ANNUAL ADDRESS

TO THE

COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS

OF LEXINGTON;

IN WHICH

THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF

MEDICAL ETHICS

ARE ILLUSTRATED AND URGED AS ESSENTIAL TO THE WELFARE OF THE PROFESSION;

Delivered in the Medical Hall, January 1st, 1839,

BY THOMAS D. MITCHELL, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF MATERIA MEDICA AND THERAPEUTICS IN THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY; PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, ETC. ETC. ETC.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

LEXINGTON, JANUARY 2d, 1839.

DEAR SIR:—As a Committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Lexington, we have the pleasure to return to you the thanks of the College, for your very able Address, and to request of you, in their behalf, a copy of it for publication.

Respectfully, &c.

C. W. CLOUD,
JNO. T. LEWIS,
J. M. BUSH,
ROBT. PETER,
Committee.

Professor T. D. MITCHELL.

LEXINGTON, JANUARY 3d, 1839.

To Messrs. C. W. CLOUD, J. T. LEWIS, J. M. BUSH, ROBT. PETER.

GENTLEMEN:—Your polite note, requesting a copy of my Address to the College for publication, is before me. I have only to say, that the Address is entirely at your disposal.

Very respectfully,
Yours, &c. THOS. D. MITCHELL.

LEXINGTON, JANUARY 12, 1839.

DEAR SIR:—The Medical Class, being desirous of obtaining copies of your invaluable Address, delivered before the College of Physicians and Surgeons, on the 1st instant, have appointed the undersigned a Committee to request of you a copy for publication. Believing that it embraces laws of professional etiquette which, if strictly observed, will guide to honor and distinction in our profession, we hope you will duly appreciate our motives, and grant the request.

We have the honor to be
The Class' Committee,

D. L. PRICE, M. D.
WM. SYDNEY GREEN,
J. B. COONS.

Professor T. D. MITCHELL.

LEXINGTON, JANUARY 12, 1839.

To D. L. PRICE, M. D., WM. SYDNEY GREEN and J. B. COONS.

GENTLEMEN:—Perfectly willing to gratify the Class, to the utmost of my ability, the request contained in your polite note, shall, without delay, be complied with.

Yours truly, THOS. D. MITCHELL.

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MEDICAL ETHICS.

Gentlemen of the College of Physicians and Surgeons:

In the humble hope that I may be able to subserve, in some measure, the interests of the medical profession, I have consented to appear before you, to pronounce the annual address. Charged as I am with highly responsible official duties, I could not, even though prompted by inclination, pretend to make a display, in the shape of an elaborate and finished oration. My highest aim, on this occasion, will be to give such an exhibition of truth, as may be practically useful; to point out defects, which, although the occasion of mischief, are not incurable; and to indicate a course of professional policy, the faithful observance of which, cannot fail to augment our respectability, by virtue of its benign influence on our intercourse, one with another.

However comprehensive the design of your organization as a College may be, I feel confident, that no subject can ever come within its purview, with more cogent motives for investigation, than a system or device, calculated to establish and perpetuate a spirit of harmony and kind fellowship. This should be the corner-stone of our professional edifice, aside from which the most splendid superstructure is valueless, liable to be rocked and convulsed by every blast, and destined, at length, to fall with a mighty crash, and not a vestige of its pristine glory left.

As a shield against the imputation of perverting the present opportunity to the unworthy purpose of gratifying personal resentment, or of impugning the motives of a single individual, I owe it to myself to affirm, that all the strong points (if there be any,) in the address about to be made, were penned by the speaker, prior to his association with this community. They were prompted by the long degraded condition of our profession; and the keenest source of regret was the indisputable truth, that the degradation was voluntary and self-inflicted.

With these preliminary remarks, allow me to name as the theme of the feeble effort now to be made, the *Morality of Medicine*, or, in more common parlance, *Medical Ethics*. In the imperfect examination of this interesting topic, my principal aim will be to fasten conviction on the mind, by the force of unvarnished truth, and the irresistible appeals of unsophisticated common sense.

The oft-reiterated charge of unfriendly bearing and a contentious spirit, as peculiar to the profession of medicine, whatever be the source of the evil, is, alas! too well founded, to justify an effort at denial. That the causes are multifarious, is doubtless true; but that they radiate from a criminal ignorance or neglect of the vital principles of Medical Ethics, as from a common centre, is, we apprehend, equally susceptible of proof. And perhaps, a portion of the blame that attaches to this subject, rests upon the teachers in our schools of medicine, who seem to have regarded the principles of Medical Ethics, as too trivial to merit their attention, or so entirely self-evident, as to incorporate, by necessity, with the usual teachings of the schools.

There can be no place for a reasonable doubt, of the efficacy of correct views of the morality of the profession, to allay, in great measure, the tumults that have so long agitated it, and to gain for it a more favorable public sentiment. And although, like a wide spreading tree, its branches and twigs are almost innumerable, a principle, beautiful as it is simple, lies at the root, and gives vitality and energy to the whole. The principle to which I now refer, is embodied in that well known, but oft forgotten maxim, HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.

By the phraseology "Medical Ethics," I understand, all that appertains to the formation, developement and perfection of the medical character. You perceive, at once, that the subject is of most ample dimensions; and I need not say, it is full of thrilling interest. If the effort to form the physician, after the best model, prove abortive, from erroneous judgment or inherent defects of any kind, it will be vain to anticipate such results, as will prove honorable to the profession and beneficial to society.

To assert that the want of harmony in our profession, is very much dependent on the introduction of unsuitable members, is but to reiterate a truism, that has long since borne the symbols of old age; and yet, it is a verity, that to this day, has not been felt as its magnitude demands. If we encourage young men who are destitute of the proper natural endowments, who evince intellectual or moral obliquity, or a gross ignorance of the subordinate branches

of education, to enter upon medical studies, and give our influence to secure their final admission within the pale of the profession, what right have we to complain of its degradation, or to mourn over the accumulating ills that flow from legalized empiricism? Every preceptor should have independence enough, patriotism enough, a due regard to the *esprit du corps*, to make him faithfully honest with every applicant for private instruction, and to point out, unhesitatingly, the defects that disqualify for the study of medicine. I do not mean, by this remark, to shut out every aspiring youth, whose early education has been deficient, and to bar against him, forever, the door of entrance. If he possess a vigorous mind, I would say to him, with the kindest feelings, "defer your plans for the present, and aim at the acquisition of a good education." But if a youth, whose mental calibre was very small, and whose literary advantages had been so slender as to be unavailable, were to offer as a private pupil, in the honesty of my heart, and with the purest intentions, I would be compelled to reject the applicant. It has been my lot to act thus, and however mortifying to a youth such a decision may be, it is the course that duty indicates, both in respect of the individual and the interests of society.

But, it is incumbent upon us, not merely to be satisfied that an applicant is prepared by nature and by cultivation, to commence a course of medical reading; we are bound also, to state, with plainness and candor, the difficulties appertaining to the practice, as well as to the study of the profession. Too many, alas! aspire to the office of physician, with erroneous views of the high responsibilities, the self-denial and the toil, that cluster around it. They vainly dream, that the life of the practitioner is pleasant and easy; and hence, when stern reality chases away the creatures of fancy, you discover such physicians retiring in disgust, or dragging along, as drones and loiterers in the work. Our path, in its happiest mood, is beset with pains, as well as strewed with pleasures; and the youthful aspirant for medical fame, should be early taught, that thorns and briars sometimes grow beside the sweetest flowers.

When a young man, of proper qualifications, is embarked in medical studies, he should, as far as possible, have a due proportion of practical teaching, in order to render our theoretical precepts, available. He must see, as well as hear. The picture may amuse him, and it may be true to the life, but he must also witness the reality. It is not enough to tell him, very explicitly, the most successful rules of practice; he must be permitted to behold the verification of our positions, at the bed-side. The man who expects to

succeed in practice, by the exercise of the cogitations of his office, rather than by a careful scrutiny of clinical examinations, will be disappointed. He whose head is too full of theory, to make room for facts, may indeed be adroit at feeling pulses, and gathering fees, but he cannot rise to the character of a judicious, intelligent practitioner of the healing art. It is not enough, that the preceptor has delineated the chart, on paper; he must travel over the ground with his pupil, to point out the windings and to mark the dangers. Herein consists the prominent advantage of a well arranged and judiciously managed hospital; and hence the practical benefits derived by the faithful student, in walking its wards. He is there enabled to test the fine-spun theories of the closet, and to separate the wheat from the chaff.

The pupil who is correctly trained by the private preceptor, according to the brief model we have drawn, will be vastly better prepared to profit by a course of public instruction, than the youth who has been permitted to mark out his plan of study, according to his own fancy, and whose chief merit consists in the bulk of the volumes he has read. Both, however, look to the medical professor, as a source of truth and accuracy, and not unfrequently aim to copy his virtues or his vices. Hence the great importance of the station of a public teacher. He has not only the scientific advancement of the pupil, very much under his control, but he may exert a decided influence on his moral character. If he fail to teach intelligibly, his efforts will be abortive, and if he give to vicious or even questionable conduct, the force of his example, he can hardly fail to lay the foundation of almost irremediable mischief.

The grand object which engages the student's attention, and prompts him to vigorous effort, is the honorable attainment of the Doctorate. So entirely does this absorb his ambition, that he dreams not of difficulties, beyond the day that is to place him on the roll of the profession. And although his estimate be imperfect and erroneous, there is vastly more importance in the diploma, than many are wont to imagine. The act of granting it, as well as the act of receiving it, is a solemn, a weighty concern, and must be so regarded, or its legitimate bearing cannot be felt and will not be acknowledged.

The examinations of candidates, for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine, are designed to test qualification; and hence, the necessity for the most perfect fairness, on the part of the examiners. Private resentments, partialities and prejudices should be utterly excluded. Let the examinations be minute, protracted, thorough,

and make the merits of the party the ground of decision, and the only ground. To admit any other basis, is to practice a fraud upon humanity, to constitute a Diploma a mere matter of form, a cloak for ignorance, a burlesque upon truth. Favoritism should in no case be tolerated, and however strong the private friendships of the examiner may be, they should be merged in the high responsibilities of the professor. Could these sentiments be engraven on the hearts of the public teachers in all our schools, and become the common law of Faculties and Trustees, a glorious reformation would speedily ensue, and our profession rise in dignity and importance.

I know not a more prolific source of mischief in the science of medicine, than *Empiricism*, and none are more inclined to practice it, in some one or other of its manifold forms, than our young graduates. This may be accounted for, in some measure, by the power of example, the tendency common to our nature, to be imitators, rather than originals.

By some, the term *Empiricism* has been restricted to the use or countenance of avowed nostrums, and this is undoubtedly a part of the evil. But, in our judgment, every species of random practice, the exhibition of remedial agents, without a rational *why* or *wherefore*, prescribing for names, rather than for symptoms, and every other device resorted to by the practitioner, to save the labor of thinking, may with strict propriety, be placed to the account of Empiricism.

I do not say, that he is an empiric, who employs a popular remedy, that is even lauded in the newspapers, as a panacea, provided he is acquainted with its actual composition, and applies it judiciously, watching its operation, and carefully noting its effects. Under such circumstances, it is lawful to resort to any remedy, and to give it a fair trial, if its action appear to be salutary. This was, virtually, the practice of Sydenham, in regard to every new article that presented itself, as proper for medical use. He made a cautious trial of the remedy, in order to learn its effects, and he persevered in its exhibition, until satisfied. The man who proceeds on such ground, cannot greatly err; and as every remedy, whether it be called a nostrum or by some other name, is new to the physician who has never employed it, he must pursue the plan of Sydenham, or give the article because his neighbor does so, or reject it entirely.

But, the case is otherwise, if, without an acquaintance with the constituents of a popular remedy, the physician condescends to administer it, on the testimony of the press, or to gratify the whims of

a superstitious patient. Such conduct cannot be defended against the charge of empiricism.

Physicians are often interrogated, touching the value of the patent medicines that are blazoned in our newspapers, as sovereign remedies for all the aches and pains of life; and the good natured inquirer, half inclined to believe the puffs he reads, is sometimes displeased, if the doctor hesitates to give an opinion, although confessedly a stranger to the composition of the article. To expect a discreet physician to commit himself thus, is about as unwise, and equally ridiculous as to consult him on the treatment of a sick man, a thousand miles off, concerning whose case there is no other information than that he sickened ten years ago, is the son of A. B., born in the year 1800, &c. &c. What physician could refrain from smiling, if consulted on such ground, and how many would treat the affair as a mere hoax? And yet, not a few well meaning persons seem to think a doctor quite illiberal and narrow-minded, who withholds an expression of approbation from popular remedies, that have done so much service to their friends.

The proprietors of nostrums are often complete monomaniacs; and because they can discern excellencies in a panacea, seem to think that all should laud the praises of their specifics. And they have the presumption to solicit the countenance of medical men, on the faith of the scores of printed certificates, which, in their estimation, are absolutely infallible. They expect the sanction of the profession, too, while they refuse to confide to them, the secret of the composition; and strange to tell, some medical men have so far laid aside their dignity, as to gratify the impudent request. A physician should not prescribe, nor patronise, in any way, a medicine, the ingredients of which are unknown except to the proprietor.

It sometimes occurs, that empiricism clandestinely supplants the efforts of the regular practitioner, and occasions not a little embarrassment. Our best patients, laboring under chronic diseases, are occasionally beguiled to try some vaunted mixture, that has the reputation of infallibility; and if temporary relief be procured, they sometimes venture to rebuke their long-tried and faithful physician, for his want of discrimination. However vexatious such occurrences may be, it is, sometimes, wise to bear with them, and to maintain our friendly relation, as though nothing of the kind had transpired. I have watched such cases with some attention, and have witnessed the return of confidence, as the necessary result of dissatisfaction or disgust with the pretended specific; and in this way, empiricism has

been more effectually counteracted, than it could have been by the direct assault of the physician. As a general rule, however, we should frown upon, and, if possible, frown down every *secret* remedy, the chief recommendation of which is, that nobody but the proprietor understands its composition.

But there is another sort of empiricism, that is exceedingly fashionable, and therefore the more formidable; I mean, the quackery of applying any given mode of treatment to a disease, irrespective of the varying conditions of the system. There are even yet many physicians who prescribe for names instead of things, although the venerable Rush, in his day, was accused of slandering the profession, when he charged them with this kind of mal-practice. Such practitioners are mere routinists. They have one pill for this and another for that case, and wherever you meet them, the well known pill box is forthcoming, and the entire treatment can be anticipated, almost with unerring certainty. They regard disease as possessed of characters, unvarying as the granite and feldspar, the tiger and the lion; and hence their therapeutics make no account of the influence of season and other controlling circumstances, that so often modify and aggravate disease.

The intelligent physician must needs be a student as long as he occupies the field. He knows that the forms of morbid action are continually changing, and that his constant vigilance is demanded, to meet the exigencies that surround him; and he regards as preposterous, all curative efforts, that are not based on this fundamental principle. With the mere mechanic in medicine, who looks upon every shade of disease, as a distinct piece of statuary, moulded by the chisel, he has no sympathy. He professes allegiance to a system, that has sound philosophy for its basis, and that demands the daily exercise of the ablest minds.

It is a mistake to identify empiricism with the ungraduated practitioner. Some of the most flagrant instances of quackery that have ever fallen under my observation, were in the ranks of medical diplomatists; while, on the other hand, I have witnessed an enlightened and honorable course, more than once, in those who never sought the distinction of a degree in medicine. A judge in Pennsylvania, who was highly incensed at the stupidity of a court officer, recently appointed by the Governor, observed, in the hearing of the officer, "the Governor can make Prothonotaries and Clerks, but he cant give them brains." In like manner we may affirm, that a school of medicine may confer the Doctorate on the undeserving, and unqualified, but that act does not infuse into the party,

either the powers of investigation, or plain common sense, and much less, straight-forward honesty.

With all his characteristic mildness, Dr. Rush boldly denounced a class of men, to whom he gave the appellation of "traders in medicine," more than thirty years ago. And these persons were not quacks, in the ordinary acceptation of the term; but actual graduates, legally invested with the honors of the Doctorate. Though destitute of the spirit of honorable enterprise, they had foisted themselves upon colleges, with scarcely any sort of preparation, and by some indefinable process, had squeezed through the formalities of the *green-room*. Strangers to the finer feelings of human nature, they took up with the profession of medicine, just as the tinker falls on his avocation, viz. for the purpose of making the most money, in what appeared to be the easiest way. These are the SHYLOCKS of the profession, who want the pound of flesh and mean to get it. You might as well essay to talk the tornado into silence, as to seek the reformation of such men by argument. They are utterly incorrigible. The voice of persuasion falls on their ear as powerless as on the thundering, senseless cataract. The effort is abortive from the very nature of the case. Where then is our hope? We reply, in the rising generation. Let the proper training be given to all our young men, before they are permitted to commence the study of medicine, and let them enjoy the instruction of physicians, whose moral sense is not less vigorous than their ability to teach, and who rightly appreciate the dignity of their station. If this discipline fail to resuscitate the decaying energies of the profession, we must lie down in despair, greeted only with the appalling inscription glaring upon the vision from every quarter, "the glory has departed."

Let the young graduate who would rise superior to the trickery of empiricism, resolve to do every thing in his profession by rule, and according to just principles, drawn from perpetual investigation of disease, and all the passing events that may modify the type and grade of morbid action. Setting out with this determination, he will soon acquire a fondness for the course, and in a few years, the habit will be so fixed, that to practice on any other basis would be a violation of his nature.

The next feature to be noticed in Medical Ethics, is *Etiquette*. If we might be permitted to judge of the importance of this subject, from what appears to be its derivative signification, we might include in it vastly more than is ordinarily contemplated. In this light the term would embrace all that is embodied in the *character* of our profession. And when we reflect on the absolute necessity

of a strict regard to what is generally understood by etiquette, we shall discover, that it really denotes nothing less than lexicographers have assigned to it.

By the term *etiquette*, is generally meant, a course of conduct in physicians, *that is calculated to beget mutual respect*, and thus to insure the regard of community. But, if we might take the liberty of defining the ideas which many practitioners appear to entertain of this subject, from their settled habits, we should be compelled to render a very different version. Their notions of etiquette seem fitted for no end so well, as to engender mutual contempt, and, by consequence, to make the profession a reproach and a by-word.—Yet these are the men who talk loudest and longest about professional propriety. I wonder if I should do them injustice by putting them side by side with the Pharisees of olden time, who to be seen and heard, made long prayers in the streets and market places, but whose arrant hypocrisy was aptly represented by the figure of the whited sepulchre, fair without, but within, full of all uncleanness and abomination. If I have slandered them, I beg pardon. Nevertheless, it is my duty to affirm unhesitatingly, that unless the laws of professional etiquette be strictly observed, no system of discipline, no fines, nor censures by medical societies, nor any other means, can avail to save us from discord, and to shield us from the contumely of a discerning public.

The first practical remarks I offer, on this point, refer to *consultations*. These are delicate, important, and highly responsible. They involve the interests of time, broad and expansive as its nature can make them; yea, they reach onward to eternity. Let us look at them, then, as men should do, who expect to be called upon for an account of their stewardship, in the assizes of the last day.

When you are requested to consult with a member of acknowledged skill, let no private feeling of animosity prevent a compliance, unless it be so inveterate as to obscure your judgment. In that case, refrain from intemperate expressions, but state your objections calmly and with dignity, avoiding needless detail, that could serve no purpose but to prejudice the mind of the patient. These remarks, as you perceive, are of general application. We cannot and will not conceal the truth, that there are, and ever have been, in our profession, men of high attainments, whose public and private misconduct should have excluded them from our ranks; and, who are permitted to remain, only because we have no provisionary statute, by virtue of which the base and unworthy may be expelled. It is not thus in the law. There, absolute excision is held to be es-

sential, in order to maintain the honorable standing of the profession; and the individual who outrages the courtesies of life, and does violence to the character of the Bar, knows full well that expulsion treads closely on the footsteps of proof. But with us, the most unprincipled man continues to hold his ground; and if he can succeed in gathering around him a few sattellites, he forgets his real degradation, in the clamorous hozannas that encircle him. And, is it expected that the upright and honorable physician will stoop to consult with such an individual, because he is held to be a man of large experience and practical tact? It is unreasonable to suppose that such characters have the smallest claim upon our lenity, when a sick man or his friend solicits a consultation, merely because prompted by the deep moving spirit of intrigue, that is artfully concealed. What good result can be anticipated from *meeting*, under such circumstances? Can the true and genuine spirit of consultation operate, when there is a settled want of confidence and respect between the parties? Impossible. They may talk, it is true, but they will not, for they cannot, make a candid and frank comparison of opinions. The good old book inquires, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" and rest assured, that physicians cannot consult for the benefit of a patient, if there be not between them, at least a semblance of moral agreement, an apparent assimilation in the fundamental principles of honor and honesty.

Do not imagine that I am dealing in mere speculation. Happy would it be for the profession and for society, if such were the fact. I have known the attempt made again and again, to gain the advantage of combined council, under such circumstances as those referred to; but all to no good purpose. Physicians have ventured forth, under the panoply of a magnanimous spirit, resolved to *command* the respect of their professional adversary, but they have generally met with disappointment. They do not fail, however, by such conduct, to gain the approbation of the respectable portion of society. Sometimes, it is true, they have conciliated the regard of an enemy, and if utterly foiled, they have acquired such proofs of his unworthiness, as to guard them effectually for the future.

But it may be inquired, how would you act if an unprincipled man, for whom the patient or his friends had an immoveable partiality, based on imaginary or real skill, were proposed for consultation, after an avowal had been made, on your part, that the case was so urgent or obscure, as to render additional advice necessary? I reply, that ordinary politeness demands that the attending physician, after suggesting the need of a consultation, be allowed to name one

or more of his medical friends, as suitable for the object. And I say further, that if a patient or his friends choose to violate this principle, and attempt to force upon me a consulting physician, whose moral character and professional deportment I am bound to detest, I have independence enough, to prompt me to abandon the case, though it were in the best family in the United States of America. If every man of integrity would thus act, we should soon have a common law in the profession, based on custom, that would be little less effective, than the summary plan of ridding the bar of foul and polluting nuisances.

Whenever a professional meeting is appointed, with a view to consultation, it is of the utmost importance to be punctual in attendance. To some men, five minutes are of great value, and you could not more certainly offend them, than by trespassing on their time, by your neglect. Young physicians should be scrupulously careful in this matter, especially when they are to consult with their seniors; and they should resolve to acquire habits of punctuality, in the opening of their career, with men of all ages and of every rank. I doubt very much, whether a young man can rise in his profession or in public estimation, though his talents be of the first order, if punctuality, to the minute, be not regarded as a cardinal virtue. Point me to the individual, who, in the spring-tide of his being, is equally reckless of the time of other men, as of his own, who feels quite indifferent about his engagements with his brethren, and I can show you a man, who, unless he speedily reform, is already at the zenith of his glory.

Nor is punctuality the only important item in a consultation. The patient should be examined as carefully by each of the physicians present, as if the responsibility rested exclusively on each. Let the patient feel that you are interested in his welfare, and that you are anxious to acquire a full acquaintance with his case. This is indispensable, if you expect his confidence.

Moreover, you are not, in any case of consultation, to take the opinions of a senior for granted, but, with becoming modesty, to judge and speak out your own mind. To the views of a junior, manifest a proper deference, and never slight his suggestions, because he happens to be a few years younger than yourself, or has been more recently introduced into the profession. I have witnessed, with sovereign contempt, those chilling inattentions to a young man, that assumed air of importance, the self-complacent smile of protection, the catechetical style of address, and the impertinent dictatorial manner, which, if they are not always, most

certainly should be regarded, as indications of a weak mind, and of one who lacks the spirit of a gentleman. Such an one, if he condescend to consult with a young man, regards the affair only as a *meeting*, the object of which is to impart a little of his extra stock of wisdom, to an inexperienced youth. But depend upon it, there is something radically deficient in such minds. He who is justly conscious of his own excellence, fears not to have his opinions canvassed by those, who, in many respects, may be his inferiors. The right and the obligation of professional men, when called to consult about the life of a patient, to discuss freely, to compare opinions without restraint, to object or approve as judgment dictates, is too obvious to need argument. Where these things are forgotten, or omitted from fear of offending, there is, virtually, no consultation. I shall never lose the recollection of a case that occurred in Philadelphia, about 18 years ago, and which I shall state to you concisely, by way of illustration. It was one of those unfortunate, but happily rare instances, in which the Cæsarean operation seemed to be unavoidable. The attending physician was a good-natured, unoffending, complaisant sort of a man, who was in the habit of thinking just as every body else thought. Some six or eight gentlemen were summoned to his aid, and although there was a considerable diversity of opinion among them, it so happened, that this polite and accommodating individual agreed with them all. The case, fortunately, had a happy termination; but the family soon learned that their physician had surrendered his opinion to every one of his colleagues. He lost entirely the confidence of the family and their friends, and his professional brethren, as a matter of course, held him in no enviable estimation. Such, gentlemen, will ever be the result of indecision, and the case teaches most distinctly, that all physicians, whether young or old, should have the moral courage to think for themselves. Always recollect, that consultations are, legitimately, collisions of mind, comparison and interchange of thoughts and opinions, and cannot lawfully be cramped and fettered by the rules of common courtesy, or the intolerance of inflated pretensions and overflowing vanity.

Far be it from me to discountenance the respect due to age. But if a young man solicit the attendance of a senior physician, in consultation, and a very important difference of opinion arise, one that in the estimation of the junior may have a serious bearing on the issue, no considerations of respect should induce him to yield. He may be correct in the positions he has assumed, for old age is not always immaculate. But he may also be erroneous, for youth is of-

ten impulsive and self-complacent. In all cases of this kind, the proper course is to call in the aid of a third party, so that the treatment may be predicated on the preponderance of views, on one side or the other. Such a course is safe for the patient, and honorable to the professional parties.

It is held to be a correct principle, by the great mass of well educated medical men, that a consulting physician should not, at his first visit, suggest any alteration in the treatment, unless his views of the case are entirely different from those of the attending physician. The true principle is, to *sustain, as far as practicable, consistent with the patient's welfare*, the course pursued prior to the consultation; and hence if there be but one consulting visit, the physician called in should state his views freely to the attendant, and the latter should carry out the result of the interchange of sentiment, at his discretion. It is to be regretted, that some of our fraternity avail themselves of every opportunity to cast reproach on the previous management, by an immediate suggestion of some new prescription, in the hope that a happy result may follow its administration, and the favorable regard of the patient and his friends, be transferred from the attending to the consulting physician. It is scarcely necessary to say, that an honorable man would rather starve or beg his bread, than succeed in business, by a resort to such contemptible artifices.

A merely speculative difference is not very material, in reference to the issue of a consultation; for theories, apparently diverging, not unfrequently lead to the same conclusions. If the entire aspect of the case be different, in the judgment of the consulting parties, there will be greater difficulty. In that case, be neither dogmatical, nor hastily submissive to the reasoning of your opponent, but endeavor to compare adverse opinions with candor, ever remembering that truth, and not victory, is your aim. If you discover your mistake, be not too proud to acknowledge it. But, if reflection serve only to confirm your views, dream not of abandoning your ground, until the judgment of an umpire shall have decided the case.

In this connexion, it is important to notice a practice of some physicians, which I hold to be highly censurable. I allude to discussions of the merits of a case, in the presence of the patient. These, to my knowledge, have been conducted with great latitude and much excitement, at the bed-side. How, rational and plain common sense men can thus degrade their office, I am at a loss to comprehend; and I pray, that the vile and unseemly habit may be

speedily abandoned. During the term of my pupillage, I have known the Hospital physicians to prescribe altogether in the Latin language, when they desired to keep the patient in ignorance of the medicine about to be employed. How much more important is it, for consulting physicians to have their patients entirely unconscious of the points of difference, in their judgment of the case.

After a free and satisfactory examination of the patient, the consulting parties should retire to a private room, that the grounds of their decision, as to treatment, may be kept secret. If two physicians be engaged in the case and they cannot agree, the friends of the patient may then be apprised of the *points* of difference; but the basis of disagreement and the opinions connected therewith, should not be disclosed. Such a revelation might injure one or both of the medical attendants, and could not profit the patient. The physician, first in attendance, should write all the prescriptions, give all the necessary directions, and in fact, be the executor of the decisions of the consultation. In general, he should also perform the operations that may be deemed advisable. To this rule, there may be exceptions. If there be an old and settled partiality for the operating skill of the consulting surgeon, the gentleman, first in attendance, should at once waive his right. The more cheerfully he does so, the more favorable will be the impression made on the patient and his friends.

Not a little embarrassment has grown out of the accidental visits of one physician, to the patients of another. I hold it to be a sound position, in the main, that every Doctor will do well, to learn, very early, the inscription on the old Continental money of this country, viz: *Mind your own business.* The pimping curiosity of some physicians, to get a back-door entrance to a sick room, that is under the care of another of the profession, is, of all propensities, the most unenviable. Caught in such a transaction, who would not feel very much, as if detected in a petty larceny? I do not say, that a medical man is to seclude himself from the society of a friend or neighbor, because a brother physician is in attendance. But, depend upon it, unless you are on the most cordial terms with a professional colleague, you had better have no intercourse with his patients, except in the regular process of consultation.

It sometimes happens, that in the absence of the family physician, an alarming symptom will urge the friends to call, with great urgency, for the advice of another. In such cases, you are bound by the laws of humanity, to yield a quick response. But, having given your counsel, let it be clearly understood, that your visit is

purely vicarious; and if the physician of the family arrive before your departure, continue no longer in the house, than to tell what you have done and your reasons for the procedure. Perhaps his politeness or the gratitude of the patient, or both, may urge you to repeat your visit. Do not yield, however, unless the case be sufficiently urgent, to justify your joint attendance. Decency makes their request a proper one, and modesty renders your hesitation and final refusal, equally a duty. The avidity with which some men pounce upon a case, no matter how it comes, nor what it may be worth, has always struck me with amazement. Nor are they satisfied with a mere grasp, but love to display the characteristic feature of the leech; and hence you find them holding on, as long as they can. It matters not who, or how many may have been called on prior to their arrival, or before their attendance was solicited. If they can get the case into their hands, first, they clinch it fast, and laugh at the laws of courtesy. The temporary indisposition of a neighboring practitioner, is, by some, regarded as a most felicitous opportunity for the procurement of business; and there are not a few in our profession, who would gladly retain every patient, thus accidentally cast in their way. But what honorable man could help referring all such cases to the golden rule of action? The principles of common honesty teach, that in our attendance on the patients of a sick medical brother, we should keep a true record of every visit, and on his recovery, hand it over to him, for entry in his day-book. Should he die, the emoluments may, perhaps, be held for our own use. But, if he be able to resume his occupation, the fees belong to him; and by dealing faithfully with his interests, we lay the foundation for a reciprocity of kindness, whenever the season may occur for its display. This is not an Utopian scheme, but one of real, practical value. We have practised on these principles, and have profited by them, and can testify that they are essential to professional harmony. They lay the axe at the root of that detestable selfishness, that is the bane of good feeling, among so many neighborhood practitioners.

From the general rule laid down, on the subject of attending the patients of other physicians, we except obstetrical cases. The correct practice, as we believe, in this department of business, is, to retain the case, if personally engaged in it, even though the practitioner first called, should arrive prior to actual delivery. There can be no objection to this course, and with a general understanding on the subject, the rule will be found to operate, equally well, in all cases. I have known a physician, who loved money better than any

other object on earth, who insisted on the discharge of a practitioner who had rode some five or six miles in great haste, to attend a parturient female, and was in the very act of completing the object of his visit. This poor soul was doubtless afraid, that the kindness of the accidental attendant would insure for him the future practice of the family. But he measured the sense of honor of his brother, by his own crude and heartless notions. No man of correct feelings will presume on a merely casual attendance of this sort, to establish a claim to subsequent business in the same family. And yet, I regret to be compelled to say, that some practitioners are willing to supplant their brethren, and rise into favor, precisely in this way. Verily, they have their reward.

You will sometimes be consulted, not in technical form, but as a mere incident, on the street or in the highway, touching a case of sickness, under the care of a physician, in your own vicinity. Although you may not have seen the patient in your whole life, you will be pressed to give an opinion of the treatment pursued; and that too, after a most imperfect and perhaps erroneous statement. Be on your guard in these matters. If there be a want of friendly intercourse between the attending physician and yourself, refuse to give any thing that can be called an opinion, in the case. Nay, do not, by any expression of countenance, allow the most distant notion to be fastened on the inquirer, that his Doctor is not doing what he should do. The doubting look and portentous shrug, the lengthened visage and expressive sigh, are more unmanly than open censure. Whether the medical attendant be your friend or foe, you will act wisely, to discountenance all inquiries, that have the semblance of a want of confidence.

If the *esprit du corps*, based on the principles of stern integrity, were more operative than it is, in the ranks of our profession, the public would hear less of medical quarrels. But alas! to a deplorable extent, we lack the right foundation, and yet, in its absence, dream of a noble superstructure. It is to this defect, we attribute the prevailing mania for business, at the sacrifice of the most obvious sense of propriety. Hence the indifference manifested, when a practitioner has been treated by a patient with great rudeness; and hence the willingness to gain the case, without even an inquiry into its merits. Hence, too, arise the intrigues and petty, clandestine operations to undermine and supplant, which are so common and so prolific of misunderstanding among brethren of the same vocation.

When you are called to a patient, who tells you that another has

been in attendance, but has been discharged, do not assume the case, until you learn the true history. If it should appear, that the previous attendant was mal-treated, decline altogether to prescribe, until you can have an interview with the dismissed physician, except the urgency of the symptoms demand immediate attention. Should a full hearing convince you, that gross injustice had been done by the patient or the famliy, insist upon a satisfactory apology; and if that be withheld, abandon the case. You must invariably pursue, in all these matters, just such a course as you would be satisfied with, on the part of others towards yourself. In other words, you must know, clearly, what is right, and you must act accordingly.

When serious differences arise between two or more practitioners, which cannot be reconciled by their mutual explanations, the best plan that can be adopted, is to refer the whole to a common friend of the parties, in whom all have confidence. If this step be unsuccessful and a more general appeal be deemed advisable, let it be restricted, if possible, within the pale of the profession. I have never known a public exposure of grievances, however real and weighty, to answer the contemplated end; while the reiteration of imaginary wrongs invites ridicule and contempt. The great mass of society cares but little, if at all, for the grounds of controversy, and you might as well appeal to a mile-stone, for redress. None but medical men, or their intimate friends who may take a deep interest in the dispute, are at all qualified to appreciate the grounds of difference. The man, however wronged, who expects to fire the community with his indignation, will be disappointed; for after all the charging and rebutting, the previous standing of the parties will be the ground of decision, if the public interest can be at all excited, to examine the question. Time will often effect, what haste and passion may defeat, and if an individual be truly meritorious, a course of moderation will do more in his favor, than all the labored efforts of an over-heated zeal.

Who has not witnessed the folly of public professional controversy, calculated to implicate character and standing? In all our cities, with very few exceptions, the press has groaned under the weight of detraction and calumny, it has been compelled to bear. Pamphlets have been multiplied, even when their writers, as I have sometimes known, were obliged to take the benefit of the insolvent laws, in order to pay for them. And I would ask, in what instance in the United States of America, have the medical pugilists accomplished any good results, by their reiterated public exposures? The

writers of all these anathemas gain nothing, that any man of sense would not rather lose; while if any person be profited, it is the slandered man. I am well acquainted with the most successful politician in Pennsylvania, who is also a graduate in medicine, who has repeatedly declared, that he could not have reached his high elevation, but for the multiplied efforts to blast him, through the public press. And a practising physician, of considerable eminence, assured me, that two or three pamphlets, published expressly to destroy him, had very much contributed to enlarge his business.

Take with you, gentlemen, wherever you go, this thought, and if it disappoint you, pray inform me, by the earliest opportunity. *The professional man whose general conduct in private life, is unexceptionable, who has acquired the character of an upright citizen, may smile at the efforts of the traducer, for they cannot injure him permanently.* The slanderer may sully your exterior a little, but he cannot stain your character. His poisoned arrow falls harmless at the feet of innocence, or if it strike, is warded off by the coat of mail, which purity of intention infallibly secures. Let him feel that you scorn his malice, that his shafts have not so much as ruffled your surface, and you inflict upon him a severer chastisement, than if you whipped him with rods, or returned railing for railing, with compound interest. The fire that he has kindled to consume you, will go out and harm none but himself, unless your imprudence supply it with fuel.

There are some embarrassing circumstances in the career of a physician, from which many occupations are exempt, and these often put his magnanimity to the severest trial. He may have been grossly slandered and wronged by an individual, who, in a moment of deep distress, sends an urgent call for his immediate presence. May he demur, or positively refuse to obey the summons? I answer, no. If injustice has been heaped upon you, prove by your generous spirit in the hour of danger, that you merited better treatment, and however regardless the man may have been of your character, let him feel that you have not lost the sensibilities of your nature. True manliness scorns to resent an offence on a prostrate enemy, and heaven-born charity prompts to the noble satisfaction of rewarding evil with good. You will seldom, perhaps, be tried with these perplexing circumstances. Yet there are cases, in which such unshaken confidence in professional skill has been acquired, that all former occurrences are forgotten; and the victim of anguish eagerly seeks relief from one, on whom he may have practised injustice. It is not a sacrifice of dignity, to obey the voice of human-

ity, even though shrouded in wickedness. To stoop at such a time is, often, to conquer; the most deep-rooted prejudices may be dissipated, in a moment, and an enemy transformed into a lasting friend.

The young candidate for business is anxious to know what kind of manners, or what general course of conduct will be most likely to secure his object. I wish it were in my power, to designate any special plan for the attainment of this desirable end. Success has been realised by men of such opposite traits of character, that it would seem impossible to mark out any rule of conduct, as peculiarly appropriate. One of the most profligate physicians ever engaged in practice in America, was, at the same time, one of the most popular and successful. His profanity was proverbial, and yet his great skill secured him business. Sometimes the most forward and impertinent, who are scantily supplied with intellectual and professional furniture, rise into notice without difficulty, while the modest, retiring and talented often drag along, in comparative obscurity, for years. Great volubility, a propensity to multiply interrogatories, almost without end, and similar devices sometimes constitute a fortunate substitute for brains, and prepare the way for multiplied calls.

But, notwithstanding all the variety of stratagem, *ad captandum vulgus*, there is, we presume, a *right* course, not dependent on, as it is uncreated by, the breath of popular favor, but having for its basis, the principles of truth and justice. It is prompted by an honest consciousness of qualification, and a proper sense of responsibility, and is not impelled, simply, by the sordid motive of *quid pro quo*. Can you not place your finger on an individual, who meets this description? I have seen such physicians, however few and far between, they be. And wherever you find them, you discover a steady progress in the acquisition of a solid reputation. They do not dazzle and bewitch and deceive, by their pretensions. They are men of reality, substantial, sterling characters, and their fellow-citizens prize them as diamonds. They do not always grow rich, but they bequeath to their children and to society, a good name, that is above all price. Better to die with the reputation and poverty of a Lazarus, than to leave the world with the execrations of the widow and the orphan upon your memory, for deeds of extortion that have filled your coffers to overflowing.

In your visits at the chamber of sickness, be careful to avoid, on the one hand, a sickly sensibility, and on the other, a morbid indifference. Let your deportment testify, that familiarity with pain and sorrow has not blunted the sympathies of your nature. Be calm,

self-possessed and firm, avoiding every manifestation of bustle and hurry. Having made up your mind in relation to the case, be decided, for on you rests the responsibility, that may involve the happiness, not of one, but of many. The fears of the patient or his friends may be unreasonable; but let not their embarrassments nor solicitude offend you. Even though, in the excess of their alarm, they may seem to forget the deference due to your station, indulge not in angry invective, and above all, do not abandon the case, unless plainly and designedly insulted. There are circumstances of danger, that unhinge the most stable and throw them off their guard, and they will cheerfully apologise when the hour of trial is past. Stand firm to your purpose, while the circumstances are urgent. When danger is over and the alarm is hushed, you will generally receive the grateful acknowledgments of those, whose disquietude betrayed them into error.

Much of our embarrassment in practice, arises from the incompetence of the people at large, to judge of medical conduct or professional ability. Hence, it often occurs, that in a case eliciting the best skill of the physician, he receives no credit; while the voice of praise is heard, on occasions, the success of which depends much less on good judgment, than on the powers of Nature. Of the capabilities of persons in other professions, every man of common sense may form a tolerably fair estimate, while none but medical men are competent to judge correctly of medical practice. This is a difficulty, without remedy; and every physician must calculate on meeting and enduring it, until a matured confidence in his judgment shall place him above suspicion.

And here, I feel constrained to name a feature in medical deportment, that is peculiarly offensive. I allude to the trick of magnifying the danger of a case, the exaggeration of symptoms and realities, as well as the resort to fancy, for evils that are not present. All this has been perpetrated, in order to invest professional services with undue importance, and to justify a more copious draft on the patient's purse. Such conduct is a violation of truth, a palpable profanation of the tenderest sympathies of our nature; and the man who dares to sport thus, with human woe, is unworthy to hold a place in civilized society. Nor is he less deserving of censure, who deceives, by inducing a belief that recovery is easy and near at hand, when every symptom warns of hastening dissolution. He wrongs the patient, by a postponement of the due arrangement of his worldly concerns, and infinitely more, by beguiling him of time, that should be consecrated to the adjustment of his account for

eternity. I know it is true, in general, "that while there is life, there is hope." But this position is often perverted, and most unhappy results have followed its injudicious application. Let every thing be done that prudence dictates, while life lasts; but never deceive a patient or his friends, about the final issue. You are not needlessly to obtrude your opinion of the result, for the physician should be, as far as possible, the minister of hope. Even when despair has settled on the countenance of relative and friend, let the soothing, but not the delusive voice of the medical attendant be heard. If there be a crime that merits execration, it is the baseness of deceiving a fellow-creature, who is on the eve of departure to the bourne whence no traveller returns, and who defers preparation for his change, because his faithless physician cruelly beguiles him. If you feel assured that he must die, very soon, and he implores your honest sentiment, tell him out like a man, and risk the consequences. That plainness of speech, in uttering the truth, may have done harm on such occasions, we doubt not; but the evils, thence resulting, are not to be named, in view of the unspeakable and irremediable wrongs, inflicted by falsehood and prevarication.

But there are before me to-day, those who have a right to know the views of the speaker, on the propriety of religious intercourse with the sick. Shall the request of a man, who expects shortly to close his earthly career, that a pious friend may have access to his chamber, be denied? Objections have been repeatedly made to such requests, from an apprehension, that pernicious results would follow. But, we believe that in a large majority of the cases in which such objections are raised, it will be found, that a deep-rooted dislike for religion, or at least a want of love for it, pervaded the minds of the objectors. We fear not to risk the assertion, that very few well authenticated cases can be cited, in which judicious, religious conversation with the sick, has done serious mischief. We know that it has done positive good, both to mind and body. And it is more than probable, that the public feeling which fosters the charge of infidelity, as peculiar to our profession, has been occasioned, in great measure, by the frequent reluctance to admit ministers of the gospel or pious laymen to the bed-side.

The stoical rules of human philosophy may fit some men for the ills of life, so as to bear them, and even death itself, with icy fortitude. But all in Christendom are not thus constituted; and many have learned in theory, and not a few by experience, that a calm and delightful resignation can be inspired, only, by the sublime precepts of christianity. And because a physician may not be able to ap-

preciate that divine system of ethics, that is the joy and consolation of thousands, will he dare to exclude from the dying man, the last source of comfort? Interference here were cruelty—I had almost said, unpardonable cruelty.

Let none suppose for a moment, that I design by these remarks, to be the champion of every meddling, ignorant gossip, who may feel inclined to obtrude upon the sick, at improper seasons, and thus to harrass the mind and body of the already perturbed patient. This, so far from being advocated, meets our unqualified disapprobation. There is a proper time and a proper place for, and a proper mode of, doing every thing. We are friends of order.

There are some of the profession who may feel disposed to sneer at these remarks; and I regret to say that they are generally in the middle and more advanced stages of life. And while I wish them a better frame of mind, let it be understood, that I am also addressing juniors in the profession, and not a few who are candidates for it. To these I would say, "Be not the servile imitators of your predecessors, however vast be their celebrity." Society is not standing still, but is moving onward. Every day it is becoming more enlightened; and a respect for religion, even where the experimental power of it is unfelt, is likely to predominate, by the force of regenerated fashion. It is taking hold, insensibly, on the habits and customs of men, and is giving a tinge and a tone to every department of society. Let not the young physician, therefore, attempt to stem the current of a reformed public sentiment. Let him resolve to treat all the institutions of religion with respect; but what is still more important, let him feel and confess its power. Thus, he will be more amply qualified to heal the broken spirit, and to minister to the maladies that flesh is heir to.

The last point, claiming a particular notice, is that which relates to *compensation* for professional services. If there be an avocation, that is better entitled to liberal remuneration than ours, I have yet to learn its name. Dignified as it is, in its results, as well as in the mental energies it developes, it fastens on the public sympathies, with an attraction of no ordinary power. And it is only because physicians have so often degraded their calling, by an ignoble estimate of its magnitude, that the consent of civilized society to compensate with a generous munificence, has not long ere this, been universal.

Although the physician of enlightened mind is far elevated above the mere trader in medicine, yet his circumstances are often straitened, while his situation in life compels him to present an aspect

that shall comport, in some degree, with his profession. He needs, on this account, the frank support of the community. It often happens, that medical services are of such a nature, and are given at such a time, as to put them above price; and these are occasions, in which the physician of limited resources, may be relieved, in the most delicate manner. We are proud to record the fact, that won and then, prompted by the grateful emotions inspired by the unusual circumstances of the case, the man of affluence gives a splendid fee, to his medical friend. These events, however, come, like the phenomena of "angels' visits," "few and far between." And we would do injustice to the subject, were we to conceal the truth, that some who are not affluent, occasionally display a liberality to their physician, that is not drawn from established rule, and is therefore a generous departure from custom. Such indications of a noble spirit, have a fragrance and an inspiration about them, that make an indelible impression. With these exceptions, however, the public feeling, in reference to medical compensation, seems to be regulated by views, no more elevated, than those which measure out the daily allowance of the most ordinary laborer.

Aware of the objections raised to the establishment of a fee bill, we are nevertheless persuaded that it is desirable; not as a rule for universal observance, but for general guidance. The men who are disposed to have our services for nothing, should be taught that, like all occupations in society, we have our printed list of charges. But there are circumstances, which forbid the notion of an invariable standard. Thus, it seems to be quite proper and just, that the practitioner, who has buffetted the sea of experiment, and has waded through many difficulties to final success, should be at liberty to make higher charges than his junior, who has not yet encountered such trials. The former has acquired, by long and close application and laborious attention to professional duties, a fund of practical information, of which the latter is not possessed; and it is fair to regard him, as the proprietor of a larger and better amount of stock, the superior value of which, the public know how to appreciate.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, we are decidedly in favor of a fee-bill, such as is common in many parts of the country. If it serve no other purpose, it may protect against the fraudulent attempts of the base and ungrateful, to rob the physician of his due. It is safe to have something of this nature, to which an appeal may be had, in cases of dispute; and, if adopted by the majority of the profession in a given place, it prevents the more ordinary practitioners, who regulate the value of their services by a consciousness of

inferiority, from perplexing and harrassing the respectable portion of the profession. Suppose a medical man requires payment for services rendered, and on refusal to pay, a suit is instituted; he gives the number of visits, at one dollar for each, but is unable to produce a fee-bill, regularly adopted, to justify his charge. The defendant, instigated by some mercenary pretender in medicine, calls in six or a dozen doctors who profess to charge 50 cents per visit, (too much, a great deal, for any services they can render,) and establishes, by the preponderance of evidence, the half price, as that which he ought to pay. The plaintiff is foiled and mulcted in the costs. The case hypothecated, has actually occurred, in a neighboring city, and may be repeated in every city, town and village, where some sort of standard is unprovided, to meet exigencies.

It may seem superfluous to remark, that it is as much the duty of a physician, to charge his visits in his day-book, as to make them. But, we have known more than one, who seldom thought of a book entry, and trusted to his memory for charges, as well as for payments. The folly of such a course is self-evident, and I fear, results from a deficiency of an article, that many eminent men have lacked; I mean, common sense. And as this defect is the result of neglect, in early life, rather than original deficiency, it behoves every young man to set out with regular, well-formed habits, and to perpetuate them. It is perfectly easy to acquire this faculty, and more easy, to strengthen it. I could name to you a physician, who prides himself not a little on his passion for order and method in every thing, who attributes this feature in his character, to the keeping of a daily, but concise journal, from the week of his graduation, through a life of many years, and often too, when pressed with professional duties, even to satiety and weariness. Imitate the example, and you will be as necessarily methodical, as thinking beings.

In peculiarly unhealthy periods of the year, the physician is often sorely straitened for time; but he should not retire to bed, until some sort of record be formed of every visit made in the course of the day. On any other plan, it is impossible to exhibit a book of entries, such as an honest man could verify on oath, with a clear conscience. He may forget, he may err; yes, he will certainly err, if procrastination be tolerated.

It is not enough, that we enter some visits, and omit others. They mistake, who neglect to note the attendance on the poor, because no advantage is expected from that sort of business. A man's day-book should inform posterity of his fidelity, of his business ha-

bits, of the amount of labor actually accomplished. In these respects, our services to the indigent tell as largely as those given to the affluent, and as a basis of character, are often more valuable. But there is an additional reason for making entries of service to those, who, at the time are unable to compensate us. We have witnessed very many unexpected reverses in fortune, up, as well as down. Poverty is sometimes exchanged for affluence, and the subjects of these revolutions are then fully able to meet every just claim; and if not willing, they should have all the justice which law and equity may be able to award. An eminent physician has recorded, as a matter of experience, that a long attendance on a poor family, made suddenly rich, was requited by the employment of another physician, because the presence of an old and faithful, but ungratefully treated servant, would remind them of the penury from which Providence had rescused them. Such monsters, in human shape, should be taught that there stood against them a daily register of services, continued throughout a series of years, which, although marked *poor*, (as the practice ought to be, and never designed for collection,) now, in the wisdom of heaven, constituted a fair and equitable claim. Our labors are our means of living; and it is a matter of the most perfect fairness, that the poor who have enjoyed our faithful attendance in the hovel, should amply requite us, when their basket and store have become full, even to overflowing.

The entries of visits to those who cannot pay, should be merely notes of the fact, with dates, leaving the charge in blank. The reason of this is obvious. If the individuals remain poor, our books, in the event of our decease, exhibit no amount as due; and if we survive their poverty, the charge can be recorded, in agreement with the subsequent pecuniary elevation.

It is, as you are aware, almost a proverb, that few men become rich by the practice of medicine. Yet there are those, who resort to many devices to make money, by their profession. Thus, medicines are multiplied, at high prices, in connexion with low charges for visits. There may be three or more visits, per day, and each costing but a trifle. In this way, however, an opportunity is afforded, for detecting changes in the symptoms, that call for new prescriptions; and care is taken, that these, at all events, shall be liberally paid for. The patient is gulled by the excessive kindness of his attendant, who, it may be, is satisfied with twenty-five or fifty cents for each call; and the secret is not detected until the end of the play, when perchance he is cajoled into the belief, that all is

just as it should be. The medicines, however, to the amount of several dollars per day, as is sometimes the fact, furnish an indication, that the doctor has not been looking, exclusively, to the patient's welfare. That this sort of chicanery may be profitable, we do not deny. That it is unworthy, dishonorable and mean, every one who loves honest dealing, will perceive, at the first glance. There is a physician now living (perhaps there are many) in the United States, who became rich by a scheme not unlike the above. He had his favorite apothecary in the city, who allowed the doctor 50 per cent. on all his prescriptions. This worthy gentleman was held to be a most attentive physician, ready to go at any hour, and to make three, four, or five visits per day. He was careful at almost every visit, to discover a necessity for some change in the prescription; and, most generally, evinced a fondness for such forms as pay the best. To prevent the blunder of having any other apothecary to compound his recipes, he employed a sort of hieroglyphic language, known only to his favorite.

When a physician makes out a bill for services rendered, it should be a full bill. By this we mean, that the charge should be uniform, (excepting in the cases previously noticed,) and that our accounts should exhibit that uniformity. If, for sufficient reasons, we think proper to make a deduction, let the patient or his friends understand our motives, and, if not inexpedient, state the fact at the foot of the bill. This course will save us from the accusation of irregularity or caprice; and it is the proper one, in respect of persons in very moderate circumstances.

The genius of our calling, gentlemen, has no fellowship with cruelty and oppression. It scorns to take advantage of any man, much less to presume on his embarrassed circumstances. Yet have I known physicians, who fastened their grasp on families, scarcely able to sustain themselves, with such an inveterate clinch, as ultimately to render them houseless. By exorbitant charges, they involved them in a debt, to secure which, a mortgage on their strip of land and humble cottage was demanded. An occasional payment satisfied the extortioner, for the time; but his gripe on the property, strengthened his purpose to be yet more exorbitant. Did the victim venture to complain? a threat, to sue out the mortgage, operated as an opiate, and the mercenary spoiler pursued his course of depredation, with accelerated pace. That such physicians are not numerous, is cause of thankfulness; that there are any, is matter of lamentation and disgrace. Regard them as beacons; profit by their aberrations.

Every member of society is apprised of the cheerfulness with which physicians serve a large portion of the community, without expectation of reward; unless with Bœrhaave, who held such services to be the best evidence of qualification for a happier state of being, they regard poor patients as their best paymasters. Whatever be the motive, the truth is indisputable, that a very large amount of service is rendered by our profession gratuitously.

A sentiment has obtained currency, in respect of attendance on ministers of the gospel and their families, that requires to be corrected. That by far the larger portion of the clerical profession should be regarded as having claims on our kindness, is most cheerfully conceded. Their salaries, in many instances, are very small, and do not often grow with the enlargement of their families. They are expected, also, to be hospitable, and to entertain a good deal of travelling company, and to meet many calls of a charitable nature, from which their congregations, are, in great measure, exempt. A minister, in this State, who has travelled pretty extensively and officiated in many parts of the country, is not unfrequently honored with the company of a stranger, who eats and lodges with him, without having had any sort of introduction, save that he had the pleasure to hear his kind host preach some year or two ago, in this or that place.

The calling of the clergy forbids their engagement in worldly speculations, which are sources of profit to others. They are regarded as public servants, who are poorly compensated for their labors; but whose willingness, in various ways, to promote the welfare of society, entitles them to our sympathy. This sentiment is so prevalent, and commends itself so forcibly to the understanding and heart, that physicians of sceptical views. are often prominent in their practical support of it. But, while all this is right and proper, in respect of ministers of the gospel, who are poor, it is of no force in reference to those who are affluent.

The doctrine laid down by Percival, who has written better than any other man, on Medical Ethics, is this: "Clergymen, who experience the *res angusta domi*, should be visited, gratuitously, by the faculty, and this exemption should be an acknowledged, general rule, that the feeling of individual obligation may be rendered less oppressive. But such of the clergy, as are qualified, either from their stipends or fortunes, to make a reasonable remuneration for medical attendance, are not more privileged than any other order of patients." Here is a perfectly plain statement, and we are at a loss to divine how it can be misunderstood. And yet we have been

acquainted with more than one wealthy clergyman, who was permitted to shelter his purse behind the generous provision for ministers in indigent circumstances. That any clergyman, having the true spirit of his station, and abounding in the good things of this life, could plead exemption, on this ground, is out of the question. And if any one, having the name of a minister, and at the same time known to be rich, should venture to escape the payment of medical fees, because of his calling, let your charges be doubled, as the best palliative of a spirit so covetous and unworthy.

As a general rule, it may be settled by every practitioner, *that he may charge for attendance* on any individual, whose circumstances are decidedly *better than his own*, excepting members of the same profession. At the same time, it is equally clear, that he may be under no obligation to prescribe, gratuitously, for many whose resources are much below his own. We have named, as an exception, members of the medical profession; and yet, there are some, even of this class, who should reward us for services. Now and then, a physician, partly by a lucrative practice, but chiefly by some additional efforts, as in the way of trade, manufactures, speculation, or inheritance, becomes immensely wealthy. Such an one, moved by the spirit of avarice, (by no means a stranger yet in this world,) may expect the nearest physician to attend himself and family without charge, merely because he is of the same fraternity. This very thing has happened, and may occur again. But every such person is just as legitimately under obligation to pay the doctor's bill, as is the richest merchant or farmer in the land. And the young physician who has a growing family to provide for, and wholly dependent on his profession, does his wife and children wrong, by neglecting to make a full charge for services rendered, under such circumstances.

I have now, gentlemen, opened the subject of Medical Ethics, for your future meditation. Its vast extent has precluded the introduction of many important points, that deeply interest the profession, and to which I may, hereafter, invite attention. He who would gain distinction and pre-eminence in medicine, as well as in society, must cultivate all the principles set forth in this address. He must not only be diligent in professional studies, but he must stand forth as the advocate of truth and uprightness, and be an example for the imitation of others. On profanity, intemperance, and all the brotherhood of vices, he must frown. In short, like Howard and Rush, he must be willing to live and act for the cause of humanity, and the promotion of virtue.

I call upon you, gentlemen, as constituent parts of a liberal profession, to examine your credentials anew; to look over the chart by which your course has hitherto been directed; to rectify the wrong and establish the right, on the basis of integrity and virtue. Resolve that you will never cherish an unworthy jealousy; never adopt a questionable policy: never sanction the slightest, intentional aberration from the straight line of rectitude. Then shall our reproach be taken away, our light shine with unfading effulgence and its glory never be eclipsed again.