

cease to foster irrational, absurd, and credulous doctrines, and embrace true, rational, scientific medicine.

Be religiously exact in everything that relates to consultations. Let them always be conducted in proper form, and strictly private; before entering the patient's room give the consultant a brief sketch of the history and treatment of the case, then invite him in to a chair at the bedside; after making the necessary examination and inquiries, retire and consult, within a room that is private and exempt from intrusion, if possible; exchange thoughts in an undertone, and out of the sight and the hearing of eavesdroppers, and, if possible, never let your conversation be overheard,—

“The very shadows seem to listen,”—

and never allow any one to be present except the physicians engaged in it. When the consultation ends, the attending physician should, of course, re-enter the sick-chamber and give all the directions, etc., determined upon in the consultation.

Bear in mind, also, that consultations are called for the purpose of deciding for the *future*, not to criticise the past; however, if you are called in to a case, and find that the attending physician is suffering unmerited odium for his previous treatment, every principle of honor should impel you to *volunteer* to defend him. Beyond this, never pass any opinion on the plan of treatment in hearing of the patient or friends, unless it be an approbatory one, and where the circumstances truthfully admit of it.

Let all that follows a consultation show that you act in concert and that it is the result of joint action, and never express an individual opinion of a case seen in consultation, except in strict accordance with the ethical code. If you do, those whom you address may, either unintentionally or purposely, misinterpret what you say, or otherwise discredibly involve you.

Remember, moreover, that if you are sufficiently agreed to continue in joint attendance, you are in duty bound to act in concert, uphold each other, and refrain from telling whose

opinion prevailed, or by whom the course pursued was suggested, and from all other hints and insinuations likely to diminish confidence in your fellow-attendant.

If for any reason a professional friend ever request you to see a case with him, not so much for the patient's welfare as on his own behalf, *i.e.*, to confirm a correct diagnosis, and thus protect him against undeserved censure, or to divide unusual responsibility toward a poor or worthless, but exacting patient, or to advise what course to pursue under any other very trying circumstances, you should lend him a ready and willing hand, and that, too, without expectation of a fee.

“Hast thou no friend to set thy mind aright?”

It would be sad, indeed, were any honorable physician to fail to find at least one medical friend to consult without fee in such a dilemma.

Be prompt to the minute in answering all professional correspondence.

If you are ever requested by letter, or by a messenger, to prescribe for an out-of-town patient who is not under the care of any other physician, it is perfectly professional to do so, if you wish, even though you may never have seen the case; but, unless the case is a clear one, it might not be judicious.

Revere the past, have confidence in the present, and hope for the future of our glorious profession, and strictly avoid disparaging the individual members of the profession, or the profession itself, or telling people jokingly of the mistakes and discreditable dilemmas of yourself or others; and also avoid decrying and ridiculing medicine to the laity, and boasting of your own and the general ignorance of disease and remedies, and your distrust of your own capacities, or of the number of people killed, maimed, mutilated, or destroyed in health, and suppress all other fulsome confessions.

“Evil is wrought by want of thought,  
As well as want of heart.”

When a physician makes such unguarded and sweeping

remarks, he means them *relatively* only; he means to say that he is aware and willing to confess that medicine has its natural limits, and is not an exact science, and that the application of therapeutics is but an art. The public, however, cannot appreciate the sense in which such imprudent confessions are made, and they are taken up by Doubting Thomases and Lying Pauls as quickly as a sponge takes up water, and work no little harm to physicians who make them and to the profession at large; because, all who hear or read them conclude, with Tom Hood, that "it takes a great many M.D.s to be worth a d—n," and that our prescriptions are only a series of guess-work, and that medical practice is only a shapeless mass of uncertainties, contradictions, and inconsistencies, as irregular and lawless as that of the winds; whose votaries ask whether we are certain of anything, or certain that we are certain of nothing; and ever after crack jokes at our expense,—

"God cures and the doctors charge,"—

and either do not employ physicians at all, or do so with feelings of disrespect and distrust.

You know there is no such thing practically as a perfectly straight line, plane surface, regular curve, exact sphere, or uniform solid; yet you never hear the engineer or the surveyor boasting of it from the housetop, or in reckless language, as if to belittle his own profession. Look at the other learned professions: law is still very imperfect and full of uncertainties, and it has its reproaching pettifoggers just as we have our quacks. Its books teem with conflicting opinions, and the best decisions of to-day are liable to be overthrown by others of to-morrow. Religion, too, has its opposing creeds, its rival spires, and its innumerable sects, and its ignorant and often unprincipled expounders,—sad proofs that Medicine is not alone imperfect.

"All things are big with jest; nothing that's plain  
But may be perverted if thou hast the vein."

The truth is, physicians personally are far more imperfect than physic. For instance, there are undoubtedly medicines

the action of which is *diuretic*; but *diuretics* may be given when not indicated, or the *diuretic* given may not be the proper one, or it may be given in improper doses or at wrong intervals, or it may not be continued long enough, or too long, or without proper restrictions. Now, none of these errors are justly chargeable to the class of medicines which we call *diuretics*, nor to the art of medicine, but are plainly due either to the physician's bad judgment or to his ignorance.

"A hand-saw is a useful thing, but not to shave with."

The fact is, all studious physicians are more or less conversant with the same remedies, but skill in effecting a cure with them consists in applying one's knowledge correctly, in thinking of and selecting the proper ones, skill in proportioning the dose, and genius in judging correctly the time and necessity for their use, etc. Just as different persons essaying to paint will exhibit different degrees of success: one possessed of natural aptitude or special gift will obtain wonderful skill, another less apt will reach mediocrity, while a third will fail entirely in his attempts and quit in disgust,—this difference in result being due not to a difference in the material or colors at the command of each, but to the more or less perfect judgment and skill shown by each in selecting and using them. There must be a reason for giving medicines and also for withholding them, and there must be medication in sufficient doses when there is an indication for it.

The ability to determine accurately the condition of a patient, and to conceive and do the right thing for him at the right time, is the essence of skill, constitutes the chief difference between successful and unsuccessful physicians, and explains the reason why the prescriptions of some physicians are much more valuable than those of others. One may know a vast deal about the profession and yet be a very poor practitioner.

A judicious use of medicines, and not a wholesale renunciation of them, is a leading characteristic of a good physician. When you hear of a physician who wishes to be regarded as

especially clear, or ahead of others, or exceptionably fair in his opinions, boasting that he is skeptical, "does not believe in drugs," "depends on kitchen physic," "on nature," etc., you can safely conclude that he has a very weak spot somewhere; either that

"He has mistook his calling,"

or in his zeal to become a medical philosopher, or to coquette with somebody else's opinion, he has lapsed in his *materia medica*, or overstates his credulity, or that his usefulness has run to seed.

Does the mariner lose his faith in navigation because ships are tossed by the winds and waves and too often wrecked by uncontrollable storms? Or does the farmer deny the fertility of the soil, because his neighbor has neglected the proper season for planting and the right mode of cultivation? Or does he lose his faith in agriculture because droughts and insects, and irregularities of sun, rain, and frosts, sometimes ruin his crops? Would any worthy sailor fold his arms and do nothing while the storm raged, or any thoughtful farmer neglect to plant again when the season returned, because the sailor's brightest hopes are sometimes crushed and the farmer's fairest prospects are often blighted? Or is medicine to be abandoned because in some cases it is unable to do all that is expected of it?

"Medicine is God's Second Cause of Health."

Is there a physician on earth who would let intermittent and remittent fevers take their course without drugs, or who would let the syphilitic and other poisons develop or progress unchecked? Is there one who, in the face of the positive facts offered by anatomy, and physiology, and pathology, and chemistry, and hygiene, and *materia medica*, will confess that he can do *nothing* for pain, or for fever, for nervous complaints, for digestive ailments or chest diseases; nothing for diseases of the circulatory system, delirium, insomnia, headache, epilepsy, hysteria, gout, neuralgia, worms, colic, acidity, peritonitis, child-bed fever, constipation, convulsions, diarrhœa, anæmia, scurvy, cholera morbus, poisoning, casualties, etc.?

The end and aim of medical practice being to relieve, to cure, and to prevent death, if there is a physician in the land who has never seen medicines restore health or prolong life, and does not sincerely believe in his power to benefit by drugs some of the twenty-four hundred diseases and modes of decay to which mankind is subject, he is *an icy infidel in medicine*, and should at once and forever, for conscience's sake and for the sake of the afflicted, take down his sign, burn his diploma, drop his title, and no longer pretend to practice. What think you of a man preaching religion and living by the pulpit who does not believe in the usefulness of religion?

"Seem a saint and play the devil."

The tolerance of disease has greatly increased in the last few decades, and is still increasing, and medical theories and practice are undergoing great changes. The advance of scientific observation is constantly teaching us to distinguish more clearly between the numerous self-limited cases daily met with and the few that threaten a fatal issue, and *of course* we of to-day use much simpler remedies for the former class than did our predecessors; but it is doubtful whether in serious illness we have *lessened* the doses half as much as some imagine. We now give twelve or fifteen grains of quinia daily for an intermittent fever, where physicians formerly gave half an ounce or an ounce of crude bark containing but six or twelve grains. We give to-day the same dose of opium, or its representative, morphia, when that drug is indicated, as they gave a hundred years ago; the same quantity of castor-oil at a dose, and so throughout the whole *materia medica*. The great difference is, that we do not now prescribe vaguely or rashly, and when cases are trifling, or obscure, or undeveloped, our treatment is tentative instead of heroic.

We of to-day know better than our predecessors the natural history of disease, and are aware of the almost infinite resources of nature, and that three in every ten of those who

send for physicians need no positive medication; that recovery from disease is everywhere the rule and death the exception; and that nine of the ten would get well, sooner or later, by proper hygiene, air, exercise, dieting, and intelligent nursing if there were not a drug or a physician in the world, and consequently we are naturally prescribing less and less medicine. In acute affections, and especially the cyclical diseases of children, we now, in many cases, mainly trust to nature, and see them get well spontaneously from seemingly hopeless conditions almost as if by magic, and these cases constitute a majority of those that seem to be restored to rosy health by a thousand and one therapeutical illusions and quack medicines now in vogue.

The deduction to be drawn from these facts is, that the prudent physician may show as much—nay, more—skill in withholding drugs, and especially those of an active, perturbing character, when not needed, as in giving them when they are.

## CHAPTER IX.

"Pledged to no party's arbitrary sway,  
Follow Truth, where'er she leads the way."

BEAR in mind that nothing under heaven prevents you from giving whatever you believe to be best for your patient, whether its therapeutic action be similar, antagonistic, or anything else in the circle; but if, in so doing, you adopt a narrow or foolish dogma, or an exclusive system, and prejudice your mind against all other ascertained truths, your one-sided partisanship will fetter you, abridge your usefulness, and make you unfit for fellowship in liberal medicine. Thus, when Vincent Priessnitz, with his wet sheets and water-tub, in trying to build a house of a single brick, shut his eyes to everything but hydropathy; and one-sided John Brown founded Brunonianism on incitability; and Broussais went wild on Inflammation, Gastro-enteritis, the lancet, and leeches; and Rasori overdosed with his system of "Contraria Contraries," and rabidly denounced everything else; and Samuel Thompson, in his exclusivism, threw away everything but herbs, they each ignored a host of important facts for jumbles of vain, useless, and fanciful speculations, and thereby lessened their own usefulness and that of all who follow them.

"For never yet hath one attained  
To such perfection, but that time, and place,  
And use have brought addition to his knowledge;  
Or made correction, or admonished him  
That he was ignorant of much which he  
Had thought he knew, or led him to reject  
What he had once esteemed of highest price."

Thus it is with agriculture, and navigation, and every other human occupation, but medical science, above all others, has no goal,—its greatest law is PROGRESS.

Medicine is neither a perfect nor a stationary science; not a single department of medicine has yet reached scientific exact-