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The Law and the Doctor

An Address before the Academy of
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In accepting with much pleasure, as I did, the invitation of your President, to address your Academy again, I requested information as to the matter with which my address should deal; and I have been furnished with a list of subjects upon which some one or other member desires me to speak.

The subjects have a familiar ring; I have met them time and again; but they are of sempiternal interest to the medical profession, and deserve respectful treatment.

Many difficulties disappear if, leaving the separate fact, the superficial, we seek after the principle, the essential. That the medical man may understand, or at least may rightly appreciate, the rules of law, he must consider the basis of law, not alone the individual dictate—(were it not that I might be misunderstood I would say “prescription”).

Law and Medicine rest upon wholly different bases, and should, and in the nature of things must.

Medicine—I mean true scientific medicine—endeavors by all legitimate means to discover the workings of nature. Control over nature she has none, and can have none. Whether inherent in the very essence of things, as the Pantheist thinks, or implanted therein by an Almighty God, as the Christian holds—whether “it must needs have been so,” or the Supreme says “I willed it to be so”—there is a system, a manner of working, a re-