

if no such protection was afforded to inventors, they might not be able to direct their energy in the direction of invention.

Some one may suggest that in taking this position we are at variance with the theory formerly advanced, that the good of man lies in the fulfilling of his capabilities. But not so, for the good of man is the fulfilling of his present capabilities, and it has already been pointed out that our capabilities are known only in so far as they are attained. What we may hereafter be, we cannot tell. Our abilities depend upon our surroundings, and as these change, so do our possibilities change. If the conditions are such that patents are necessary for the fulfilling of man's capabilities, then patents are necessary; but the time may come when man has so advanced that such protection is unnecessary.

If a discovery be made of such a kind that it is a boon to suffering humanity, that the terrors and pains which have been endured in the past may in the future be assuaged, then the thought is suggested,—is it equitable to allow the discoverer or inventor to give to the profession, and through it to the world, the fruit of his labors. These labors may have been intense and prolonged, and the result obtained only at the expense of health and fortune. Has the profession the right to accept these discoveries as free-offerings? They may be presented to the world as such, but is the generosity of an individual to be greater than the magnanimity of the community? It is not enough to say to dentists, "You belong to an honorable profession, therefore you should not disgrace it by obtaining patents, your aim should be something higher than mere commerce." Of course it could hardly be maintained that a discovery of vital importance to humanity should be patented and so restricted in its use that the poor might not profit by it.

But when we come to discuss secret compounds and secret local anaesthetics, the question becomes altogether different in its bearings. It is nothing short of a criminal act to prescribe for a patient some mixture of which we do not know the ingredients, or if the ingredients are known the proportions of the ingredients are unknown. The dentist who uses these secret preparations must hold in very light esteem the value of a human life. Besides, how undignified is the position of being treated as simpletons by men who presume to think us so weak-minded as to use their drugs on their guarantee. The very fact that such proprietors wish men to act criminally ought to be a sufficient intimation to us to be cautious. Can such proprietors have the welfare of the profession at heart? If so, then it is compatible with the welfare of the profession to induce men to lose their own identity and to become unscrupulous by imperilling the safety of their patients. We owe it to the profession to put a stop to these secret preparations, because the standard of the profession is lowered when it is admitted (by using these