

character when, as sometimes happens, he is requested by a patient to observe this duty. On the other hand, some patients are not sensitive and may even desire that others should know of their maladies, and under these circumstances the physician is absolved from his duty of secrecy. The clause in the code of Ethics reads as follows :—"Secrecy and delicacy, when required by peculiar circumstances, should be strictly observed ; and the familiar and confidential intercourse to which physicians are admitted in their professional visits should be used with discretion, and with the most scrupulous regard to fidelity and honor. The obligation of secrecy extends beyond the period of professional services : none of the privacies of personal and domestic life, no infirmity of disposition or flaw of character observed during professional attendance should ever be divulged by the physician except when he is imperatively required to do so. The force and necessity of this obligation are indeed so great that professional men have, under certain circumstances, been protected in their observance of secrecy by courts of justice."

There is a difference of opinion as to the duty of a physician in reference to knowledge of criminal acts. The code however makes no exception, and, clearly, the doctor is not to act as a detective or informant. Some may consider it an extreme view to hold that a physician is under an ethical bond of secrecy when he knows his patient to be a criminal. No matter what the crime, every wretch has the right to medical services in sickness, and the duty of the doctor relates exclusively to his patient. Some may say that a distinction should be made as to the nature of the crime. But the ethical rule is without exception, and the doctor is not called upon to exercise judicial discretion on the point. Not long ago the body of a new-born infant was discovered on the pier beneath a bridge. The following day a policeman, detailed to investigate the matter, visited the physicians in the neighborhood to learn what confinements they recently attended. It was certainly not the duty of any physician to answer such a question.

Another case : A physician is called to attend a young woman whom he discovers to be a victim of malpractice, and, as he believes, in the cause of justice, demands to know the name of her betrayer and of the one who undertook criminal interference.