

you must remember that to many families and individuals, except the clergyman, you will be the only person who has an opportunity to exercise such an influence. In your relations with your patients, you must preserve a judicious reticence. Your patients have a perfect right to demand of you that you shall keep sacred facts concerning them learnt by you in a professional capacity. There is, as you have doubtless learned, only one exception to this rule, and that is when called upon to give evidence in a court of justice. You should, therefore, carefully avoid a habit of tattling and gossiping, as being unworthy the position of a cultured gentleman, especially a physician. I am sorry to say that the habit I would caution you against, so characteristic of small minds, is one too much indulged in by members of our profession. It is easily acquired, and with difficulty lost.

An important function of modern medicine—if not the most important, certainly one steadily growing as we make progress—is the prevention of disease. You will, I hope, pardon a brief allusion to certain instances in which you may do much to prevent disease. You all know that there seems ample evidence to show that insanity is on the increase. You also know equally well that in scarcely any other disease does hereditary taint play so important a part in causation. The marriage of persons with such tendencies is therefore a most serious question. You will not always be asked your advice on such points, but it will be your duty to speak with no uncertain sound, and to give it with all the necessary tact and authority. It will, perhaps, be often without avail. In these matters few persons are disposed to look to anything beyond their immediate gratification. If it were put to two persons passionately in love with each other that they may have children, one of whom would certainly die prematurely of consumption, another become insane, and a third perhaps commit suicide, I am afraid that in three cases out of four they would not practice self-denial and prevent so great calamities, but rather self-gratification and trust “the universal plan will all protect.”

You are doubtless aware of the intimate relation between the spread and prevalence of typhoid fever, cholera, diphtheria and