

## MEDICO-DENTAL RELATIONS.\*

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When your secretary asked me to prepare a paper for this meeting I assented. Fate so ordained that it be written under difficulties, the greater part on the train between Montreal and Providence and the balance to-day on board the *Gladys* at Newport, R.I.

The smell of the salt water, the rattle and animation of numerous craft and their crews and the general tone of holiday-making are not very conducive to the consideration of serious professional questions. However having promised, something must be done in fulfilment.

The relations that should exist between sister professions form a very interesting subject for thought. Those existing between medicine and dentistry, while ever improving, are not the best that could be desired. The proverbial conservatism of medicine and the recent origin of dentistry have been to a certain degree incompatible. Medicine has been slow to recognize dentistry as a specialty of the healing art, and dentistry has resented this lack of recognition. In the course of evolution each profession passes through certain phases, not always well marked but none the less inevitable. There is that early period of mystery, which means ignorance, then arises a dogmatic empiricism which is as unthinking as it is cruel. Slowly comes the dawn of intelligent action founded upon individual observation and reasoning, action that is decisive without cruelty and uniform without dogmatism. The fault of all dogmatism is that it is based upon generalizations that are more or less arbitrary or at least too limited. Medicine and dentistry have not completely emerged from the empirical phase. The more obscure and difficult the basis the more given to rules will the profession be. Medicine is a difficult study, subject to numerous and ever-changing conditions, the mastery of which is beyond the power of any one individual.

As the majority in any profession is composed of individuals more or less unfitted by nature and training to the duties thereof, it follows that this majority must always be dependent upon fixed rules rather than upon the result of trained observation. In the immediate relations under discussion much that is undesirable is the result of this principle. There is great scope for improvement which can come only through intelligent discussion. In my opinion, dentistry is a specialty of medicine as important and as intricate as that of the oculist, aurist or other specialist. To successfully practice dentistry requires as a basis as well grounded a knowledge of general medical subjects as do any of the others.

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\*Read before the Eastern Ontario Dental Association.