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Address of President William D. Haggard

The Speaker introduced the President, Dr. W. D. Haggard, Nashville, Tenn., who delivered the following address, which was referred to the Reference Committee on Reports of Officers: (44)

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Delegates:

My distinguished predecessor chose as the outstanding activity of his administration the dissemination of knowledge about the condition of medical practice in this country, particularly the distribution of medical men, and its relation to our present educational program. In the work which I have been privileged to do, I have tried to stress as the major theme of the administration, so called, the question of the periodic health examination, believing that it was the thing of the moment that should engage not only the House of Delegates but every single, solitary member of the American Medical Association. To that end and as a valedictory this morning, I want to outline to you briefly a plan for the promotion of the periodic health examination.

Among the many activities of the Association during the last year, a persistent effort has been made to popularize the periodic health examination of the apparently healthy. This has been done by editorials, special articles, addresses by the officers of the Association, and especially by a meeting of the secretaries of the constituent state medical societies, for which a special two days' program was arranged to consider the question.

As an officer, I have labored in season and out of season to bring this matter before the attention of every state, county and local medical society that I have had the honor of addressing, together with many educational and other lay organizations.

Every other profession and utility is striving for service to its patrons. The annual health examination is a new type of service that the profession has never yet employed as a whole for the benefit of its clientele. There is no gainsaying the great importance and wonderful opportunity for the betterment of mankind, and especially in preventing future disability,

than the universal health examination. It would add not only years to life, but life to years. It would in all reality increase the scope of each individual's life by detecting the insidious maladies of all types in their incipience. The skill of the physician could be utilized in the anticipatory prevention of the many maladies whose early recognition makes for cure. It would mitigate the age long wail of the medical profession that patients present themselves too late. This is particularly true of cancer and the precancerous lesion. The oftener the examination from head to toe, the surer the beginnings of new growths can be determined. If cancer alone were the only disease that could be detected by these examinations, it would be of incalculable benefit.

It is the insidious diseases of the great organs, the degenerative diseases, that especially go undetected unless an examination, even in apparent health, discloses their first evidences.

The greatest field of the physician, which has been so long neglected, is the health guidance of his clientele. His judgment, wisdom, experience and knowledge can be massed in an attack against all forms of abnormal and unhealthful living, bad eating, and environmental and occupational disorders.

Social hygiene, in its best sense and in its own most rightful application by a man of sane and practical experience, could be employed to throttle abnormal behavior tendencies and bad habit formations and in the training of character.

It is not only the physical handicap but also the mental and environmental that so often needs surveillance. Thus will the true physician come into his very own in the close and intimate management of the health and happiness of his patients and render a vital service for which no one else is so transcendently fitted.

Blanks of the physical examination, including the history of the patient, which he himself can fill out, should be in the waiting room of every physician for the use of his office patients, with a little placard over it, as employed by the Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania, inviting the patient to take a health examination blank, fill it out, and be examined that he may have better health and longer life.

When once inaugurated, there could be no objection to the physician notifying his clientele by mail that the yearly examination would be due on a certain date, just as dentists do about their prophylactic treatments. It is not only a courtesy but a valuable thing to the patient and would embolden a large percentage to apply for examination who would neglect it if not reminded of it.

Each medical society should determine its own charge, both minimum and maximum, which it thinks would be wise and reasonable for the annual health examination.

The publication of the "Manual of Suggestions for the Conduct of Periodic Examinations of Apparently Healthy Persons," which has been issued by the Association under the direction of the Bureau of Health and Public Instruction, is very complete and helpful and has been very well received by the profession. It should be in the hands of every physician in the United States.

It is obvious that mere propaganda, while all important in the beginning of a great movement of this sort, cannot realize its object unless it has as a basis a plan whereby every one in the profession can be brought to the acceptance and employment of the plan. It is clear that such a far reaching effort cannot rest on a few men or on the officers alone of the various societies, but it must be put in the hands of the individual members.

It would seem, therefore, that on the county society as a unit should be devolved the responsibility of giving every one of its members the information and the facilities, and further, through its cooperation, to bring the matter to the attention of every individual in the community.

To that end and to the practical utilization of the idea of periodic health examinations, the following plan has been elaborated by the retiring president as a suggestion in order to get the maximum number of patients examined by a maximum number of family physicians:

PLAN FOR PROMOTION OF PERIODIC HEALTH EXAMINATIONS

1. The House of Delegates should recommend to the thirty-four states that have not yet acted, that the manual be

obtained from headquarters at cost price, together with a suitable number of examination blanks, and supplied to each individual member.

2. The House of Delegates should recommend to the county societies that a special meeting on this subject be held at least once a year in order to popularize the plan and bring it into being.

3. A medical society clinic emphasizing the need, value, method and technic in the conduct of health examinations, and their bearing on preclinical medicine, should be arranged by local or neighboring clinicians.

4. A strong, active committee in each county society on periodic health examinations should supervise the inauguration and perpetuation of the health examination.

5. A nation-wide educational campaign should be inaugurated during "Health Week," or some designated period in cooperation with the existing board of health or with some local activity, such as the Anti-Tuberculosis Association, or other lay organization, to interest the civic clubs and other organizations in the great importance and benefit to be derived from this plan. Health parades with banners carried by Boy Scouts, films, large posters, and folders could be utilized, as was so successfully done by the Illinois State Medical Society.

6. A statement in the nature of a circular letter should be prepared by the county society and sent impersonally as a statement from the county society to the clientele of the various members, calling their attention to the importance of the annual health examination and urging their acceptance of it at the hands of their physicians.

7. Many organizations, lodges, clubs, large industrial corporations, etc., could greatly facilitate the idea by having cards mailed to their various members on their birthdays, urging the importance of the acceptance of the birthday physical examination.

8. The medical society as such should start the campaign by having as many of the individual members as possible to undergo the examination, first, as an educational measure and, second, to imbue the individual members themselves with the importance and far reaching value of the plan. This method was employed by the Medical Society of the County of Kings. Nothing will stimulate the universal application as much as the profession themselves who so sorely need it, utilizing the idea for their own benefit as well as for the advancement of the general scheme.

9. The press should be requested to carry articles prepared and issued by the county society, preferably unsigned, as a news article or under the signature, if desirable, of the officers of the society, explaining the importance of periodic physical examinations and the benefit to be derived by the health client.

These recommendations are to strengthen the work already done, crystallize it and have it activated by the House of Delegates.

No more humane, scientific and socially and economically beneficent movement for the well being of the American people could be fostered and put into nation-wide practice than the universal periodic health examination by the American Medical Association. (44)

Address of President-Elect Wendell C. Phillips

The Speaker introduced the President-Elect, Dr. Wendell C. Phillips, New York, who delivered the following address, which, together with his presidential address, was referred to the Reference Committee on Reports of Officers: (44)

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Delegates:

Since the World War, the histories of foreign nations have been marked by intense nationalism. This nationalistic trend has led them to take advantage of every possible opportunity to exploit their merits, and medical science has been no exception. Unfortunately, many of the medical discoveries thus far proclaimed and promoted as national interests have not fully proved their worthiness. In other words, the rush for publicity has led the promoter far afield from the pathway of proved science.

From Switzerland has come the Spahlinger treatment of tuberculosis; from England, the Gye-Barnard work on cancer,

also the Dreyer vaccine for tuberculosis; from France, the Calmette work on vaccination against tuberculosis with living organisms; from Germany, Blumenthal's investigations on cancer, and from Denmark, Sanocrysin.

Not one of these discoveries has thus far been established as of great value, although, according to Park, the Calmette work on vaccination seems to possess possibilities of virtue.

The United States, on the contrary, without having made any great pretense to the forcing of its scientific discoveries into the nationalistic program, has given to the world remarkable discoveries and scientific advances in medicine.

The work of the Dicks and of Dochez and Blake on scarlet fever seems to be established on a definite scientific basis. The discoveries made on the virtues and the relation of light to rickets represent another real achievement in the advance of science.

The toxin-antitoxin prevention of diphtheria has been definitely and positively proved. An intensive antidiphtheria campaign carried on in the city of Auburn, N. Y., has been so successful that no deaths from diphtheria have occurred in that city for the last two years. An antidiphtheria campaign now going on in New York State carries the slogan "No diphtheria in New York State in 1930," and the state commissioner of health believes that this is possible. It would seem that the future holds out hope that diphtheria—the dread destroyer of child life—may ultimately disappear, at least as an epidemic disease.

We may also claim a distinct advance in studies related particularly to the elimination of scarlet fever, measles, and possibly whooping cough. Moreover, the United States may truly be called "teacher to the world" in organization and methods of preventive medicine.

All these are distinct achievements in the advance of medical science, but in this country they have not been promoted in a nationalistic spirit. They have been offered freely to the world as our contribution. Let us not hesitate to do all in our power to give our own people the knowledge and the benefit of these discoveries. The public should know that children may be made immune from diphtheria as surely as from smallpox, and every physician should endeavor to persuade all patients to safeguard their children, especially those of preschool age, by the employment of preventive treatment.

During the last few years, many of our leaders of medical thought, and particularly those clothed with the responsibility of outlining medical policies, have given serious consideration to the subject of public health education. There has been a slight awakening of the medical conscience as to the trusteeship of physicians as promoters of individual and community health. These pioneers have become alive to the fact that physicians only are qualified by heritage, by education and by experience to give to the public the basic principles of health preservation, and the protection of life that is afforded by sanitation and the scientific application of all the phases of preventive medicine. Given such responsibility, I ask you in all seriousness whether the medical profession of the country has ever lived up to its great opportunity to teach the people how to keep well. It sounds like a simple thing to do, but the reticence of medical men and the innate fear of publicity, the supposed restriction of ethical limitations, have tended to prevent these great educators from fully covering this proper field for a physician's activity.

Nevertheless, there has gradually developed on the part of the public demands for public health education. Gradually, great newspapers and newspaper syndicates are coming to realize that public health knowledge is a valuable commodity for which the people are willing to pay. This tendency is leading newspapers, magazines and newspaper syndicates to realize that the public must be given the true facts regarding individual and community health. This further knowledge in turn is showing its influence by the gradual elimination from these publications of the publicity which is sought by nostrums, cults, quackery and other menaces to the public health. This naturally engenders a desire to purvey only well founded information regarding health matters.

In the quest for such information on the part of great publications, they have learned that organized medicine is