

connected with the probable origin of the diseases which they are called upon to treat.

Owing either to the confusion and, at times, obliquity of mind produced by the disease, or to considerations of false delicacy and shame, the truth is not always directly reached on these occasions; and hence the necessity, on the part of the physician, of a careful and minute investigation into both the physical and moral state of his patient.

A physician in attendance on a case should avoid expensive complications and tedious ceremonials, as being beneath the dignity of true science and embarrassing to the patient and his family, whose troubles are already great.

In their intercourse with each other, physicians will best consult and secure their own self-respect and consideration from society in general, by a uniform courtesy and high-minded conduct towards their professional brethren. The confidence in his intellectual and moral worth, which each member of the profession is ambitious of obtaining for himself among his associates, ought to make him willing to place the same confidence in the worth of others.

Veracity, so requisite in all the relations of life, is a jewel of inestimable value in medical description and narrative, the lustre of which ought never to be tainted for a moment, by even the breath of suspicion. Physicians are peculiarly enjoined, by every consideration of honour and of conscientious regard for the health and lives of their fellow-beings, not to advance any statement unsupported by positive facts, nor to hazard an opinion or hypothesis that is not the result of deliberate inquiry into all the data and bearings of which the subject is capable.

Hasty generalization, paradox and fanciful conjectures, repudiated at all times by sound logic, are open to the severest reprehension on the still higher grounds of humanity and morals. Their tendency and practical operation cannot fail to be eminently mischievous.

Among medical men associated together for the performance of professional duties in public institutions, such as Medical Colleges, Hospitals and Dispensaries, there ought to exist, not only harmonious intercourse, but also a general harmony in doctrine and practice; so that neither students nor patients shall be perplexed, nor the medical community mortified by contradictory views of the theory of disease, if not of the means of curing it.

The right of free inquiry, common to all, does not imply the utterance of crude hypotheses, the use of figurative language, a straining after novelty for novelty's sake, and the involution of old truths, for temporary effect and popularity, by medical writers and teachers. If, therefore, they who are engaged in a common cause, and for the furtherance of a common object, could make an offering of the extreme, the doubtful, and the redundant, at the shrine of philosophical truth, the general harmony in medical teaching, now desired, would be of easy attainment.

It is not enough, however, that the members of the medical profession be zealous, well informed and self-denying, unless the social principle be cultivated by their seeking frequent intercourse with each other, and cultivating, reciprocally, friendly habits of acting in common.

By union alone can medical men hope to sustain the dignity and extend the usefulness of their profession. Among the chief means to bring about this desirable end, are frequent social meetings and regularly organized societies; a part of whose beneficial operation would be an agreement on a suitable standard of medical education, and a code of medical ethics.

Greatly increased influence, for the entire body of the profession, will be acquired by a union for the purposes of common benefit and the general good; while to its members, individually, will be insured a more pleasant and harmonious intercourse, one with another, and an avoidance of many heartburnings and jealousies, which originate in misconception, through misrepresentation on the part of individuals in general society, of each other's disposition, motives, and conduct.

In vain will physicians appeal to the intelligence and elevated feelings of the members of other professions, and of the better part of society in general, unless they be true to themselves, by a close adherence to their duties, and by firmly yet mildly insisting on their rights; and this, not with a glimmering perception and faint avowal, but, rather with a full understanding and firm conviction.

Impressed with the nobleness of their vocation, as trustees of

science and almoners of benevolence and charity, physicians should use unceasing vigilance to prevent the introduction into their body of those who have not been prepared by a suitably preparatory moral and intellectual training.

No youth ought to be allowed to study medicine, whose capacity, good conduct, and elementary knowledge are not equal, at least, to the common standard of academical requirements.

Human life and human happiness must not be endangered by the incompetency of presumptuous pretenders. The greater the inherent difficulties of medicine, as a science, and the more numerous the complications that embarrass in its practice, the more necessary is it that there should be minds of a high order and thorough cultivation, to unravel its mysteries and to deduce scientific order from apparently empirical confusion.

We are under the strongest ethical obligations to preserve the character which has been awarded, by the most learned men and best judges of human nature, to the members of the medical profession, for general and extensive knowledge, great liberality and dignity of sentiment, and prompt effusions of beneficence.

In order that we may continue to merit these praises, every physician, within the circle of his acquaintance, should impress both fathers and sons with the range and variety of medical study, and with the necessity of those who desire to engage in it, possessing, not only good preliminary knowledge, but, likewise, some habits of regular and systematic thinking.

If able teachers and writers, and profound inquirers, be still called for to expound medical science, and to extend its domain of practical application and usefulness, they cannot be procured by intuitive effort on their own part, nor by the exercise of the elective suffrage on the part of others. They must be the product of a regular and comprehensive system,—members of a large class, from the great body of which they only differ by the force of fortuitous circumstances, that gives them temporary vantage ground for the display of qualities and attainments common to their brethren.

JOHN BELL, M.D.

*Code of Medical Ethics, adopted by the National Medical Convention, held at Philadelphia, in May, 1847.—Chapter 1.—of the duties of Physicians to their patients and of the obligations of patients to their Physicians.*

1. *Duties of Physicians to their Patients.*—A Physician should not only be ever ready to obey the calls of the sick, but his mind ought also to be imbued with the greatness of his mission, and the responsibility he habitually incurs in its discharge. Those obligations are the more deep and enduring, because there is no tribunal other than his own conscience, to adjudge penalties for carelessness or neglect. Physicians should, therefore, minister to the sick with due impressions of the importance of their office; reflecting that the case, the health, and the lives of those committed to their charge, depend on their skill, attention and fidelity. They should study, also, in their deportment, so to unite *tenderness with firmness, and condescension with authority*, as to inspire the minds of their patients with gratitude, respect and confidence.

2. Every case committed to the charge of a physician should be treated with attention, steadiness and humanity. Reasonable indulgence should be granted to the mental imbecility and caprices of the sick. Secrecy and delicacy, when required by peculiar circumstances, should be strictly observed; and the familiar and confidential intercourse to which physicians are admitted in their professional visits, should be used with discretion, and with the most scrupulous regard to fidelity and honour. The obligation of secrecy extends beyond the period of professional services;—none of the privacies of personal and domestic life, no infirmity of disposition or flaw of character observed during professional attendance, should ever be divulged by him except when he is imperatively required to do so. The force and necessity of this obligation are indeed so great, that professional men have, under certain circumstances, been protected in their observance of secrecy, by courts of justice.

3. Frequent visits to the sick are in general requisite, since they enable the physician to arrive at a more perfect knowledge of the disease,—to meet promptly every change which may occur, and also tend to preserve the confidence of the patient. But unnecessary visits are to be avoided, as they give useless anxiety to the patient, tend to diminish the authority of the physician, and render him liable to be suspected of interested motives.