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THE ORGANIZED MEDICAL PROFESSION AND SOME OF ITS ENEMIES.*

EDWARD JACKSON, M.D.
DENVER.

THE BASIS OF AN ORGANIZED PROFESSION.

The medical profession becomes organized, medical associations are formed, principally for these two purposes: to increase and diffuse medical knowledge and to elevate and maintain the ethical standards of the profession. Other important purposes may be served by our professional organizations. The guidance of the community in relation to matters of public health and hygiene is often, and properly, matter for consideration in medical societies; and special societies may be formed among the medical profession devoted to such particular purposes, as for the eradication of tuberculosis or trachoma. Again, medical societies sometimes act to protect the interests of the individual members of the profession; as by union for defense against suits for malpractice, or the relief of physicians who have been specially unfortunate, or their families. But this work, too, is taken up after the profession has been organized. Such objects do not primarily bring about professional organization.

1. Maintenance of an Ethical Standard.—The vital purpose that brings about organization, that sustains and perfects it, is the determination to make the profession more efficient and valuable to the community, by the improvement and diffusion of knowledge among its members, and the maintenance of an ethical standard. A little consideration should show why this is so. The profession exists to render a certain service to the community. In so far as it fulfils this service it is worthy of perpetuation and support. If it should fail to render valuable service it ought to go out of existence and ultimately would do so. Its value to the community, like the value of any other profession, depends on the fidelity with which its members serve the interests of their clients. Between a man and his medical adviser the relation is this: the patient agrees, explicitly or implicitly, to pay the physician his fee; the physician agrees to employ all his knowledge and skill for the benefit of the patient. There can be no matching of knowledge of the market, as between salesman and buyer. There can be no use of conscious power, on the one hand, to drive an extortionate bargain with dire need, on the other. To apply the rules of conduct recognized as proper in ordinary commercial transactions to the relation of physician and patient is to destroy that relation. Hence, the peculiar need of professional organization to define, maintain and enforce a standard of professional ethics.

2. Diffusion of Medical Knowledge.—Then medical organizations attempt to improve, extend and diffuse professional knowledge. It is the possession of certain knowledge and technical skill that justifies the recognition of a man or woman as entitled to membership in the medical profession. Without the possession of such knowledge and skill, no well-informed person would for an instant regard him or her as a physician or surgeon. Let us consider for an instant how this mass of professional knowledge and technical acquirement has come into existence. It has been wholly through the communication of the new fact or method discovered by one member of the profession to his fellows. Take all the original discoveries attributable to any one member of the medical profession, the most able, the most indefatigable, the most favorably situated, through the longest working life. How utterly insignificant would these be as a basis for the practice of medicine; as compared with what each of us has learned from his predecessors and contemporaries in the profession. Without the diffusion of medical knowledge no medical profession would or could exist.

Consider how our appreciation of any medical truth is arrived at. Take the history of tuberculin. Announced to the laity by one of the most acute observers of the age, after years of study and careful laboratory experiments, Koch's discovery, for a time, seemed to serve only to raise false hopes, to increase suffering, to destroy life, to bring contempt on scientific medicine. But announced to the profession, placed in the hands of a host of interested workers, there have already emerged certain facts that have made tuberculin a real benefit; and give promise, through the general sifting and trying process to which the whole profession subjects the observations that are brought before it, of benefits to match our earlier hopes. With an organized medical profession we possess an authoritative tribunal capable in the end of fixing the value of each proposed measure that is frankly brought before it.

ENEMIES OF THE PROFESSION AND THE GROUNDS OF WARFARE.

Our organized profession rests on these two things: recognition of the supremacy of the interests of the patient and absolute frankness and honesty in statements of scientific fact. The enemies of the organized medical profession, its essential enemies, those whose opposition to it is radical and vital, are those who would place other interests on a par with those of our patients; or who would practice or permit secrecy or untruth to be mixed inextricably with established scientific facts. Between the medical profession and all interests or individuals who place themselves in the attitude of opposition to our vital principles, there must always be warfare; a struggle that can not end until secrecy and dishonesty as to therapeutics, until willingness to sacrifice the interests of the

* Read before the Medical Society of the City and County of Denver, Oct. 2, 1906.

patient to other interests are swept away; or the medical profession itself is annihilated.

Let us not underestimate the importance, the severity or the duration of this warfare. On the one side the medical profession springs from the needs and the best impulses of humanity. On the other side the opposition to it draws its vitality from selfishness, deeply rooted and universal as the life of our race. The struggle commenced before we were born; it will go on when we are dead. Our duty is to see that we understand the present phase of it, as well as we can, and give what little influence we have to the support of the right.

PROPRIETARY MEDICINES, ETHICAL AND UNETHICAL.

The present phase of the subject deals with the question of proprietary medicines. "Patent medicines" is the popular term for the class, but those to which the term "patent" strictly applies raise a relatively unimportant side issue. The "patent" medicine may represent interests to some extent opposed to those of our patients, but a patent is only granted for a limited time and based on definite published statements. If such statements are not true, their falsity can readily be demonstrated.

In this country, at least, the important issue is with regard to preparations sold under a registered trade-mark. We can have preparations sold under a copyrighted trade-mark that are strictly ethical. But such preparations must conform to the following requirements: their composition, or exact method of manufacture, and their physiologic and therapeutic action, must be generally known. They must be sold under their ordinary pharmaceutical names which any person is privileged to use, so that all may understand what the medicine purports to be. The trade-mark or copyrighted portion of the name must only indicate the responsible maker, thus becoming a guarantee of purity and quality.

Squibb's ether is a type of such a preparation. Ether is a drug, the composition, physiologic action, uses and dangers of which are well known. False claims for such a drug would be promptly challenged and could not seriously mislead any one who took care to inform himself on the subject. If the manufacturers of a particular brand of ether can produce one of greater purity, more free from irritants, they deserve the reward of superior skill; while the profession and the public can profit by the guarantee of a reliable name. The same may be true of a particular brand of diphtheria antitoxin, if proven to be more perfectly aseptic or more efficient than that produced by a rival manufacturer.

But a name can be copyrighted without any definite statements as to the chemical composition or method of preparation of the substance it represents. When what is claimed to be a new chemical compound is put forth, with claims of therapeutic value, based not on the general experience of the profession, but on the alleged results attained by some anonymous or unknown experimenter, generally in the pay of the proprietors of the copyright, the act violates the fundamental principles of organized medicine. It is an act of aggressive warfare on the part of an enemy of medical science, and as such must be regarded and met by every loyal member of our profession.

Even though the composition of a new preparation be frankly stated, the copyrighting of the name by which it will be commonly known should be regarded with suspicion. The physician who prescribes a substance by its copyrighted name places himself at the mercy of the

proprietors of that name. He must have full faith in their honesty and intention to put forth a valuable drug, the use of which shall be wholly subject to the discretion of physicians; but the copyrighted name is an asset that may pass, as it often has done, to the hands of those who may vary the composition of the preparation, or the manner of placing it before the public. Even aside from secrecy or misleading statements, when the physician prescribes acetanilid under the name antikamnia, amonol or phenalgin, what possible benefit is the use of such name to the patient, who pays from 100 to 500 per cent. more for the drug, or to the general public, or to any one except the proprietors of these copyrighted names, and those with whom they divide their profits?

IGNORANCE AND TREASON IN THE PROFESSION.

In the past, even in high places, ignorance and indifference to this matter have been so common, the evil has grown so gradually to its present gigantic proportions, that individual members of our profession can not be greatly blamed for some mistakes in this direction. But now that the issue has been raised by the American Medical Association; now that even the better lay magazines and newspapers have awakened to the enormity of the crime against the public of secret proprietary medicines, all members of our profession and all medical organizations are called on to take a positive stand with reference to this subject. There is need to arouse the professional conscience and also to inform the professional intelligence with regard to this subject.

The warning of Samuel Hopkins Adams¹ in his address before the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland is too true:

You have not, as a profession, an intelligent idea of the forces which you are fighting. . . . You are fighting a very keen and powerful enemy in the "patent medicine" man, or rather you are just beginning to fight him, for you have let him take the aggressive thus far. There is little about your profession that he does not know. When he misrepresents you he does it shrewdly. There is little about his profession that you do know.

In the present confused situation the danger is not from open avowed enemies, but from ignorance and treason in our own ranks. For ignorance there will soon be little excuse. The facts that have been published by THE JOURNAL of the American Medical Association and some of the journals of our state medical societies are within the reach of all who have a proper interest in the subject. For treason we may have to resort to sharper remedies than have yet seemed necessary. Let us remember that the Constitution of the United States defines treason as consisting "in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort." No narrower definition could possibly be sufficient.

Let us clear up this issue as much as we can. Our enemies are the vendors of unethical proprietary medicines, secret or put forward with extravagant claims. These men are engaged in getting out of the public all the money they can without coming in serious collision with the criminal law. They have no professional traditions; they have no special code of morality; they are engaged in a business in which the general morality taught in churches and schools is disregarded. They have no interest in the establishment of scientific truth. The proprietary medicine maker would not be satisfied with a true estimate of the action of the preparation he

1. Maryland Med. Jour., February, 1906.

puts before the public were it ten times more powerful and generally useful than any medicine yet known. The most nearly decent proprietor of such a preparation is spending a large part of his time and thought in exaggerating the virtues of his drug and minimizing its evil effects. His aim is to build up an impression, manufactured out of hope and based on credulity, which will cause people to buy his wares.

HOW THE PHYSICIAN IS MADE A CATSPA.W.

In accomplishing this aim he seeks the assistance of the medical profession, he studies the psychology of the medical man and employs such agencies as will best accomplish the object. He sows free samples broadcast, calculating that one prescription from one physician will pay all the expenses of sampling ten. He pays impecunious or renegade members of the profession for what purport to be scientific articles, making favorable mention of his drug. But especially he buys the advertising pages of the medical journals, with the good-will of the editorial management thrown in, to keep his blatant unsupported claims and skilfully worded suggestions forever before the eyes of our profession.

Thus are a multiplicity of worthless preparations, of false statements, and of distortions of facts brought to hinder the progress of scientific medicine even in the mind of the physician, and weaken his power to combat disease. Thus do our enemies damage the healing art and steal the confidence the community reposes in the physician and use it as an important aid in the creation of the false impression, through which they hope to amass fortunes—the very livery of heaven to serve the devil.

The time has come when the treason in our own ranks, which makes it possible and easy to use the reputation of medical men and medical journals against our profession and the interests of our patients, should be recognized and characterized in its true light. The proprietary medicine manufacturers fight the medical profession in every state in the Union, with lobbyists in the hall of every legislature, and with clauses like these inserted in their contracts with the newspapers:

1. It is agreed in case any law or laws are enacted, either state or national, harmful to the interests of the ——— Manufacturing Company, that this contract may be canceled by them from date of such enactment, and the insertions paid for *pro rata* with the contract price.

2. It is agreed that the ——— Manufacturing Company may cancel this contract *pro rata* in case advertisements are published in this paper in which their products are offered, with a view to substitution or other harmful motive; also, in case any matter otherwise detrimental to the ——— Manufacturing Company's interests is permitted to appear in the reading columns or elsewhere in this paper.

On the other hand, these same manufacturers subsidize some of the largest so-called "independent" medical journals of the country to induce the more poorly trained, ignorant, lazy or careless portion of the medical profession to prescribe these nostrums; while the more venal lend their names and talents to give such use of these nostrums an air of respectability.

Charity may well be exercised toward the shortcomings of individual physicians; but there is no excuse for medical organizations in any way favoring or condoning the efforts made to confuse medical fact with falsehood and bring about the disintegration of an organized profession. Of course, the effort is persistently made to beg the issue. There has been a great deal of hypocritical rejoicing in certain medical journals over the declaration of the American Medical Association at the

Boston meeting that it was not opposed to "independent medical journals." No one ever honestly supposed that it was. The declaration simply met the false issue raised by those who give "aid and comfort" to the enemies of the profession, when there was evidence of a disposition to oppose the treason which manages so-called "independent medical journals" in the interests of nostrum makers.

There is need on all occasions and on all sides for clear thinking and plain speaking in regard to this matter. Let it be understood that it is treason to the traditions and ideals of our profession, treason to scientific medicine and to medical organization, to give aid and comfort to our enemies by prescribing, recommending, associating one's name with, or advertising any proprietary remedy, which is secret in composition or method of manufacture, or for which extravagant, misleading or untruthful claims are made.

THE PLACE OF PATHOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY.*

EDWIN O. JORDAN, PH.D.
CHICAGO.

It is a well-known historical fact that the origin of the natural sciences and in particular that of the biologic sciences is closely connected with the study of medicine. Physics, chemistry, zoology and botany were not only first cultivated mainly by physicians and students of medicine, but their special problems were also in the beginning largely the outgrowths of questions that plagued the minds of those who practiced the art of healing. As time went on these sciences did not remain exclusively attached to medicine and the medical schools, but became associated with other branches of learning. The history of education shows that universities, throughout their development, have been almost continuously enriched with new subjects for study and scientific investigation derived from the activity of medical thought and practice. Singularly enough, the universities, and more strangely still, the first born of the natural sciences, have not always shown themselves hospitable to the biologic studies that have been developed more recently in medical surroundings. Zoology and botany hold conspicuous and time honored places as branches of study worthy of the attention of the general university student, while an unmistakable, although it must be confessed feeble protest is being made even to-day in some quarters against the admission of scientific anatomy and even physiology into the same category. In one instance, the classification of the biologic sciences into medical and non-medical has had the effect that the buildings that house comparative anatomy, zoology, botany, and chemistry are separated by a considerable distance and by other barriers from the new and magnificent facilities for studying human anatomy, physiology and pathology. Apart from the essential identity of many of the biologic problems, and putting on one side the question of the lessening of the opportunities for mutual intercourse among workers in related fields, there is here involved the question of the exclusion of the general university student from participation in some of the most stimulating and momentous scientific movements of the day.

Medicine on its side also is the loser by any divorcement from the university. On more than one occasion in the last few years zoölogic and chemical discoveries

* President's Address, Chicago Pathological Society, Oct. 8, 1906