

opinion on this important question! The people look to the family physician, and quite properly trust to his judgment and advice, in all matters relating to health. True, he may not often be consulted with regard to such matters, but how often is he made the silent witness of alliances which he knows are, to say the least, unsafe. If the full significance, and grave responsibilities, involved by a marriage in which in the ancestry of either of the contracting parties there was insanity, were properly explained, both parents and children could soon be taught the gravely prejudicial nature of such a procedure. We can do a great deal to create a proper public sentiment in regard to this matter. No coercive measure enacted by any Legislature would probably be respected or obeyed. The public must first be intelligently instructed as to the dangers involved, and when thus taught they will surely comprehend the importance of the subject.

I would not venture to assert that all persons with such defects in their family histories should be condemned to celibacy. It is fairly safe to make an estimate of the probability or improbability of a particular individual of such a line of descent transmitting to his offspring the special defect which has appeared in his ancestry. Much may depend upon the intensity of the predisposition, the frequency of its appearance, and the relative proportions between damaged and vigorous branches. On the other hand, I think, there are instances where marriage is not advisable under any circumstances. For example, where experience has shown that in that particular family the defect so dominates and stamps itself upon the hereditary tissue that it cannot be made safe. I feel sure, too, in asserting that this absolute restriction applies to a small proportion of the cases in which insanity has appeared in the family history, and that in the larger proportion the defective numbers have been relatively few. There is, therefore, room for discrimination, and here the family physician may render invaluable aid. He will be comparatively safe in offering no objection where the particular individual is of strong and vigorous development, well balanced, and if the alliance is with a line which will tend to antagonize such a defect rather than to encourage it. But if there is evidence of physical or mental weakness, of instability or eccentricity, or if there is reliable trace of such defects in the family history, the prudent counsellor will not only withhold his sanction, but do all in his power to discourage such a contemplated union.

However successful the effort to guard against the alliance of persons having their ancestry tainted by mental disease, children will continue to be born handicapped by this unfortunate predisposition. Even where such defect has not been known in the ancestry, it may arise from accident, or it may be the fruit of the individual elements, either of which in itself or in other combinations would be safe, but which plus the ele-