BUT ONE PROFESSION OF MEDICINE.*

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It may be fairly claimed that, prior to 1880, the medical profession embraced the regularly educated regular physicians, the regularly educated homeopathic physicians and the regularly educated eclectic physicians. Infinite varieties of each of these classes, representing all manner of individual peculiarities, were to be found in every community. There were those claiming the inherent hereditary power of healing the sick or some mysterious gift from the Creator of the universe to dissipate disease. Then we had the Thompsonian, the Baunnscheidt systems, *et id genus omne*. In most states any person desiring to engage in the practice of medicine might have his sign painted, issue his cards or publish his announcement in the newspaper and proceed at once to invade the ranks of the credulous. In some places a local license tax was exacted. All this has been changed.

The work of the Association of American Medical Colleges has, through the encouragement and support of the medical societies, brought about a better understanding by the general public of what constitutes the necessary qualifications of a physician. In most of the states laws have been enacted defining these qualifications, or creating a board of experts for that purpose. This has aroused the sectarian schools of medicine to a realization of the necessity for systematic education in the fundamental subjects of the medical curriculum. Now all schools teach the same anatomy, histology, physiology, pathology, chemistry, toxicology, materia medica and therapeutics, with no pretense of any difference, excepting in some special features of materia medica and therapeutics. In fact, nearly all of them use the same text-books.

State examining boards all require a definite knowledge of anatomy, histology, physiology, chemistry, pathology, toxicology, hygiene, principles of medicine and surgery, obstetrics and medical jurisprudence, of every candidate for license to practice. Those claiming to practice peculiar systems are, in addition to the subjects named, examined on the subjects of materia medica and therapeutics, as taught in the sectarian schools. The truth is, these are subjects nearly identical with what is taught in the regular schools, so that now the sectarian physicians are, nearly all of them, alumni of regular schools, or at least trained from the same text-books in use at the regular colleges.

Education must have its refining influence even on the crudest material, and it has been nowhere more clearly manifest than in the ranks of the profession of medicine.

By agitation and by organized effort it has now become one of the fixed requirements of all applicants for admission to the classes of a medical school, whether sectarian or regular, that the student must possess a good English education, embracing rhetoric, Latin, mathematics and physics. This is exacted by both the colleges and the state examining and licensing boards. If the student is not a graduate of some high school of the first class, or some college or university, he must pass an examination equal to that required of common school teachers of the first class, or submit to an examination by some legally authorized examining board.

Some of the colleges and universities now require of all students of medicine before matriculation an A.B., B.S. or equivalent degree from a first-class literary college or university.

Step by step the advancement has been made until now a higher standard of scholarship is exacted of the medical student than is required of those entering on the study of any of the other professions.

The ethics of all the educated classes of people distinguish them from each other, as well as from the unlearned, and we may now find but little ground for dividing the medical profession into separate classes. Sectarianism fades before the broadening lights of a uniform course of systematic education, just as the refining process of analysis separates the pure gold from the adulterating deposits of earth in which the crude ore is found. It has already come to pass that no sectarian claims are made by the physicians of Evansville, Ind., and must soon be so everywhere, the sole test being educational qualification. Education just as certainly creates ethical regulations for individual deportment as it broadens the sphere of intellectual activity. With the general recognition of these facts all opposition to ethical rules vanish.

If the medical profession is not now a confraternity it soon will be. It is certainly reduced to a common plane as to collegiate training and legal exaction, and it has so far advanced in the growth of knowledge as to be at once conspicuous in the intellectual pre-eminence of its teachers and practitioners.

To assist in this great work of advancement the profession itself must be organized. The recently adopted plan of the American Medical Association to have all the states organized with their auxiliary county and district societies, provides a broader and better field for the continuation of our further development in those channels of scientific knowledge which experimental research alone may unfold to us. Laboratories for experimental tests are every day opening to us some of the mysteries of pathology and laying the sure foundation of new therapeutic procedures. The Roentgen rays of electric light came from the experimental laboratory to aid us in the diagnosis of internal growths, the dislocation of fractured bones, the presence and location of foreign bodies hidden by the flesh of our bodies; and, later, to melt away malignant growths on the surface and within the body. Hundreds of other blessings to humanity have resulted from the community of experimental science.

We never ask what political, religious or other opinions are held by the doctors of medicine. The great question is this, has he a systematic and duly accredited medical education? Has he been lawfully admitted to the practice of his profession? Now, as physicians, we may ask, does he possess a collegiate degree from a first-class medical school, and is he disposed to observe those ethical rules our organized societies have established for the observance of the members, and will he unite with us in our attempts to uphold and maintain the honor and dignity of the profession as a body?

We are one profession in spite of any number of protesting individuals. We are one profession by virtue of our community of interest, occupation and educational training. We are one profession by virtue of our lives of devotion to a common cause.

Our great advancement has been brought about by the labors of those who limit their work to some special field of practice and those who labor in the laboratories.

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