

4. BE GOOD CITIZENS.

Passive obedience to law and order does not alone constitute good citizenship. There must be active work for the good of the community.

There are many social and domestic problems with which the physician is peculiarly qualified to deal. His intimate relations with the members of society as family physician give him many opportunities of learning the secret vices that are sapping the foundations of the social fabric. It is not enough that he should warn privately those whose follies are undermining their physical constitutions. It is necessary sometimes that public action be taken to protect society and especially the youth of our communities against contamination and vice. Even the refinements, so called, of modern society, sometimes require the veto of the physician. We should have the moral courage to denounce what is debasing and dangerous in social life and customs. The physician should also identify himself with all measures looking to a betterment of the intellectual, educational, industrial, and recreative pursuits of the people.

In order to be a good citizen it is not necessary that we be politicians. I think the best interests of the profession as well as society would be served by abstaining from active participation in political strife.

The physician is sometimes appealed to by aspirants for political honors to use his influence in their behalf. I think a proper conception of our relation to our patients forbids us taking advantage of this relation for the purpose of influencing free choice or free action. The average physician cannot afford to be a politician. He has a right to think—to discuss men and policies and even to vote that he may promote good government; but to be an active partizan is against the genius of our profession.

Of course there are bright and shining lights in our ranks who may and ought and do enter the arena of practical politics. The interests of the profession and the public demand their presence in our legislatures.

Some distinguished physicians have become distinguished statesmen. Such men reflect credit on the profession and are better representatives because of their intimate acquaintance with the frailties of human nature and the wants of the people.

III.

ATTITUDE OF THE PROFESSION TO THE PUBLIC.

Whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the attitude of the public towards the profession, there can be no doubt as to the converse of this.

The history of medicine from remote ages down to the present time proves beyond cavil that this attitude is one of unselfish devotion to the best interests of the people.