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Address

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND THE ISSUES WHICH CONFRONT IT.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS AT THE FIFTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL
SESSION OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
AT BOSTON, JUNE 5-8, 1906.

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The American Medical Association begins its fifty-seventh Annual Session under the most auspicious circumstances. After an interval of forty-one years it again meets in Boston, the guest of this great commonwealth which has ably upheld the highest medical traditions since the founding of New England.

Another cause of felicitation: The sectional differences in New York have been overcome and the Empire State, for the first time in twenty-five years, presents a unified delegation.

The House of Delegates of the American Medical Association (which technically is the American Medical Association) represents directly about 55,000 and indirectly the 120,000 regular practitioners of medicine in the United States. The official organ, *THE JOURNAL*, reaches each week over 43,000 subscribers, and, under the able editorship of Dr. George H. Simmons, has become the leading professional magazine in the world.

The medical profession is to be congratulated on these evidences of a useful organization, but much remains to be done. In his individual capacity the medical man has not been found wanting. Go where you will in civilized lands, you will find the physician self-sacrificing, patient and charitable, upholding the honor and dignity of his noble calling. Collectively medical men do not have the influence which we might expect and without which great movements for the welfare of humanity can not be carried on. A lack of unity has prevented a realization of our hopes, and if we are to gain and maintain the pre-eminent position to which we are entitled we must unite for the common good.

The present organization of the American Medical Association is but a beginning: we must further the interests of this body unselfishly, not for ourselves alone, but that we may better fulfill our sacred obligations to mankind. The people must be educated up to a point where they can understand the broad humanitarianism of modern medicine. Society appreciates the saving of a sick person's life by the skilled physician, but fails to see the priceless gifts to the human race made by preventive medicine and sanitary science. It views everything in detail and misses the perspective. We have failed to secure the support of the mass of the people to much-needed sanitary reforms, because we have appealed to them as one individual to another without the weight of an authoritative organization.

That the people are ignorant of medical affairs is due to bad education rather than prejudice. They are more

than two decades behind advanced medical thought; it is our duty to keep them better informed. The theory of medicine did not contain the essential principles of a science until within the last quarter of a century. Originally a part of priestcraft, the profession had its beginnings in a time of mysticism and superstition. Anatomy, gross pathology and chemistry were among the early foundation stones which made progress possible. Clinical treatment was based on a very few specific remedies and a considerable number of drugs of proved value in the cure or alleviation of disease. But, lacking a sound theory of causation, the results were not much better in the average self-limited malady than those claimed by the various "systems" based on the giving of inert or useless remedies which, like the incantation of the Indian medicine man, kept the patient and friends interested until cure came about through natural processes. The public found that the large majority of sick persons got well under any, all or no treatment, and, not rightly understanding the reason, have never been able to comprehend why one method or form of treatment, as long as it apparently yielded about the same average of results, was not as good as another.

The germ theory promulgated by Pasteur and given surgical significance by Lister, strengthened our foundation by adding to it the long-sought-for causation of the majority of diseases, and this, with the aid of experimental research, has led the practice of medicine out of the wilderness and established it as one of the exact sciences.

New and fundamental truths have followed each other so rapidly that we have scarcely been able to digest them and much less can we expect the public to have kept pace. The layman's view is that of twenty-five years ago. He accepts with avidity new dogmas and "pathys" based on theories incredibly foolish in the light of modern investigation, and we have allowed him to become fixed in these beliefs. We have permitted the public to be educated by "patent-medicine" advertisements and the voluble charlatanism of the commercially interested. In return we are classed with these schemers, and efforts for the general good are believed to be selfishly inspired.

The Utopianism of our profession is too idealistic for ready comprehension in this commercial age. The time has come for the public to be taken into our confidence; if we wish better results we must enlighten the people, for with them lies the final word.

THE PROFESSION AND THE PUBLIC.

General sanitary matters of the greatest importance are becoming understood through medical influences. The public has been and is being educated in regard to the "great white plague," tuberculosis, and statistics are beginning to show the effect of this diffusion of knowledge. In Massachusetts and some other states a committee has been appointed in each district to promulgate measures for the relief and control of tuberculosis. This should be imitated in every state in the Union.

We can already see the good which has resulted from the teaching of the habits of mosquitoes, the short distances they travel from their breeding places, and especially the necessity for the quarantine of patients afflicted with yellow fever and malaria, not directly to protect mankind, but to prevent infection of the little pests who act as carriers of the contagious micro-organisms.

Society must be taught the early symptoms of cancer, the greatest foe of humanity, that its manifestations may be recognized while in the curable period. A propaganda of this kind, inaugurated by the profession of Germany, has borne fruit.

The typhoid-fever crime of cities through polluted water supply is not the least of the many branches of popular education. There is no reason why a man who has become infected with typhoid from a city's neglect should not sue for damages as he would for personal injury sustained from falling through a defective sidewalk. Unavoidable sickness is bad enough, but when we stop to consider that the life of the individual is worth \$5,000 to the state, and that those who recover undergo great disability and expense, the continuance of unsanitary conditions is criminal. The experience of Vienna, which was converted from a typhoid center to one of freedom from such outbreaks by bringing in a pure water supply, has now been repeated over and over again in every civilized land. Yet hundreds of deaths from this preventable source yearly attest that the lesson has not yet been learned.

How can the work of education be best continued? The answer, as shown by our very efficient chairman of the Committee on Organization, Dr. J. N. McCormack, is through the local society. Occasional meetings to which the public shall be invited must be devoted to questions of general interest, and the proceedings published in the local newspapers. The county society must become the unit, and the allied professions of pharmacy and dentistry urged to attend and take part in the deliberations.

To the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Colliers' Weekly* the public owe the successful crusade against poisonous substances and intoxicating beverages which are sold under the guise of "patent medicines," patent only in the sense that the name is copyrighted; the constituents can be changed at any time and in any way.

Do you think that our American mothers will continue to give "Kopp's Baby's Friend" and "Mother Winslow's Soothing Syrup" to their babes when they find that these mixtures contain opium and that instead of securing rest the little ones are narcotized and that many deaths are directly attributable to this cause?

Will the American people continue to use Bromo Seltzer and similar dangerous preparations to an extent which causes them to exhibit blueness of the skin surfaces from poisonous coal-tar products, or become victims of drug habits from cocaine catarrh cures, when they discover the harmful and dangerous character of these agents?

Will our prominent people, statesmen, politicians, ministers and ladies of note continue to allow their photographs over signed testimonials to be published, telling their fellow-citizens how much better they have felt after taking Peruna, Warner's Safe Cure and the various Nervines and Tonics, when they find that most of these preparations depend on alcohol for the stimulating effects which they describe? The success of most "patent medicines" depend on the fact that they contain drugs and stimulants which create a craving and must be repeated. Once get the public conscience awakened

and we will have a demand that every "patent medicine," before being sold, shall have its exact component parts printed on its label, and its claims to cure verified by scientific investigation. The action of the Postoffice Department in denying the use of the mail service to some of the worst offenders against common decency is to be commended.

PUBLIC HEALTH LEGISLATION.

One of the few misfortunes of the individual freedom afforded by a republican form of government is that it enables the most ignorant man, through prejudice, to interfere with and delay needed legislation, with the result that, by the time the law can be passed, the immediate object to be obtained has often disappeared.

In Germany compulsory vaccination has practically caused smallpox to disappear from the army and country, a person properly protected being immune. In the state of Minnesota inability to enforce vaccination in the late smallpox epidemic permitted, from a few sources, 27,876 persons to become infected with this disorder; all due to a small but vociferous band of anti-vaccination agitators.

Contagious disease in any place is not a matter of local or state interest alone, as the ease and freedom of transportation render local control impracticable and properly place it in the hands of the general government.

The keenness with which the American people are watching the affairs at Panama argues well for the future. The communication of Dr. Charles A. L. Reed awakened public interest. His portrayal of red tape and obstruction to sanitation in the Canal Zone has resulted in obtaining for that most able army medical officer, Colonel Gorgas, power to carry out the necessary reforms and has made the Canal Zone the most sanitary place in Latin America.

Compare our record in the Spanish-American War with that of the Japanese in the war with Russia. We had 14 deaths from disease to 1 from wounds and more than 95 per cent. due to disregard of the simplest problems in sanitation—therefore, unnecessary and avoidable. In the Japanese army there were 4 deaths from wounds to 1 from disease, a difference of 56 to 1. This was not due to the fact that the Japanese had superior knowledge, but that their medical officers were thoroughly organized and in sanitary matters were supreme. The knowledge which they used was obtained in western institutions and was the product of the Occidental, not the Oriental, civilization.

The army and navy medical departments have worked intelligently against overwhelming odds. Their individual members have international reputations honestly achieved. Their schools for the special training of their men are in the highest degree efficient and deserving of every praise; but the departments have been so small as to be unable to act even as nuclei about which in time of war competent forces could be gathered and the militia of our country enter into conflict fearfully handicapped. The indications, however, are that these matters will now be rectified, and if so it will guarantee to the patriotic American that should he again be called on to serve his country his enemies would be in front and that he will not be destroyed by his own side through neglect of sanitary laws.

The United States Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service has been and is doing splendid work in sanitation. Its skilled investigators have revolutionized quarantine measures and have placed preventive medicine on a solid basis. Their powers should be extended so that such unnecessary outbreaks as occurred in New

Orleans shall not be repeated. They should be given control of national quarantine in all its phases.

MEDICAL EDUCATION, STATE LICENSURE AND RECIPROCITY.

What is needed is a higher standard of requirements and more and better supervision of professional schools. The Council on Medical Education is working hard and is now in a position not only to show what should be done, but to initiate needed reforms. No more important work has ever been taken up by the profession. At the present time medical education is uncontrolled and each state has its own standard of requirements. We can not rid ourselves of dogmas and "pathys" until we can secure a universal primary law as to the minimum amount of knowledge on fundamental branches. To accomplish this the American Medical Association must co-operate with and encourage medical colleges to do better work. The profession owes it to itself to investigate in some manner what the schools are actually doing and to make it known whether or not they fulfill their obligations to the student. No well-conducted college could object to such reasonable supervision.

Another question of great importance is that of reciprocity in medical license. The conditions now are well-nigh intolerable and restrain the individual freedom guaranteed by the Constitution. The boundaries between states are imaginary lines; yet a physician on one side of a border can not relieve human suffering on the opposite side without becoming amenable to the law or subjecting himself to vexatious examinations which he has already successfully passed in his own state. This must be met and speedily by agreement between examining boards as to the minimum of requirements. After all, this is but a part of the educational problem. If we could solve this, licensing boards could at once adopt more uniform examinations and reciprocity.

RELATIONS TO INSURANCE COMPANIES, CORPORATIONS, ETC.

We come now to consider some abuses from which the physician suffers. It is a matter of professional pride that, in the general condemnation of the life insurance companies, although every other part of the control has been shown to be corrupt, no breath of scandal has touched the medical department. Yet the local examiner has the most cause of all to be dissatisfied. The New York Life, some years ago, cut the fee for examination 40 per cent., apparently not as a matter of economy, for at that time the most corrupt practices existed, but rather to enable the agent more easily to pass "new business" at any cost. This action has lately been imitated by the Equitable and some others and has resulted in forcing the resignation of many of their best examiners. The general officers have taken great credit on themselves for voluntarily reducing their salaries 20 per cent. It is a rank injustice that the one body of men who have emerged clean from the insurance scandals should suffer the most for the crimes of others. A thorough medical examination to prevent fraud by the admission of unsafe risks is essential. With few exceptions the line companies pay a fair fee and less should not be accepted. The casualty companies, such as the Maryland, are the worst offenders, and some concerted action should be taken to compel them to mend their evil ways.

Lodge practice is another scheme by which officers of an association draw salaries ostensibly to give medical services at a figure below the possible point at which a professional man can live and continue his education. The people are badly served, as competent physicians

can not be secured to do the work, and the whole scheme is properly condemned by the various medical associations all over the country.

Public service corporations abuse hospital privileges in a way that is no more or less than an open scandal. In Pittsburg the steel companies pay \$1.00 a day for the care of their injured men at the hospitals, and for the class of patients under discussion this can not be provided for less than \$1.60 per day. The companies pay the surgeons at the hospitals absolutely nothing for their services to its injured, which amount to thousands of dollars a year. The same condition exists with many of the large railroad and street car companies and other public corporations.

Hospital abuse by patients who are able to pay, through the neglect and indifference of the trustees, is prevalent, and thereby the profession is robbed of just returns for labor and the funds of charitable persons misused to an extent which is almost beyond belief. All hospitals should have competent individuals whose business it is to see that no one secures free treatment who is able to pay.

Some great hospitals go still further and receive any patient, rich or poor, allow him to have a suite of rooms and bath and several nurses if he can pay for the same; but will not allow him, even if he is willing to do so, to pay the surgeon who operates on or the medical man who takes care of him. If the patient is disposed to be more just than the trustees of the hospital, he can do so only by giving a gratuity at Christmas, as would be done with a servant. Such indignity should be resented by every right-feeling man.

It is a misfortune that the large majority of hospitals have no physicians among their directors. Hospital management is often extravagant and wasteful, due to official influence in furnishing comfortable berths for incompetent relatives or unfortunate friends in some salaried executive position.

Fortunately the list of grievances is not large, and I believe that they can be harmoniously adjusted if taken up with the proper authorities in a conciliatory spirit. Our first object must be to see that no poor person shall be subjected to the slightest inconvenience or annoyance and that every worthy charity shall have our united support; but we must look to it that the charitable practitioner's time, knowledge and skill shall not be misused.

THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AS A BUSINESS.

It is a hard matter to adjust the financial side of the practice of medicine; that doctors are poor collectors and bad investors is a notorious fact and makes them the easy prey of the various investment "gold bricks." A physician owes it to himself, to his family, to his profession, and especially to the community at large, to manage his finances well. Otherwise he can not pursue his studies and give to the sick his best efforts, which they have a right to expect and demand. No sensible man enters on a medical career with a view of making money. I have never known a physician who has become rich solely from this source, and it is better so, for beyond that reasonable competence which leaves him free to pursue his life work the care of money interferes with the highest aims of the true physician, and few who have been burdened with wealth have reached their ideal in a calling which makes no distinction between the rich and the poor.

One of the demoralizing tendencies in this commercial age is the money standard of success. Physicians are not called or chosen; accident or environment brings about their choice of profession. While professional life

broadens the mental horizon and increases sympathy, it can not change man's nature, and men who are unfair in business affairs are to be found in our midst.

The one crying evil, which fortunately is not widespread, is the giving of commissions—in other words, the selling of the confidence which the patient has in his practitioner—to some specialist who will divide the fee in return for reference of the case. The one secretly takes money from the patient without his consent, and the other, in order to complete the bargain, charges more than he should. This is equally harmful to the one who receives and to the one who gives. Such matters can not be kept secret, and I have personal knowledge of men of good attainments and remunerative practice who have been ruined through losing the confidence of their communities by this pernicious traffic. Some attempts have been made to justify it, but the very fact that it is secret shows that both parties are ashamed to have it known and is an acknowledgment of its moral obliquity.

Our relations with the allied profession of pharmacy are not on as ethical a footing as they were twenty years ago. Then the druggist was the faithful friend of the physician. To-day, in putting up from 50 to 60 per cent. of the prescriptions sent to him, the educated pharmacist can not use his skill as a chemist, but simply acts as a distributor of copyrighted preparations which the physician calls for a few times only to take up with something new and leave the shelves of the druggist filled with the unused remnants.

Many physicians compound their own prescriptions, to the detriment of the pharmacist. The proprietary medicine people have managed this very cleverly; to the medical profession they are continuously calling out that the druggist is "substituting;" with one hand they have given the physician remedies to dispense himself, and with the other furnished the druggist with "patent medicines" with which to compete with the physician, and these two natural allies have drifted apart. The average pharmacist can not live on physicians' prescriptions alone, but he should be treated justly, and both physician and druggist would profit by mutual concessions to the great benefit of the public.

The higher grade of pharmaceutical houses already see the danger to honest pharmacy in the forced promotion of "ethical" and fake nostrums under catchy names, and it is to be hoped, in the future, will confine themselves to the open compounding of legitimate preparations; and these and these only should be found on the advertising pages of reputable medical journals.

MEDICAL PROGRESS.

Graduation from a college is merely a commencement of a life study of medicine. Therefore, young men without special training under competent teachers should not be encouraged in wanton assaults on major surgical diseases unless justified by necessity. The future will demand schools for advanced training for those who desire to do special work.

The recent graduate in medicine should begin in his county society by contributions to the newer methods which will be interesting to the older men. This should be his kindergarten; from there he will carry his papers to the district meetings; and at the end of five years he will be competent to bring useful material to the state society and later to the sections of the American Medical Association.

In the practice of medicine the student days are never over. There is so much to be learned that a long and industrious life leaves one with the feeling that he is but

a beginner. The most important habit a young physician can form is the "daily study habit." Let him put in even one hour a day with the reading of journals and books of reference and much can be accomplished. He should keep an account of the time, and if something interferes for a day he should charge himself up with it. A two weeks' vacation means fourteen hours to be made up. Most men can do more, and no man has a right to do less, no matter how busy he may be. The leaders in our profession make a daily average of five or six times this amount of study the year round, in addition to the demands of an active practice.

The practitioner must make frequent trips away for the purpose of observation. In no other way can he avoid the rut of self-satisfied content, which checks advancement and limits usefulness. No amount of diligence as a student can take the place of personal contact with men in the same line of work.

What are the rewards of so laborious a life? They can not be measured, because there is no standard of comparison. To realize that one has devoted himself to the most holy of all callings, that without thought of reward he has alleviated the sufferings of the sick and added to the length and usefulness of human life, is a source of satisfaction money can not buy. I know many a man grown gray in the profession with little of a tangible nature to show as a result of his work, but who is not only contented with his lot, but proud to have served in the ranks, and who looks back on a life of privation and hardship for the benefit of humanity as a privilege which he is thankful has been vouchsafed him.

Let us continue to strive as individuals for the honor and dignity of our profession. In this we but follow out the aims and ideals of those who have gone before and prepared the way. But the great movements of the future can not be brought about by individual action. They must be initiated and controlled by united effort, and in no other way can the epoch-making truths of preventive medicine be made to bear fruit. Unity is the spirit of the times; it marks the difference between the old and the new.

The vital need of the medical profession is a harmonious organization—an organization that will encourage right thinking and good usage among ourselves, help to secure needed medical reforms, compel redress of grievances and promote and encourage the highest interests of its individual members; and in this lies the future usefulness of our profession as a whole.

Orations

THE NATURE AND PROGRESS OF MALIGNANT DISEASE.

ORATION ON SURGERY AT THE FIFTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL SESSION OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, BOSTON, JUNE 5-8, 1906.

JOSEPH D. BRYANT, M.D.
NEW YORK CITY.

My first words are words of thanks, profound and sincere thanks, addressed to my colleagues of the American Medical Association because of my estimation of the high honor conferred in inviting me to address you on this occasion. My first desire, the dominating desire of earnest appreciation, is that I may say something that will justify the choice of my colleagues and my presence before you. My first hope, the fond hope which I most cherish at this time, is that some one who may be influenced by what I shall say will gain in comfort and