibly widely separated points seems essential,—it appears clear that the separate and individual action of the states can never suffice for the great purpose in view. This entire matter of scientific preventive medicine is new. The progress it is making is marvellously rapid. There will be an absolute necessity in a few years for a central bureau at Washington in order to secure adequate study and effective treatment of problems involving the entire country; and it will be as advantageous to do it from that central point as it would be tedious and uncertain to depend solely upon the separate action of all the states. It will be by the federation of the states on this additional point of public polity that the work will be accomplished. No one need fear but that, apart from the questions which require national consideration, there will be an enormous and incalculably important work in preventive medicine for each state to attend to within its own confines.

It is evident also that it will be difficult to adjust this large work of national preventive medicine with the existing departments and bureaus at Washington. No one can fail to recognize the force of Surgeon-General Wyman's argument in favor of continuing quarantine in the charge of the Marine Hospital service and in connection with the Treasury Department. On the other hand, it is difficult to overlook the intimate relations which the problems of preventive medicine must entertain with the Departments of the Interior and of Agriculture. Upon one point all must agree—that the sanitary interests of the nation demand imperatively a national organization and representation. Upon another point I believe all will ere long come to agree—that there are several of the existing departments

at Washington which do not exceed in scope or in importance the work which must be done in national sanitation when the people are at last aroused and instructed in regard to it. Upon a final point it seems equally clear that there must be an agreement. So long as various measures—not only differing in detail but antagonistic—are pressed upon Congress with only divided or sectional support, no important legislation will be secured, and doubt will be encouraged as to the actual necessity for such legislation. We may be assured, however, that the wisdom and public spirit of our profession will be equal to the occasion. Let us organize upon this great question. It may not be possible to secure at once all that some of us feel clear should be granted. Let an agreement be reached before the next session of Congress upon a measure which shall command the approval and support of those most competent to form an opinion concerning it—the existing medical service of the government; the representative bodies of the medical profession; the accepted representatives of the boards of public health; the representatives of the homœopathic profession; the representatives of the several departments of government most nearly concerned, and leading constitutional lawyers. Let us show that we can rise, in the consideration of a subject of such tremendous importance, above the level of personal opinion or of partial conception, and that we can approach the study of a new and lofty function of government in a spirit of concession and co-operation favorable to federal action. *Salus sanitasque Reipublicæ suprema lex.*

It seems evident that to secure a broad, popular recognition of the paramount claims of hygiene and preventive medicine there must be prosecuted vigorously an education of the entire community, and there must be exhibited on the part of physicians a still higher conception of our duty as public-spirited and disinterested citizens. I am persuaded that nothing will conduce more to this consummation we seek than such measures as your society is engaged in carrying out.

Build deep and broad the foundations of your library. It will have great weight in effecting the organization of the profession and in bringing it into relations of reciprocal benefit with the community. Insist upon having your own suitable fire-proof building,

your own adequate endowment, and a broad and liberal administration. It is doubtful if there exists any more powerful human agency for the amelioration of society than the free public library; with the free school it will prove irresistible. You also will find your medical library a potent influence. It should be affiliated with the free public library of your city; it should be open freely to all serious readers; it should, of course, extend the most liberal facilities to the medical profession of the entire state. The fine example of Case is familiar to all of us. It will serve as an incentive to others to do for medical science what this wise benefactor did for the general public. Let us show that we would regard the high privileges we claim as the custodians of the public health just as we regard those we now enjoy as the confidential advisers on all questions concerning personal hygiene. These are sacred trusts whose sanction reposes as much in the cultivated intelligence of the community as in the scrupulous fidelity and technical skill of the profession. It is our duty to work for the mental as well as the physical welfare of society, and no one who gives attention to the subject will challenge the assertion that "free libraries are as indispensable to the mental health of a city as are its public parks, water supply or sewers to its physical health." As the president of the Free Library of the City of Philadelphia, I have been led to study somewhat closely the growth and influence of the free library movement in this country and elsewhere.

It always happens that so soon as the public have a taste of the advantages of a good library it demands more and more free enjoyment of its happy influence. Every town in every state of the Union must have its free library. Every medical centre must also have its fully endowed medical library. I would urge that we see to it that no department of our free libraries be more fully represented than that of public health, and that every publication is there included that will draw our people to the study of hygiene, and thus to a knowledge of the vast work to be accomplished in the field of preventive medicine. And in like manner I would urge the free admission of all serious readers to those sections of our medical libraries which are devoted to the great subject of sanitary science. Let us organize! Let us organize! Let us educate, educate, educate

So far as strictly medical organization is concerned, our work is well advanced. The county societies lead to the state society, and the state societies to the American Medical Association. The corporate as well as the scientific interests of the profession are well represented in these bodies. The various special societies of national scope afford unrivalled fields for purely technical work of the highest order; and the federation of these into the Triennial Congress of American Physicians and Surgeons gives a wholesome breadth and an elevating purpose to the entire group. Cordial relations have been established with the organizations of health officers. The success of the Pan-American Medical Congress may well seem to complete the task. More broad and catholic in its spirit than any previous organization, it has brought into organic relations the medical profession of the entire continent; has secured full governmental recognition of our efforts for public health; has created continuing agencies capable under vigorous administration of yielding splendid results, both scientific and practical. I believe that we shall be found worthy of these great opportunities, and that by our loyal support of our organizations we shall make them more and more fruitful of good, and shall raise them higher and higher in the estimation of the world.

Nor should we fail to labor for equally comprehensive organization of our educational work. The public primary school, the high and normal schools, the college and the university, must constitute an unbroken series of graded and adjusted educational agencies. The culmination of these systems in the several states should surely be found in a federal university at the capital of the nation. The spectacle of rival religious denominations struggling for precedence in the establishment of denominational colleges of the regulation type, is unworthy of the vast educational facilities offered in the city of Washington. High authorities differ as to the best way of availing ourselves of these facilities; objections have been urged to all the plans as yet brought forward. I can conceive of a truly federal university dedicated exclusively to post-graduate work; requiring no vast outlay for buildings, libraries, museums or laboratories, but provided with many endowed fellowships open to men and women alike; under the supervision of a board of trustees, one

member of which should be appointed by the university system of each state ; with a faculty composed in part of the eminent experts stationed at Washington, and in part of the ablest teachers selected from year to year from the various colleges, who would regard it as an honor and a privilege to spend a sabbatical year in the highest type of work as a member of such a representative faculty. Might we witness at the opening of the twentieth century the organization of the medical and sanitary interests of the nation completed by the creation of a government department with a secretary of public health in the Cabinet of the President ; and the organization of higher education completed by the creation at Washington of a truly federal university ; and might we, as members of our great and influential profession, be able to look back and feel that our highest duty had been strenuously done, and that our full share in these great achievements had been honestly borne, then am I sure that a proud place would be held who should stand here, as I stand to-day sadly conscious of our derelictions, to address you on the “ Municipal and National Relations of the Medical Profession.”

