

Citizenship in no other vocation calls for a keener appreciation of honor, and of honesty of purpose, than is involved in the ethical discharge of the duties of the medical citizen. The privileges bestowed on him are unique, and carry with them corresponding ethical responsibilities. Take, for example, the case of a contagious disease. When the physician has discharged his duty as a medical attendant, his ethical obligations as a medical citizen demand that he should use his technical knowledge to prevent the spread of the disease. His search for the presence or absence of infection in other members of the family, may require from these, not only the complete surrender of their persons to inspection, but also, a revelation of their habits may be called for, as well as an investigation of the sanitary conditions. These examinations demand on the part of the examiner not only cleanliness of hands and instruments, technical knowledge and skill, but also refinement of thought, and of deportment. For a physician to infect a fellow-citizen through carelessness or slovenly habits, or to act boorishly, would be an ethical abomination on his part.

Another factor in the causation of disease, especially of the digestive and nervous systems, is the morbid and indiscriminate use of drugs and nostrums by the laity. The ethical obligation of the medical citizen in regard to this evil is somewhat unique, for he himself may be a contributing factor to it. Does he not err in the importance he attaches to the use of drugs? Osler emphasizes the great importance of a physician being able to recognize the uselessness of most drugs in the treatment of disease. Prof. Dubois agrees with Prof. Sahli in saying that it is safer to be treated by a physician who gives only harmless remedies than by one who has too strong faith in the curative power of his drugs. Does the physician not often place too great importance on the part the medicine plays in the treatment of a disease? While he is writing a prescription if in the city, a messenger is hurriedly dressing to catch the first street car, or, if in the country, a horse is being hurriedly hitched up for him to get to the drug store for medicine. Many a valuable horse has been ruined in this needless rush. Were the writer a boy again at home on the farm, with the experience gathered from one-third of a century in practice, and from observation in European and in American hospitals, and sent on such an errand, he would be far more solicitous about the care of the horse, than he would be about the time required to get the prescription put up. Is not our conduct a contributing factor in fostering the drug-taking habit, so prevalent among the laity?