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THE DOCTOR AND THE COMMUNITY.*

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Mr. President, Members of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is no small honor which has come to me, and through which I am permitted to appear in this presence as the annual orator. When I consider the many distinguished men who have stood in this place in the more than sixty years of existence of this association, I am filled with an overpowering sense of the dignity of the office, and I here confess to a keen sense of my inability to measure up to the high standard set by them.

I have chosen to speak on "The Doctor and the Community," a subject altogether old, and yet one which must have to be restated anew by every member of our profession as he enters the professional arena. It involves the whole history of our noble profession, as well as every phase of the life and work of the doctor, apart from his mere professional attainments. To those of you who have solved the problems of relationship involved, what I say will nevertheless be of interest because of the point of view, possibly slightly different from that with which you have been accustomed to consider it. To the younger members of the profession, eager to get the experiences of others with which to chart their own way, the message will not be without value and meaning. I am sure.

In our consideration of society, that is, the living of men and women together, acting out their lives in conventional ways, there are a

thousand factors which enter into its warp and woof. The new science of sociology has undertaken to handle with a degree of thoroughness and attention never before attempted in this complex thing which I have just denominated as society, and man has come to know himself in a new way, by better understanding and appreciating his relation to the mass. Without stopping here to descant upon the importance and value of sociology, which I cannot refrain, however, from commending most heartily to you, it may be said that the doctor is one of the most potent and vital factors which enters into the life and affairs of man in this world. It will be the purpose of this address in a brief way to somewhat describe his training, his usefulness, his influence, what he ought to be, and with some observations on the professional future.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

The historical records which we possess concerning the progress of medicine are scanty and uncertain. Those writers who have investigated the subject tell us that Egypt was the country in which the art of medicine, as well as the other arts of civilized life, was first cultivated with any degree of success. Here it was that medicine first advanced to the point where it became a distinct profession. The probability is that at first the priests were also the physicians. This, too, appears to have been the case with the Greeks and the Jews. In fact, when Greece had learned the

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healing art from the Egyptians, the religious temples became the hospitals of the people in many cases. Whether or not the science of medicine had advanced to the extent of great usefulness, the system of diet and rest enjoyed in these hospitals was of great value to the sick, especially accompanied as it was by the cure of the soul.

At the time Herodotus visited Egypt the several branches of medicine were specialized, the monopoly being transmitted through certain families, from father to son. Certainly this custom retarded the progress of the science, and the communities in which it was practiced suffered thereby. Although we have been in the habit of attributing to Egypt the parenthood of the arts and sciences, there are some scholars who believe that the honor belongs to Assyria. These latter people have not left the memorials of their development as have the Egyptians, and hence may not be accorded what is justly theirs for lack of evidence. The priests of that nation, as in all other cases among the ancients, seem to have been the depositories of all the learning of the times, that of medicine among the rest. The dextrous application of magical arts, and such other means as tended to impress the minds of the people with a sense of their power over the operations of nature, were resorted to, while what actual knowledge they possessed was carefully concealed under the guise of mystery and superstition.

In the writings of Moses there are frequent references to the practice of medicine among the Jews; and more especially in the treatment of leprosy. The priests appear to have been the practitioners.

The art of medicine acquired the dignity of a science in Greece under the genius of a certain wise man called Hippocrates, having borrowed, as was the wont of Greece with all the arts and sciences, what learning was possessed by her neighbors. Another notable Greek who left his impress upon medicine for hundreds of years was one Chiron, who was the teacher

of Aesculapius. The greatness of Chiron in the minds of the community in which he practiced and taught all the aspiring doctors of the times was evidently pre-eminent, for it is recorded in the ancient legends that his skill in practice was such that his own death was caused by Pluto's jealousy in consequence of the number of individuals whom he rescued from the grave.

Much of the treatment in those times depended upon appeals to the imagination. Some of the practices, however, which were enjoined were of a dietetic nature and were directly conducive to cleanliness and temperance, both of which were of benefit to the community.

Surgery was practiced in this development of the art of healing, and blood-letting was well established in its long career. We have no distinct evidence as to how far internal remedies were administered. Vegetable compounds were used, but we have no evidence as to what plants.

The doctors of those days made careful records on tablets of the nature of the diseases of their patients, and of the treatment employed, and these tablets were deposited in the temples, and have greatly aided modern research in learning of the development of medicine dating back to this period.

As was to be expected, rivalry sprang up between the different branches of the then established profession and new schools were put into operation.

The body was regarded as sacred by the ancients, and anatomy was practiced only upon animals until the time of Pythagoras, who devoted the greater part of his long life to the pursuit of a knowledge of nature. Among the departments of science which he explored was the structure and actions of the human frame. His custom was to travel into other countries than his own and learn of others all that was to be learned.

Acron was the first to apply philosophical reasoning to the science of medicine. At that time schools for the practice of physical de-

velopment looking to the soundness of health brought into existence the famous Greek gymnasiums, the directors of which were called gymnasiarchs, and the form of treatment defined as gymnastic. External and internal diseases were treated in these establishments by those in charge.

Another Greek who left his mark on the history of medicine was one Galen, who left behind him over two hundred treatises directly or indirectly connected with medicine. For over a thousand years the development of the science made no progress beyond the point where this great physician had rested his labors. His rank in the world of medicine has been compared with the rank of Aristotle in the world of general science. Undoubtedly he was a man of great talents and extensive acquirements. He reduced all his knowledge of facts to general theoretical principles.

From Greece the art of medicine traveled to Rome, but it was slow in becoming established, and through the priesthood and temples as originally in Egypt and Greece. For many centuries the progress of learning and science was suspended and the Dark Ages obscure all that might have been accomplished. Superstition, magic and witchcraft superseded the general advancement of medicine, and the doctor was the fakir at his zenith. With the revival of learning, with the establishing of printing, with the invention of rapid modes of travel, and with general enlightenment, the community has benefited through its doctor as never before in the world's history. All new discoveries in the laboratory, in the clinic, in the study, are the common property for the world's good, and the doctor who lives in the most remote backwoods has no longer a legitimate excuse for ignorance in his profession. Knowledge is offered him, is forced upon him by an enlightened public sentiment. The progress was slow and came down with travail and great oppression to those who were its first fruits in learning, but the wealth of its history and the primacy of its importance to so-

ciety make it an interesting study for those who have the time and the inclination to explore the annals of its history.

HIS TRAINING.

Is there a man before me today who has come by his training in his profession without sacrifice? Perhaps it was not your sacrifice, but the sacrifice of the parents who stood back of you, ready to yield up the last penny of the little store that had been laid aside for the rainy day, or the dependence of age, that you might have the educational opportunities that would fit you for the noble profession you had chosen. Perhaps it was you, yourself, teaching in vacation times, stinting with food and heat and lights to eke out the small hoard so laboriously accumulated till the next vacation of your medical college, and the summer school again, with the cheap food, poor housing and meagre living in every way, until that eventful day of finals.

There are young men in this association who have striven hard for their diplomas, but their striving has gone into that great school of discipline that makes great doctors and great men. Through this struggle you have learned to sympathize with that great bulk of humanity whose daily life spells sacrifice. Perhaps your training did not cost you the self-denial that your fellow-student paid for his, in the way of close economy, but it cost you self-denial in the way of pleasure. It cost you the midnight oil, work, fear of failure, the dig and grind, and the dig with the vim and purpose of the forester who hews down the trees for his day's task. There is no easy road to a doctor's training. The field is so broad, the responsibility so great, the profession so sacred that those who choose it dare not slight its opportunities of preparation.

HIS USEFULNESS.

In every science, and every art, in every business, and every trade, mistakes are made. They are a part of all men. But doctors practice their science and their art on *life*. With that material a mistake may be irreparable.

The confidence that the community places in its doctor is something astounding. Life, that most precious of all heritages, is entrusted into their hands every day. People may talk of the fine arts, but there is no finer art in all the world than medicine. By medicine we do not mean simply drugs, but all that belongs to the modern meaning of the word. It was the doctor who gave to the world the truth about itself, its enemies, its friends, its rules of living, and what of salvation it has today in a material sense. It was the doctor that told the community it must have fresh air to breathe, or else die of the great white plague. It was he who taught the health value of sunshine, of draining, of pure water, of exercise, of diet. It was he who taught the community how to arrest the scourges of fevers, of smallpox, of all the diseases that have ravaged the earth since the beginning.

The doctor has justified his existence, has established his usefulness, and has made himself indispensable to every community where his fellows dwell. Doctors have come to mean so much because they have come to regard their lifework as indispensable to man, and spare themselves no labor to make themselves of use. They have learned humility with their learning, and have come to care less that they make a favorable impression personally than that they know their work. These men who are the community doctors are humble because they are scourged with their professional difficulties, scourged with elusive diseases, scourged with competition, and scourged with the realization of their responsibility.

But with all these things the profession is as near as any to Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The spirit of practice gives us these, and our usefulness to the community in which we live is in proportion to our observance of the laws of this great trinity of virtues.

HIS INFLUENCE.

The advice of the doctor is respected because he is a man of thought, of character, of discretion. The tribute is a well deserved one.

The average doctor is a man to be trusted. There are few men of the profession who are unworthy of confidence, and when such a one shows his head every reputable doctor ought to brand him as false to the loftiest standards of manhood. Not only among individual classes is the community doctor looked upon as a man of influence, but the world at large respects him for his very work's sake. There is no household, however exclusive, but opens its doors to him socially as well as professionally if he is worthy of his cloth. Somewhat of the influence and power that belonged to the fathers of the profession, those old Abyssinian, those Egyptian, those Greek and those Roman priests who were all powerful in the community, has lingered about the traditions of the calling of the doctor, and next to its spiritual adviser, the household, the community regards the cure of its body.

HIS STANDARDS.

Some of you have not forgotten the spirit of resentment you nourished when you sat before the examining board and rebelled against what you regarded as catch questions designed especially for your defeat that these men already in, might have the fewer competitors. Now that you know the answer to those questions you are not quite so hard on the men who propounded them, and the longer you exercise your calling the more certain you will become that the board is right in maintaining a high standard of knowledge for admission to its sacred ranks.

At English common law and the Roman civil law the right to practice medicine and surgery was not regulated by law, but was free to be engaged in by all. But the necessity of prescribing qualifications for these professions became so apparent that in the year 1422, during the reign of Henry V., Parliament passed a statute which provided heavy fines and imprisonment for practicing medicine or surgery unless the person had studied in some university and was at least a bachelor of science. As a result of this law these doctors acquired the

names or titles of physicians and surgeons. the one to prescribe drugs and medicines, the other to cure diseases by manual treatment or surgical operations. English statutes were thereafter passed relating to the same subject, and most of the American states have passed statutes prescribing qualifications to practice medicine or surgery, or even to sell drugs and medical supplies. The constitutionality of these statutes was at first assailed, it being claimed that they were unconstitutional because they unjustly discriminated in favor of some, and deprived the citizen of his property without due process of law; that they were an unauthorized denial of the citizen's right to practice a noble profession; that such regulations and restrictions could not be imposed as to the practice of medicine any more than in the case of the farmer or mechanic in the pursuit of their avocations. But it has been uniformly held by most of the state and federal courts, and by the United States Supreme Court that such laws were the valid exercise of the states' "police powers," upon the ground that they were necessary to protect the public health against quacks and fakirs. This police power of the states has been uniformly held sufficient to provide for the general welfare of the people by prescribing all such regulations as in the judgment of the legislature will secure or tend to secure them against the consequences of ignorance and incapacity, deception and fraud. Our own state has followed in line with the English parliament and the legislatures of other states, and hence a great part of the statutory law of this state, which has been made a part of the code law of this state, pertains to health and quarantine, and prescribes qualifications and examinations for those who practice the medical profession, or even that of the apothecary. These statutes provide for a state board of health, and for county boards of health, and prescribes the duties and jurisdiction of these boards, and in fact, the public health and quarantine is placed

under the management of these boards of health.

It must be said to the honor of our legislature, and we believe to their judgment, that they have in a large measure enacted these laws as prepared and suggested by members of our profession, and by these medical state and county boards, so that if these laws are not what they should be, we, ourselves, are in a large measure responsible. On the other hand, if they are what they should be, we are entitled to the credit. It will be seen from inspection of these laws that our profession is one of great honor, importance and respect; that it is even so written in the law. Hence, if the standard of the medical profession in Alabama is not what it should be, it is your duty and mine to proceed at once to make it what it ought to be.

WHAT SHOULD A DOCTOR BE?

First of all he should be a Christian. The needs of spirituality will come to him every day of his practice, the needs for giving consolation, the needs for that patience that is the peculiar possession of the man of pure and undefiled faith. He should not only have Christian tendencies, but should be a part of the religious life of his community. If he is this he cannot be a man of dissipation, a man given to vice, to habits that disqualify him for the greatest capacity of usefulness and intelligent service within the scope of his natural endowments. He should be the kind of man to whom you can entrust the most nurtured members of your household, not only in a professional way, but in the charmed circle of the home socially.

He should be careful of his dress, neat in his habits, polite in his manners, and discreet in his conversation.

The worst type of man is a gossiping doctor. The man who is entrusted with secrets of the family to which he ministers should hold those secrets as inviolate as a Mason holds his oath. To you is shown the skeleton in

the closet with confidence and with that tragic dependence that knows no other succor, and the doctor who would betray such confidences should be shut out of his guild with the same sure handed justice as is shown him who is guilty of malpractice or cloaking his murderous instincts beneath the mantle of his honorable calling.

Too often is it the case that the successful practitioner neglects his studies. The city doctors, with their hospital clinics have not the great need of keeping up with the advance of their profession as has the country doctor, for day by day they come in actual contact with the things that the man in the small community must learn by reading. The moment a doctor loses his keenness for his profession, lets down his ambition for doing the greatest amount of service, and doing it as well as any other man, then he is a community menace. The most dangerous man in that community may be the egotist who soon becomes the ignoramus. Indolence he cannot allow himself. Work and study without ceasing must govern the doctor's course in life, that he may be to humanity what he ought to be, an intelligent minister to its needs and a potent obstacle to the ills and sufferings with which it is threatened.

In this day of marked progressiveness, when nothing seems longer impossible, when nature's storehouse, filled with its countless treasures, is opening to the explorer its most hidden recesses; when art and science are lighting up a pathway to accomplishments which but a quarter of a century ago would have been considered, if considered at all, as idle dreams; when inventive genius in persistent pursuit of its ideas is fashioning into facts every conceivable fancy for mankind's convenience, it is a matter of pride to the doctor that the medical profession is keeping step in the modern march of progress, and by research, investigation, experiment, and scientific achievements, is equip-

ping itself the better to fulfill its mission as a benefactor to the world.

The physician in his reveries looks out upon the immense domain of medicine and he is appalled at its magnitude. This great expanse which spreads around him in all directions, farther than one human mind can expand, is divided into numerous fields known as specialties. Some of these he notes already in a high state of cultivation, while some are hardly rid of their underbrush. As he ponders he is bewildered by their grandeur, and he wonders how so much work as is even now done could have been compassed by human hands and brain. He is impressed with the value of the profession to mankind. He is still more impressed with the burden of responsibility he sees resting upon the shoulders of the workers in many of these fields. And he himself decides to enter into this domain and to go through these fields. He would not go alone, but he invites you to go with him and there see for yourself something of the greatness of this profession, of its usefulness to mankind, and of the trials and hardships and responsibilities of its many individual members—these heroes who, in their efforts to prolong the lives of others, give up their own lives long perhaps before the allotted time.

In his dreams he can see, only a short distance in the future, the unveiling of a multitude of scientific facts that will astonish the world. "Histology is being studied as never before; biological experiments are being made by master minds; pathological processes are better understood; and always some great discovery is near at hand. In his musings he can see the results of the investigations of the great leaders of his profession in the early dawn. He believes that in the physiological properties of the white corpuscles and their nuclei, and in the blood serum, lies hidden—but no longer deeply hidden—the key to the treatment of the infectious and contagious diseases." From earth, sea and sky he exacts

aid; from the fields and the forests he draws his coadjutors; nature and nature's forces are made his co-workers. His mission is to serve, and he commands to his assistance every agent that he may make the better servant.

CONCLUSION.

And now, as I conclude, I feel that what I have endeavored in a general sense to express as to the close relationship of the doctor and the community is more sensibly evident in a specific way to the happy harmony that exists here at home, in our own great state, between our profession and all other component parts of the body politic. The laws of our state have armed the medical profession with an authority extensive, and it is a satisfactory thought that as great as is the privilege granted, the duty, just as great—devolving, and the responsibility just as potent—incumbent, have been exercised, discharged and fulfilled without abusing the authority entrusted, and with an eye single to, and an idea intent upon, and a desire ardent for the best interests and the general uplifting of the whole community.

The Alabama doctor loves the community of Alabama, for he knows himself to be a factor in a community happy, progressive and prosperous—a community whose natural resources are unsurpassed by any other community in the grand community of the Union—a community with a past cherished by us all for a glorious history, a great heritage, a grand legacy—for the heroic deeds of patriotism at home and at the battle front; for the eloquence of orators, the purity of statesmanship, the genius of literature and the accomplishments of science. A community with a present thrilled with active endeavor and pulsating with the throbs of grand efforts and glorious achievements; a community with a future spanned by a rainbow of brightest promise and portentous of possibilities beyond the fancy of the most optimistic dreamer. As doctors and as individuals we love our state, we rejoice in her progress, we stand ready to

protect her interests in the details of duty demanded of our profession.

We are proud of the forward march Alabama is making in education—of her common schools, her high schools, her colleges, her state institutions—all at work, with heart and will to raise our citizenship to a higher standard of intellectual manhood and womanhood.

We are proud of our cities—Mobile, quiet, substantial, solid, steady in her growth; Montgomery, secure in the wealth of her agricultural surroundings, and her financial institutions; Birmingham, once the magic now the magnificent city, the pride of Alabama, whose surrounding resources have invited the investment of the capital of the world, which has become the home of energetic manhood drawn from every section of the Union—a community in Alabama which has adopted a son and trained him up in such a way to go that today through his accomplishments, through his sterling qualities of manhood, his strength of character, his sound doctrine of public policies, his merit as a statesman, his recognized ability as a leader, has turned the eyes of the nation upon him and through him upon the home of his adoption. We doctors in Alabama are proud to claim him as our fellow-citizen and I feel that I voice the sentiment of the medical profession all over Alabama as well as the unanimous sentiment of all patriotic Alabamians of whatever profession, avocation or trade when I say that we are proud that we live in a community as a commonwealth, which took from Kentucky him who possessed those qualities of manhood, which this commonwealth could so fashion and form and stimulate that today we as a state can offer to the Nation's consideration him who is in every way worthy and meriting the highest honor in the gift of our government. We doctors do not hesitate to say with one accord that he is our prescription to the great party of which there is no more worthy leader, as a certain cure and sure relief from past political ills and ailments, a tonic, to strengthen

the vitality of its system, a prophylactic to ward off continued defeat, and a remedy to bring the party to the healthy condition of certain victory. Like his other fellow citizens we want Underwood to be the nominee of his party and the President of the Nation.

Our interests are ever a part of Alabama's interests, and it shall be the object of our profession in the future as it has been in the

past, to join hands and hearts with all other good citizens in the state in contributing aid to a higher advancement of all things necessary to place Alabama on a higher plane, and to lend our influence and earnest efforts in behalf of our great community, to the end that all hopes for full development in affairs—Educational, Moral, and Material may meet with full fruition and happy realization.

MONITOR'S ADDRESS.*

By S. W. WELCH, M.D.,
Talladega, Ala.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: Some years ago when the late distinguished Dr. W. M. Wilkerson was requested to read the Monitor's address, he wrote the President and asked him what he had done that he should punish him in this manner. I have thought much of that query since I set about writing this address I am reading to you tonight, and more than once I wondered if the same query would not come to me again this time from the audience. I am not given to preaching, and my relationship to King Solomon—I have been admonished—is so very remote that I do not feel justified in making a public effort to correct the faults of my brethren. I go about this day's business with considerable trepidation. Had I no fears for myself I would have some anxiety for the office of Monitor. Some years ago the lamented Marechal, the then President of this association, invited me to read the Historian's address in the City of Birmingham. I read it, and there have been no more historians in the State Medical Association from that good hour. Strange coincidence will you say? No sooner was it bruited abroad that I was to read the Monitor's address than there were heard mutterings among the powers that be for the total abrogation of all public meetings. It reminds me of an experience I had in

my early professional career. I was sent for in haste to see one of the friends of my boyhood. I found him in extreme condition. "Doc," he said, very plaintively, "I am going mighty fast. I want you to sing to me." "Man alive," I said, in astonishment, "I am not in the singing business." "But, Doc," he insisted, "I am going fast; sing to me." There was nothing else to do, so I sang. He died!

I am glad to meet this audience tonight in this center of culture and push and energy and things accomplished. I want to discuss with you the ends and aims and purposes of the Alabama State Medical Association in the light of the past, the present and the future. I feel safe in saying that we have been much misunderstood from time to time by the general public as well as by some of our brethren, and I shall ask you to give me your attention while I discuss with you some of the things we have accomplished within the past few years.

The association was reorganized in the spring of 1873 in the City of Tuscaloosa, and incorporated as the State Board of Health. This action was confirmed by the General Assembly and approved by the Governor February 19, 1875. The county medical societies were constituted boards of health for their respective counties under the general super-

* Read before the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, at Birmingham, April 16-19, 1912.