An Address

ON

THE SCOTTISH MEDICAL CORPORATIONS AND THE PUBLIC WEAL:

HOW THEY MIGHT DEVELOP A HEALTH CONSCIENCE.

Read before the Medico-Chirurgical Society of Edinburgh.

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WORK OF THE CORPORATION IN THE PAST.

THE three Scottish Medical Corporations—the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow—have each, by charter and by Acts of Parliament, acquired certain important privileges, and have many duties to the profession of medicine and to the public. The powers granted to the corporations related to the health of the people and the welfare of the State. "*Vita et Sanitas*" was their motto. They bound into corporate strength the units of the profession of medicine, they "elevated its character and its dignity," and they encouraged and advantaged medical science and learning. They originated and have continued to support the chief of the great schools of medicine of Scotland. Most of the leaders of surgery and medicine in Scotland in the past have belonged to those bodies, all this tending strongly towards the public good. A glance at their history shows that their conceptions of duty have widened as time went on; they have, in fact, undergone a process of development and evolution. At the present time they are well organized, energetic bodies, full of zeal for the advancement of the profession of medicine. They show no signs of senility. They have, on the whole, taken a wide view of their responsibilities, and have not written "finality" on their aims. No one can read their charters and try to get at their spirit without seeing that they admit of a wider and more beneficial construction than appears at first sight, and this larger outlook has generally been taken. No doubt in hundreds of years of existence there have been movements that seemed narrow and selfish, but these were shortlived.

WORK OF THE FUTURE.

The proposition I am to advance to-night is that now, at the beginning of the twentieth century, medicine and surgery and the sciences on which they are founded have made such advances, and have thereby acquired such capacities of ameliorating the lives and improving the health of men and women, that there is room for a forward movement on the part of these corporations for the public weal. New conditions affecting the physical and mental welfare of men for good and evil have arisen. New means of spreading health knowledge are in existence. New methods of influencing the masses of the population for good in regard to their food and drink, their modes of life, and environment are at the disposal of those who have the knowledge and authority to use them. The general press has become a power that reaches almost every one, but it is little used by medicine. The democratic idea that every citizen is entitled to the benefit of everything that will add to human health and happiness is growing fast. The public ignorance as to health and welfare conditions is great, but the craving to know them is widespread and pathetic. A professional authority to which appeal can be made is longed for. The conviction of health sin is general, and the prospects of conversion to a new healthy life are promising. Health and sanitation Acts by the Legislature, medical officers of health, sanitary inspectors, notification of infectious diseases, inspection of workshops, health lectures, health congresses, innumerable and energetic efforts by medical societies and by medical and lay preachers of physical righteousness have all, in addition to prolonging life and diminishing death, done incalculable service by rousing in the public mind the vague beginnings of a tremendously important mental process of a dissipation of the former fatalistic assumption that disease and deformity, weakness and unfitness are inevitable things, which God and the devil had arranged between them for the chastening of mankind and the punishment of their sins. Not only so, but there is visibly arising among the more intelligent of our people the beginnings of a new development of the moral sense, a feeling of personal responsibility for the existence of disease. In fact, there is arising an influence which may do as much for the physical and mental conditions of men as morals and religion have done for their conduct. A health con-

science is being slowly created. Many people are keenly dissatisfied with the present health and welfare of the body politic, and self-reproachful about evils which they think should not exist, and which they individually should help to put an end to. Some of them go even further, and have in their minds the beginnings of a health ideal, a conception of communities of men and women, strong, handsome, fruitful, long-lived, intelligent, self-controlled, and free from disease. Such ideals are very stimulating to efforts for their attainment, and should by all means be encouraged. Things only get done when a sense of duty comes in and ideals are formed and in this direction corporations could work effectually.

A HEALTH APOSTOLATE.

No body of men knows or can know so well as the medical profession the state of the public mind in regard to health questions, or the extraordinary difficulties which must be encountered in dissipating the profound ignorance which on this matter besets it. We all feel that in this we should educate our masters, the public, in all that relates to its physical and mental condition. Most of us try to do so individually, but to leaven the mass of mankind with health knowledge will need more than sporadic individual effort.

As a profession, we have not as yet taken the position to which our knowledge of physiological laws and our sanitary and medical experience entitle us. The public at present does not use us and our knowledge as it might for its own benefit. The Legislature notoriously distrusts us, and does not call us in as it might do to its aid in framing its Acts which affect the health and welfare of the people. Few large conceptions of the value of modern physiological sanitary and medical knowledge to the State have been expressed by our parliamentarians and statesmen since Disraeli's famous *sanitas sanitatum* epigram. What do we hear of the physiology and psychology of brain development in the course of the torrents of discussion on education? We are by many influential laymen suspected of being professionally selfish, faddy, and incapable of taking large views that could be both practical and helpful to the statesman. As a matter of fact, it is doubtful if the professional ideal of the doctor is quite as altruistic and unselfish as that of the priest. In reading lately the journal of John Wesley, one could not but be struck with the fact that no man of our profession had ever been inspired with the physiological ideal of elevating and perfecting human life as he was with his spiritual ideal. None of us have gone to the people and devoted our lives to save them from disease, degeneracy, and death as he did to save them from hell fire. And yet there are possibilities for a medical apostle of health as fruitful for human good in the long run, looking to the future of our race, as were Wesley's labours of fifty years, his 300,000 miles of travel, and his 200,000 sermons and addresses. He was a great organizer, and founded a church to carry on and spread his work. We sadly need an organization for our propaganda, and some authoritative body with a continuous life to attend to the soundness of our people in body and mind.

Of course it will be at once objected that our doctrines are not yet always indisputable, that the laws of life are far from being yet fully elucidated, that our facts are yet too few to found universal health precepts on, that we might lead the people astray by premature generalizations, and that notoriously "doctors differ." Our answer is that we have definite knowledge enough even now to do enormous good to men's health, and that the public welfare would benefit greatly by the application of that knowledge.

FOODS AND DIETS.

Take, for example, the food question of our people—that primary of all physiological needs. Can any one say that the large and accurate chemical and physiological facts we possess about foods are generally known or utilized for the benefit of our people? Food—its constitution, its selection, cost, cooking, and use—concerns the health, mental and bodily, of every man, woman, and child; and knowledge about it is especially related to the health, comfort, and social well-being of our wage earners. The writing of this paper was partly suggested to me by the recent investigation on *A Study of the Diet of the Labouring Classes in Edinburgh*, by Drs. Noël Paton, Crauford Dunlop, and E. M. Inglis published last year. The scientific work of this paper having been carried on in the laboratory of the Royal College of Physicians, gave it a special interest to its Fellows and those of the College of Surgeons. It embodied most laborious and careful observations, it received help from the Town Council of Edinburgh, it was intensely practical, and its facts and conclusions would,

if digested and practised, have been of great benefit to every wage earner in Scotland. Life and health to many of them might depend on their knowledge of that paper. What systematic means were taken to spread its most important facts and conclusions in an effective way among the people it concerned? None whatever, except that part of it was published in the local newspapers. Every working man in Scotland might have got a copy for a half-penny. Can any one say that in this instance, which I take almost at random, there is not room for an organized diffusion of such important health knowledge by our corporations? Our physiological, medical, sanitary, and dietetic knowledge of the most pressingly practical value is buried in our medical journals and books, and never reaches or benefits the people who need it and who often would be most willing to receive it. It is as if practical morals and religion were to be hidden in ethical and theological tomes while vice and irreligion were rampant among mankind.

EDUCATE THE EDUCATOR.

Then look for a moment at the insignificant place physiology and medicine hold in education. A Scotch professor of education in a recent address to teachers told them that educators were commonly ignorant of the very first principles of the physiology of the developing brain, and he was not contradicted. My experience entirely confirms that of Professor Edgar, and this is not the fault of the teachers. No one has taught them this knowledge or impressed them with the idea that it ought to be an essential part of their armamentarium. If a human brain has to be "educated" between the ages of 5 and 25, surely the educator should know something of it and its development between those ages. It is only quite recently that it ever seemed to occur to our legislators and great School Boards that medicine and physiology could help them to understand the relationship between the developing brain of a man and his mental and moral character—the most subtle and for humanity one of the most important things in Nature. Has medicine no responsibility for the ignorance and neglect on this matter? It seems a clear duty to assert its place for the benefit of future generations of mankind. If there is one period of life, and if there is any process affecting mankind in which medical and physiological experience come in, they are the developmental and educational period and the educational process. People talk with horror of a Godless education; they seem to have no sort of fear of an unhygienic education. To read most educational works the mind is everything; the brain, through which alone the mind can act, is seldom mentioned.

Philosophy, religion, morals, mind, everything seems to come into education except physiological law and fact. The recent Scottish Royal Commission on physical training, admirable in its aims and its appointment a sign of better things, came nearest the medical idea of approaching the subject, but its basal idea was not quite the scientific one, and instead of one medical man among nine members, half the Commission might well have consisted of physiologists, sanitarians, and medical men. By far the most important parts of the report were not the opinions expressed by the educationalists and others, but the developmental and medical facts brought out in important original investigations by Drs. Warner, Leslie Mackenzie, and Hay. The members of the Commission as a whole seemed not to grasp the philosophical conception of the unity of the human organism and the essential connexion between body, mind, and brain. I believe a similar German Commission would have been differently constituted and would have taken a larger view of its functions. It seems as if it would take a century to eradicate the idea from this country that science is necessarily "unpractical," and that the "business man" and he only can be trusted to investigate and report on any subject whatever that concerns the people or the State.

The mind of the country is now waking up to the idea that there is a process of degeneracy going on in our town populations. But there has been no really large and scientific treatment of this momentous subject, either to investigate the facts, or to inquire into the essential difference between urban and rural life and their physiological effect on mankind. Scientific men can alone do so, but at present it and we drift along in ignorance, with spasms of panic when such facts as that only one Manchester recruit out of five can be made to handle a rifle come out in a casual way.

There are many other matters of primary importance to the life and health of our people in regard to which they urgently need knowledge and a sense of duty. The

great housing problem, the nurture of children problem, the heredity problem, the marriage of the weak and tainted problem, the alcohol problem, the mental disease and degeneracy problem are some of those. Looking at the last—the mental problem—"lunacy" is looked at far too much *per se* and without reference to its true and large physiological and psychological meaning, and to its relationship to hereditary weakness and to environment, to other forms of disease, to other degeneracies and brain "reversions." The public have first to be untaught much about mental disease as well as to receive healthful practical knowledge. Superstitions and prejudices about that and other health subjects die hard.

Even when large and admirable ideas and schemes relating to health and human conditions are started they are apt to lack scientific guidance. Witness the Garden City Association with its committee of 68 members; only two of them are members of the medical profession, and its council of 19 with not a doctor among them. Why, the very idea of such a city originated with Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson in his *Hygeia, or a Model City of Health*. If St. Margaret's Hope is to become such a model city as the Garden City Association urges, and as we all fervently hope this can only be done through the application of our sanitary and scientific knowledge, and by our active and practical help.

A HEALTH CONSCIENCE.

I have purposely omitted to refer to the existing agencies and efforts for improving and maintaining the public health which have done such wonders, but rather have endeavoured to point out some of the unoccupied fields. The labours of the older sanitarians, the Public Health Acts, and the magnificent work of our medical officers of health, we all know to be the very sheet anchors of nearly all the improvements that have taken place of late years. My only regret is that these Acts are not wider in their scope. The medical officers of health in very many cases take a larger view of their duties than those prescribed by statute, and their annual reports are as yet the best Bibles of health we possess. Any means by which the most urgent and impressive of these facts and teachings could be brought into effective contact with every mind in every county of Scotland would in time do incalculable good, and this I believe our corporations could effect. I should like to see every medical officer of health a Fellow or a Member of our medical corporations for the mutual benefit and assistance of both.

If it is granted—and it cannot well be denied—that there are many unoccupied health fields, that the public weal urgently demands further efforts to improve the health and the organic welfare of the people, and that the recent advances in science and medicine enable such efforts to be successfully made, then the question arises, On whom does this duty chiefly fall? We are a small and compact country in Scotland, we are as advanced in regard to medical sciences as any other country, we are supposed to have average efficiency in administration, and we have three great medical bodies with prestige and organization, whose charters permit of their undertaking such work, if they do not, when interpreted in a large sense, directly point to it in the public health interests. Our people are, on the whole, well-educated and receptive, as well as being alive to their own interests. Our newspaper press is public-spirited and, when politics do not intervene, open to all who can interest and instruct their readers. We have scattered through the country, thousands of medical men, increasingly well-instructed, many of them being zealous and not too busy. We have in our corporations an increasing number of young Fellows and Members, with all kinds of scientific knowledge at command, eager for research and for work of every sort.

It seems to me, therefore, that we have ready to our hands the means, first, of setting up a health authority which would command respect and confidence; and, secondly, of instituting a health propaganda to educate, to persuade, and to form a "health conscience" among our people, the new health organization neither superseding nor interfering with any existing effort or work. On the contrary, it would stimulate and back up every such means of improving the physical and mental condition of our people. Such work should be entirely altruistic, scientific, and free from what might be called professional selfishness. No "professional interests" of any kind whatever should come into this work. Religion, morals, politics, and free education have all been pressed on every individual of our people, systematically and by many organized or legal authorities. Science alone has not taken its place as an all-pervading factor in the making of the

modern man and of modern society, and of all branches of science those relating to man's life and health should surely come first for the mass of a people. They concern him immediately from the cradle to the grave. The attempt to take up this work would, I believe, do our corporations and profession an enormous amount of good. It would give us a higher sense of public responsibility to our fellow-citizens, and a higher and more altruistic ideal of our duty. It would teach us to take larger views of disease, for we would more habitually think of its prevention and its predisposing rather than its exciting causes. It would give a special opportunity for the exercise of the talent of popular exposition of health subjects by pen and voice which some men specially possess. It cannot do any individual or any corporate body any harm to have "a mission" for race improvement and race health. We have hitherto had too little of this feeling among us, our individual patients being too exclusively considered, the community too little thought of. To our country brethren it should give more of a feeling of professional solidarity and less of individual isolation. This in every way would do them good. They would thus be in frequent communication with our corporations, and we would learn much from them. The public would gradually come to look on every doctor as being a public benefactor and an essential element of a well organized society. The healthier a community became, the more the doctor would be called on to avert the curse of disease.

As to the means by which a health propaganda might reach the masses of our population, they would have to be exceedingly varied. It goes without saying that to do much good and to establish the "Health Conscience," which should be the ultimate goal of our labours, continuous iteration of the commonest health axioms would be required. The repetitive principle of the weekly service and sermon of the church would have to be adopted. The parent, the teacher, the clergyman, the public man, the politician, and the newspaper editor would first have to be interested and instructed, and then enlisted in our cause. The press must, I am convinced, be our chief pulpit. Its use for this particular service of humanity has been most unaccountably neglected. All men do not now go to church, but every man reads the newspaper. The medical press, the medical societies, the original investigators, the reports of the medical officers of health, the medical books, the university lecture rooms would supply the pabulum. This would require continuous, judicious and laborious assortment and condensation. Why should the tract almost always be a religious tract, or the leaflet commonly a political instrument? I see that for a political propaganda in one city 300,000 "leaflets" are to be circulated. A suitable literature for systematic teaching would soon come into being if it were demanded and in constant use. Health primers could be easily and cheaply got up for the use of old and young. The country doctor, well educated as we now turn him out, would be a living voice for health, and would direct and use all these agencies as the clergyman uses his Bible, Prayer Book, and sermon, and as the schoolmaster uses his school books. He would also organize health workers, as the clergyman and the philanthropist do, in every parish. My contention is that our corporations could effectually assist and stimulate him in his work.

Let us imagine a community with a health conscience, a health ideal, and sufficient health knowledge. Pregnancy and parturition would become safer and be bereft of many of their gloomy forebodings. Lactation, child-feeding, and nurture would be based on scientific knowledge, new milk and pure milk only would be given to children, the mortality among children under 5 would fall 50 per cent. in our cities, the meaning and the use of play would be understood. Child sleep and clothing would follow Nature's law, the mental and bodily development of the child would be closely studied, and the risks and danger signals understood. Simple but accurate observations of child growth and progress would be taken. The doctor would be called in for advice as to defects and arrestments of development at early periods. The effects of good air and bad air breathed by children would be appreciated. Stock would be taken of every child by the doctor and the parent before the technical process of school education began. The teacher would have far more physiological knowledge of the human brain and human body than he has now. The distinctions between physiological and moral sins would be made at home and at school. All schools and each scholar would be under medical inspection. The brain as the organ of mind, and the

body as the organ of the brain would during the developmental process be treated on sound physiological and psychological principles. School games, drill, and exercises would be systematized. Education would have a far fuller and more rational significance to the parent and teacher. The real meaning and the risks of puberty and adolescence would be far better understood. The sex question would be looked at more rationally. The choice of occupations and residences would be considered from the health side, and the idea of organic fitness introduced. Moral and religious training would go hand in hand with health training, and would be considered a part of it. Ideas of right and wrong would be made to apply to the body as well as the mind. To break Nature's laws as they affect any human being would be regarded as sin, and be followed by contrition and amendment. A health conscience would be established as an integral part of every man and woman's nature. Adverse heredity would be recognized and counteracted in every possible way. The all-important marriage question would have some science and reason as well as emotion come into it. The tremendous responsibilities of maternity and paternity would be better realized. Deliberately to choose to live in a crowded or unhealthy neighbourhood would be regarded as suicide is now. To use alcohol in excess, to indulge in sexual vice would be equivalent to losing self-respect and manliness. Health would be idealized and longed for as beauty is in woman. It would be taken for granted that all ordinary diseases may be prevented and that their existence is scandalous. To neglect any measures for the improvement of human health would in any Government be regarded as *ipso facto* a reason for its instant dismissal. A sense of organic well-being, the most certain of all proofs of health, would be aimed at for individuals and for society. The meaning and the proper treatment of old age would be understood. Disease and death would be more painless than they commonly are. Life would be far more efficient than it is now. The irritability and pessimism of men and women would lessen. Men, and especially women, would get far more out of life than most of them do at present. The efficiency of the worker would be greatly increased. The money value of a man would go up greatly through the improvement of his size and strength and nervous energy.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION.

No doubt the criticism of such propositions as I have made will commonly be, We agree that all this is most desirable in theory, but how is it to take practical effect and become a working scheme? Why not rather strengthen and broaden the existing agencies? I must, therefore, in order to answer those most relevant questions, try to suggest the basis of a working project.

1. The three Medical Corporations would each separately first discuss the proposal in all its bearings, and then, if the general principle is approved, discuss it together.

2. If no insuperable initial difficulties present themselves to the Fellows, the corporations would appoint a large and representative Joint Health Committee, with powers of inquiry and suggestion.

3. This Joint Committee would put itself into communication with public health officers, with representative medical men all over the country, with public health organizations at home and abroad, with public bodies, clergymen, teachers, and with any other person who could give practical information and advice as to unoccupied health fields.

4. The Joint Committee would then report the result of these inquiries and deliberations, and formulate a working scheme to the corporations, who would finally discuss, amend, and authorize or decline it.

5. The cost of the working of any such scheme would be a most important element for consideration and arrangement by the corporations. It is possible that on account of its obvious importance to the people and the State and its philanthropic nature, the public would place funds at the disposal of the corporations for carrying it out, if it were suitably brought before wealthy and public-spirited citizens.

6. The scheme being essentially an educative not an administrative one, and its great aim being to reach the masses of our people, the most efficient means of such education would be the prime consideration, and the press and the other agencies mentioned in the paper are therefore obviously indicated as the chief of such means of education in health knowledge, resulting in health improvement and the creation of an efficient "Health Conscience."