

simply returned to the first principles of the medical profession, principles which satisfied the profession during thousands of years, the matter assumes a different aspect. The reformers only abrogate the written law of 1847, preferring the larger individual liberty of the profession anterior to that date. Previous to this, Massachusetts had a contest along similar lines, which resulted in affording sectarians equal rights with regulars, and turning popular prejudice against the medical profession.

The Mississippi Valley Medical Association gives its members entire freedom in the matter of consultations. Other medical societies in various places, have taken similar action, notably in Chicago, Cleveland, etc.

An extensive knowledge of the habits of prominent physicians leads to the conclusion, that a fat consultation fee is rarely refused because the attending physician is a sectarian. Personally the writer has often been told by colleagues that he was a fool because he regarded it a matter of gentlemanly honor to obey the spirit and letter of the law of consultations while he retains membership in societies having this law as a condition of membership.

Another marked illustration of this drifting was seen when a committee of its own appointment, reported to the American Medical Association that it favored such alteration of the code of ethics as would permit consultations between all physicians properly educated, legally qualified to practice medicine, and of honorable reputation in the place where they live. When it is remembered that the committee so reporting individually obey both the letter and spirit of the code bearing upon this point, it will be evident that their report indicates a drifting of the medical profession.

This drifting is farther seen, in that regulars and sectarians work side by side on boards of health, state and local, and on boards of other state institutions. This very imperfect sketch shows that, whether we like it or not, the fact cannot be disguised that the professional relationship of regulars and irregulars are, at many points, multiplying and extending. If, finally, through these relationships the sectarians shall be swallowed up by the medical profession, history will repeat itself. Within the memory of living physicians, specialists of all sorts were ranked as

"irregular," and with them were classed "practitioners of massage," "electro-therapeutics," "hydro-therapeutics," etc. Now work in these fields is regarded as the most honorable, and the workers receive the largest returns in money, honor and fame.

Whither does this drifting tend? The history of the past and the logic of existing social forces point to but one result, viz., the absorption of all ideas that are true and helpful, and all persons who are honest and of good report, into the medical profession. To this end, larger liberty will be accorded the individual physician. He will be permitted to choose his professional associates from among those whom he knows to be properly educated, legally qualified to practice medicine where they reside, and of good report. Qualifications other than these will be regarded as purely local in their necessity and temporary in their existence, and to be controlled entirely by the individual physician. It were wiser to object to consultation with a physician because of known ignorance, lack of skill, dishonest methods, or disreputable character, than because of his sectarian name. Objection on the first ground is readily understood by any layman, but objection on the second fails to commend itself to most persons, and not infrequently brings the objecting physician into discredit.

The medical profession originated in the effort to systematically relieve human suffering and promote human health. Amid the glimmerings of dawning science, it jealously guarded each addition to its knowledge, and incidentally contributed largely to the advancement of science. In every age parasites have sought to ally themselves with the medical profession that they might use its resources to plunder a suffering, credulous humanity. To exclude such parasites from the profession has ever occasioned perplexing thought, and for this purpose the unwritten custom of centuries was maintained, and to add still more in the same direction, in 1847, the American Medical Association adopted the written law of consultations now in force. But from the facts presented, it is clear that at the present this law fails of its beneficent design. Large bodies of physicians no longer regard the written law as in accord with the nature of the medical profession, and believe that this law should either be abolished or made