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SERMONIC.

RELIGION AND THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

PREACHED, BY REQUEST, TO THE MEDICAL STUDENTS, FEBRUARY 29, 1880, BY JOHN LEYBURN, D.D., PRESBYTERIAN, OF BALTIMORE.

Luke the beloved physician.—Col. iv: 14.

DEFERENCE SHOWN TO MEDICAL SCIENCE.

MEDICINE has always occupied a conspicuous place among the sciences. It has to do with that which intimately concerns every one of us. Our nature is not as it came from the Creator's hand. That beautiful, healthful, perfect condition which characterized its normal state, has been lost in the wreck which sin brought upon God's handiwork, and instead thereof we have weakness, pains—a whole army of diseases, indeed—rendering this earth, to a large extent, a great lazaret-house, and all mankind its patients. No family but is subject to the all-prevailing ills which flesh is heir to: no individual but must, sooner or later, succumb under their power. Naturally, mankind have sought amelioration for their ills. Instinctively, when pain and sickness assail, we seek relief. And the cry for help has, at all times, been met with

the proffer of remedies, so that no age has been without its practitioners in the healing art; and even the most savage tribes have their "medicine men." So high, indeed, was the estimate placed on this art in the earlier stages of its history, and in less informed periods of the world, that it was regarded akin to the supernatural, and was chiefly in the hands of the priesthood, by whom it was but too often used as an instrument of chicanery and craft to control the superstitious and credulous for aggrandizement and profit. Among the ancient Egyptian priests the knowledge of medicine was kept a profound secret, and in Greece it was carefully concealed and transmitted from father to son by the family of the Æsculapides—an order of priests of Æsculapius, to whom belonged the great Hippocrates.

Though medical science has long since been divested of the garb of secrecy, and though its mysteries are open to all, it has lost nothing of its hold upon the respect and confidence of mankind. As with religion, so with medicine, some profess themselves skeptical—speaking lightly and disparagingly of the pretensions of the profession; but the best refutation of these

[The first several sermons are reported in full; the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another, of his discourse.]

objections is that no sooner are such persons attacked with serious illness than they send for the doctor.

And surely, unless it be that office whose functions pertain to healing the maladies of the soul, none could have such claims upon the respect, gratitude and honor of mankind. One of those passages of Scripture which most beautifully sets forth the tenderness and beneficence of our blessed Lord is that which designates Him as the One "who healeth all thy diseases." Divine Providence has placed in the hands of the enlightened and judicious physician the privilege of winning for himself, in a limited sense, and as pertains to the physical man, the same beautiful and honorable designation. Under God, the physician is the healer of our diseases. When the poor body is racked with pains, or parched with fever, or laid on the bed of languishing, the physician comes as the appointed minister of mercy, calms the fevered pulse, mollifies the pain, brings slumber to sleepless eyes, revives the waning strength, and restores the sufferer once more to accustomed health. Now, for such services, the physician surely deserves to be ranked among our chiefest benefactors. Without the boon which he has brought, what would be all other earthly blessings? The banquet-table is spread in vain for him who has no appetite or digestion; the downy couch in vain invites to repose him whose eyelids sleep refuses to visit; bright skies and balmy air in vain offer refreshment to him who cannot move except with torture, if at all; and kindly friendship and social joy in vain solicit to their circle him to whose shattered nerves even the voices of his own little ones are distress and agony. To the sick man riches, friends, learning—all earthly resources of profit and enjoyment avail nothing. But the skillful and judicious physician, who, by God's help, is enabled to drive away these maladies and bring again health and vigor, does for us a service for which our afflicted humanity may well regard him among the chiefest benefactors.

BENEVOLENCE OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

It is an honor, too, for which the medical profession deserves the highest commendation, that they do largely a work of benevolence. At best, taking them as a whole, their labors are not the most remunerative. Indeed, as a class, perhaps no body of educated men engaged in secular pursuits are more inadequately compensated. Here and there a physician in a great city and with a great name accumulates a fortune, but such an one is a *rara avis*. Compared with commercial men especially, the pecuniary returns are extremely meager. We find in all our large cities commercial men and financiers who are millionaires, but who ever heard of even the most eminent physician laying up a million from his practice? In smaller places, and in the country—it may be in the cities also—the doctor's bills are often the last paid. Indeed, I have known some physicians—men of eminence, too, in other sections of the country—who seldom collected their dues, and died leaving nothing for their families.

Yet, what employment, skill or services deserve to be more amply remunerated, not only on account of the benefits conferred, but because of the uncompromising and exhausting character of the work? For the physician in full practice there is no certain time for repose. The merchant, when his day's work is done, may return to his comfortable home, with the confidence that he is a free man till next morning. Or he may hail Saturday night as the harbinger of one day's perfect freedom. Not so with the physician. At any hour of the night he is liable to be roused from his slumbers by the messenger from a sick-chamber, and disease does not suspend its assaults to enable him to rest on the Sabbath. Through winter's snows and summer's heats, through all exposures, by night and by day, week-days and Sundays, all the year round, however wearied and worn, when the call comes he must go. People may make allowances for men of

other occupations when they decline service, or fail to do what is expected; but no allowance is made by the sick man and anxious friends if the physician does not obey their summons.

Then, too, how much of a physician's practice is liable to be among those who are able to make no recompense unless it be in grateful hearts! Eminently is he the friend and benefactor of the poor. Without money or price he hastens to their relief, with assiduous care ministers to them as he does to the rich, equally fears when symptoms are unfavorable, and rejoices when returning health is made sure.

But it is not merely to testify to the dignity and value of your profession that I would speak to you to-night, or even as to the self-denying and benevolent spirit of its practitioners. Rather, as a minister of God, would I set before you the importance of a true and hearty religious character, in order to fit you for the sphere of labor and influence which it opens to you.

RELIGIOUS DRAWBACKS.

It will not be denied, I suppose, that there are some difficulties and drawbacks which are peculiar to the physician as regards religious truth and duty. At first glance, one would think that no class of men could be more favorably situated for having the claims of religion enforced upon them. Surely, if any have reminders of man's frailty and mortality constantly, as it were, confronting them, none, not even the minister of the Gospel, is so constantly brought face to face with the most impressive illustrations of the Psalmist's declaration, "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble." In his pastoral visitations the minister is often called to the bedside of the sick and dying, but a large portion of his visits is to those in the full enjoyment of health, and of life's numberless blessings. But the physician's visits are wholly to the sick and suffering. Disease, in its manifold forms, is before him every day and hour. Not until sickness has entered the household is he summoned. His office is to wrestle

with the unwelcome visitor who has preceded him, to endeavor to keep back the destroyer, and to snatch waning life from the grasp of the great last enemy; and often, after his most exhaustive efforts, it becomes his painful province to find that human skill is all in vain, and that death and the grave will have their prey. If earth is a lazaretto, he it is who is called to behold its most impressive aspects. Day after day he must walk its multifarious wards, surrounded on every hand by the suffering, the dying and the dead. Surely, of all men, he would seem least likely to forget man's frailty and mortality. With the *memento mori* ever before him, how can he forget that he himself has to die, and that, if there be truth in the Word of God, he himself should be ready for the inevitable doom of man: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"? Unfortunately, however, in this, as elsewhere, it is but too true that "familiarity breeds contempt." If it does not engender "contempt," certainly it blunts the edge of Providential appeals. Accustomed, as the physician is from day to day, to witness sickness and death, the spectacle fails to produce the deep and vivid impression which is made upon one rarely brought face to face with these solemn events, so that one of the most potent instrumentalities for impressing the thoughtless and unconcerned avails but little in his case, because of the nature of his occupation.

ASSAULTS FROM MATERIALISM.

But, more than this, he is exposed to strong temptations to skepticism in regard to the very foundations of our holy and blessed religion. It has been said that the habitual study of the human organism tends to materialism; and certain it is that not a few who have been prominent in the profession have adopted materialistic views. Constantly occupied, as they are, with the material fabric, familiar with its nicely adjusted mechanism, observing the varied and marvelous products of matter, they ultimately so dignify and

exalt matter and the powers of nature, as to attribute to that source solely all that we see and know of man—man intellectual and spiritual, as well as physical. The doctrine is essentially that propounded by the infidel Lord Bolingbroke, in a former century, that man is not compounded of a material body and an immortal spirit; that “it neither has been nor can be proved that the soul is a distinct substance united to the body”; that “while we are alive we preserve the capacity, or, rather, faculty of thinking, as we do of moving and other faculties plainly corporeal”; that “when we are dead our faculties die with us,” and that “it might as reasonably be said that we shall walk eternally as that we shall think eternally.” The gist, my friends, of this monstrous doctrine is that not only animal life, but intellectual and spiritual—the mind and the soul—are only products of material agencies belonging to the mortal body; that when one dies the other dies, and that, hence, there can be no future spiritual existence. As a matter of course, man is no longer a responsible moral agent—he is a mere machine; and as he has no soul and no immortality, of course there can be no foundation for a religion. Looking from this standpoint, as a necessary consequence, Christianity is a fiction and an imposture.

Now, we shall not enter into an elaborate argument to prove that man has a soul independent of the body. But, inasmuch as all admit that we can determine the existence of matter by the properties of solidity and extension, why may we not also determine the existence of spirit in man from the qualities of thought and reflection. Materialists, however, would reply that thought and reflection are the result of certain combinations of matter in the human organism. But, let me ask, where is the ground for this doctrine? Where, in all the researches of physiology, has there been discovered the first trace of mind or thought resulting from combinations or laws of matter? Men of high intellect and exquisite

skill have been for ages scrutinizing and searching every part of the wonderful structure which constitutes physical man, but never yet have they discovered the contrivance or the forces which produce the thinking principle. They have told us how the eye is arranged for seeing; how the arterial and nervous systems, with the heart, are arranged for the circulation of the blood; how the stomach and affiliated organs perform the offices of digestion, and how all the functions of animal life are provided for and carried on; but never yet have they pointed out the organization by which thought or moral principle is produced. True, they point to the brain as controlling all voluntary action; they tell us that it is a finely constructed galvanic battery, projecting the electric current through the nerve tissues, and that thus the hand, the foot, the lips, the tongue, are brought into use and controlled at pleasure. But, after all, this leaves the great mystery still veiled. What controls the brain? What sets in motion that cunningly devised battery? Where and what is that mysterious power which says to this marvelous mechanism, “Go!” and it goeth; “Stop!” and it stoppeth? In our telegraph offices there are batteries and connected wires extending over continents and under seas—but the battery does not work itself. It needs the skillful fingers directed by an intelligent mind to put it in play, and send abroad the messages. Without this it is dumb and useless.

Again, the physiologist, proud of the progress of his science, applies the galvanic current to a dead man’s tissues, and the dead man opens his eyes, distorts his face, lifts his hands, or jerks his legs, and straightway the physiologist says: “Aha! Have I not found the principle of life? Electricity is the force which keeps the human machine in motion—we are on the right track now. Let science but follow up these suggestive hints, and we shall at last be masters of the secret as to the entire motive principle of living, thinking men.” But is this so? Has not this

speculative man jumped to a conclusion unwarranted by the premises? All that he has proved is that this force of nature—electricity—is an agency for carrying on the human functions. The point as to what sets in motion and controls this agency remains still untouched.

And does this galvanic current make the dead man *speak*? Does it bring from him expressions of joy or sorrow? Does it restore his intelligence? In short, have the results of the experimenting reached one iota beyond the mere animal fabric?

No, young gentlemen, scientific research has done nothing to demonstrate the nature of that connection which exists between matter and mind. As to proving that mind is the product of matter, it has not brought forth a shadow of evidence.

MIND ONE THING, AND MATTER ANOTHER.

On the contrary, all the researches of science go to prove that mind is one thing, and matter another—that, when we have scrutinized the material man to the utmost, we have yet before us the unsolved question as to his spiritual nature, and that between the two there is a great gulf fixed; that during natural life there is a spiritual substance inhabiting the body, and that at death it takes its departure, leaving the dust to return to dust again.

Until, therefore, more solid results can be shown by scientific research, we cannot see why any honest and intelligent inquirer should espouse materialism, but precisely the reverse. Its positions are sheer assumptions, and until more substantial arguments are produced, we may well rest in the consciousness which so plainly tells us that we are not mere matter nor the products of matter, but that there is imparted to us a spiritual nature endowed with rational, moral, yea and immortal faculties—something far higher and nobler than belongs to dust and ashes.

RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITIES.

I come, now, to speak more particularly of the religious responsibilities

which rest upon a physician. According to the Word of God and according to common-sense, obligation and responsibility increase with the resources and opportunities for doing good. To whom much is given, of him shall much be required. As to resources for doing good, surely the physician has much committed to him. Men in other departments may be his equals or superiors as to talents and attainments, or in wealth or conspicuous position, but none of them can equal him in power over the confidence and the heart. The nature of the service which he renders, wins for him a species of regard and reverence quite peculiar. Receiving through him incalculable and tangible benefits, turning always to him when danger threatens, or the vital forces are disturbed, recognizing in his instructions and directions an authority which must not be disputed, and taking even his most unwelcome prescriptions without questioning or hesitation, he comes to be regarded with a deference altogether extraordinary. Indeed, there seems almost a magic power in the very presence of the physician. All have seen with what eagerness the invalid looks forward to the accustomed visit. All have seen how the eye brightens at the sound of his familiar footsteps; how the pallid face glows in giving him welcome; how his pleasant words bring cheer to the despairing spirit, and how, all day afterward, the patient is brighter and better—not so much because of drugs administered, but because the doctor has been there. A friend told me, some time since, that a distinguished physician in one of our large cities, for lack of time to see him elsewhere, took him in his carriage one day in going the daily round of visiting patients. In the course of the day the doctor said to my friend: "Most of these are ladies who are not very sick, but they like to see their doctor every few days, and it does them good." And no doubt this was true. They were cheered and made to feel better, and the husbands observed the happy effects, and felt that the money was

well expended—though in this particular case the rates were by no means minimum.

VAST POWER FOR GOOD.

Now, it cannot be denied that, to one occupying such a relation to a large constituency, there is intrusted a power for vast good; and if the mere worldly man can do so much to cheer and comfort, how immeasurably would the happy effects of his visits be enhanced if he combined also, to some extent, the offices of physician to the soul! Words of encouragement, promise and consolation, would seem to come with even more weight from his lips than when spoken by the minister, whose official duties naturally and necessarily call him thus to speak. I could mention an eminent physician of a sister city, now deceased, but who enjoyed not only an American but a European reputation, who was a man of this stamp, ministering not only to the bodily but to the spiritual ailments of his patients; and rich and blessed was his reward, even in this world, in the warm testimonials of the many who acknowledged him as eminently their benefactor, giving, as he had, both health to the body and consolation to the soul. And why may not every physician dispense, in the chambers of the sick, this twofold blessing? What could be more fully accordant with the work of the Great Physician who both cured the maladies of the soul and healed diseases of the body? To the medical profession alone is permitted the high honor of imitating Christ by combining the two services.

The circumstances, too, under which a physician enters a household are most favorable for impressing religious truth. In prosperity men are apt to be thoughtless and callous as to spiritual and eternal things. But when sickness and sorrow come, even the indifferent are prone to feel that those subjects are of momentous importance. Words spoken then do not always fall on hearts of adamant, but upon sensibilities rendered tender and impressionable by affliction. Such opportu-

nities the truly pious physician may improve, and with such results that in time and through eternity may bring blessings on his head.

THE PHYSICIAN AND THE MINISTER.

I may also add that the religious physician is in the best position to form a correct judgment on that sometimes difficult question as to calling the minister into the sick-room. It is not a very uncommon thing for a pastor to find the sick-chamber of a parishioner barred against him by the physician's mandate. Sometimes, undoubtedly, this is wise and necessary. Unquestionably there are cases where absolute quiet and repose are indispensable, and, for one, I would be far from encouraging the minister's forcing himself to the bedside against the wishes of the medical attendant. But certain it is that some physicians have most erroneous and unjust views of the character and influence of pastoral visits to the sick. I desire to enter a protest against the idea apparently held by some physicians, that ministers, under these circumstances, cannot be trusted for discretion or common-sense; and I also desire to protest against the idea that religious ministrations at the sick-bed tend to excite the patient. I have now been many years in the ministry, and but one single instance can I recall where such was the effect; and this, I think, was because the patient's mind was wandering. On the other hand, I have seen the most happy results in soothing and tranquilizing the anxious, troubled mind, and thus contributing to the restoration of the body. I can recall one special case where, though the physician was angry when he found I had been talking and praying with his patient, it afterward was clear that these ministrations had accomplished what the physician himself had been unable to do, viz.: quieted a much excited mind and nervous system, so that from this time the patient took a turn for the better.

A most intelligent medical gentleman, referring to a case where friends of one of his patients had declined to send for

their pastor for fear of unduly exciting the sick person, said to me that this was all wrong; that, if the sick one was already a true Christian, the ministrations of a judicious pastor would be a comfort and a blessing; and if the sick one had not a hope of salvation, he ought, surely, to be allowed the means of improving the little time possibly remaining to him. And he added that he did not believe that the most ungodly man, if, whilst in health, he were asked, "Were you to be taken ill and approaching death, would you prefer to have the fact concealed from you, or would you rather be apprised of your condition, that you might have the chance at least to say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'?"—that he believed there was no one who would not reply, "By all means let me know my true condition."

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN.

And now, in conclusion, young gentlemen, let me remind you that what befalls others, rendering the physician's skill necessary, must, in like manner, also overtake yourselves. You are to be the healers of diseases, but, some time or other, you will require the healer at your own bedside. It will be yours, also, to see many cases resist all power of remedies; and whom inexorable death will snatch away in spite of all your efforts. So, also, it must be, sooner or later, when the mortal malady lays hold upon your own vital powers. The waning of life's currents, the going out of its fires, the gradual stopping of its machinery—that spectacle which you will so often have witnessed, others shall at last witness in you. Let me exhort you, therefore, to prepare for the inevitable event. None will know better than yourselves by how frail and uncertain a tenure we hold this mortal life; how suddenly, how unexpectedly, the brittle thread may snap; how eminently wise that you should improve this knowledge to make your own salvation sure. We have spoken of the importance of personal and practical piety in order to the full discharge of your responsibilities to your patients;

but it has claims which still more nearly concern you—those which involve your everlasting life. Let me recommend to you the Great Physician. He receives all who, in the appointed way, desire His aid—He invites all. Your medical dispensaries give free treatment to the poor, and your kindness and generosity will, no doubt, be extended to not a few of this class; but this Physician's treatment is always without money and without price. And He does that which you could by no possibility attain to. He *always* cures. Even from death itself He can educe life, for, "He that believeth in Me," says He, "though he were dead, yet shall he live again; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Come to this Great Physician!

JOB'S COMFORTERS ; OR, SCIENTIFIC SYMPATHY.

BY JOSEPH PARKER, D.D., IN THE CITY TEMPLE, LONDON.

INTRODUCTION.—If we were required to name the most prominent men of science in England to-day, amongst the names that would first occur to us would, of course, be Professor Thomas Huxley, F. R. S., and Professor John Tyndall, F. R. S.

What Dr. Tyndall or Dr. Huxley is to science, John Stuart Mill may be said to have been to philosophy. All the world has read his "Logic," tens of thousands of delighted students and statesmen have perused his "Political Economy," and his essays in general literature are as widely known as the language in which they are written. Yet, great and eminent as these men are, and must forever be in the estimation of intellectual men, it is a mere matter of fact, and not of thoughtless inference or sectarian prejudice, that they are not identified with what is commonly understood by the expression, Spiritual Religion. I am not prepared to say that they would assume the hostility of positive disbelief; they would rather suggest that nothing can be known of the invisible, or what is called the supernatural and divine.