

ECONOMICS OF PREVENTION.

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THERE are men, and classes of men, that stand above the common herd: the soldier. "the sailor, and the shepherd not infrequently: the artist rarely; rare-lie still, the clergyman: the physician almost as a rule. He is the flower (such as it is) of our civilization; and when that stage of men is done with, and only remembered to be marveled at in history, he will be thought to have shared as little as any in the defects of the period, and most notably exhibited in the virtues of the race. Generosity he has, such as is possible to those who practice an art, never to those who drive a trade; discretion, tested by a hundred secrets; tact, tried in a thousand embarrassments; and what are most important, Heraclean cheerfulness and courage. So it is that he brings air and cheer into the sick-room, and, often enough, though not as often as he wishes, brings healing."

So wrote Robert Louis Stevenson in dedicating a collection of his poems to Dr. Bradley Thomas Scott of Bournemouth.

A Viennese physician once wrote:

"The patient seeks aid which the physician must know how to bring. He must take away the results of the sins of the parents, of ignorance, and of excess. He must alleviate the consequences of poverty, want and misery, of grief and of despair. The effects of heat and cold, of the air and the water, of food and occupation, of poison and violence, of contagion, pestilence and old age, he must ward off and render harmless.

"He must always stand ready, cheerful and undismayed, a support to human infirmity, a guardian of life, a source of health, and of the highest earthly happiness."

The tendency today along business lines is to monopoly, or control of the markets—to make business, or increase demand. But the medical profession, to a greater extent than any other, is giving the energy of its best men, not to increase the conditions that give a living to its members, but to decrease and exterminate those conditions. If there be one significant phase to the activity of the medical profession today, it may be said to be its incessant and insatiable activity to learn the causes of disease and death, to the sole end that disease and death may be prevented. Yet the public is too often doubtful and skeptical of our veracity and our motives, when we attempt to demonstrate that such is actually the case. And this because in daily practice, each busy with his own cares and responsibilities, we become isolated, or too often public attention is attracted to our minute differences, and not to our grand agreements, and we fail to present a united front to the public in this most important work in which we are engaged—Preventive Medicine.

This much hath been imputed to us, this much with all due modesty we claim as the inspiration of all our work. What then, along a few lines, has the public the right to expect from us? What shall the public do in order that this ideal work of the physician may become a reality? It is a question only of ethics to the Doc-