

Address

before the graduating class,  
Medical Dept.  
University of Vermont  
at Opera House Burlington 1899.

No. 30, Vol 8

Subject

Experiences in Medicine



at Spence House, Portland, 1899.  
University of Vermont  
St. Albans, Sept.  
Spence the Green Mountain Club  
Spence

No. 20, Vol. 8

Experiences in the  
Field



Address before the  
Graduating Class  
N.Y.M. Medical School

(1)

OFFICE OF  
Gen. O. O. HOWARD,  
156 COLLEGE ST.,  
BURLINGTON, VERMONT,

Burlington Vt. Sept 14/1899

It is said that a man of ordinary wit becomes a veritable doctor by the age of forty; but I have always claimed that there was one subject in which I was never proficient, and that was medicine. However, we, men and women, get our own notions, and often strive as hard as we can to keep down the doctor's bill.

(1) Things to worry the Physician.

For this purpose we are sure to find a fad corresponding to different periods of life. These fads have to do with all sorts of things, youthful sports, base ball and foot ball, running races, playing croquet and tennis, and later with the aristocratic game of golf. We pass through the shower bath, salt water bathing and other various water-cures accompanied with the friction of towels, more or less coarse according to the tenderness or hardness of the cuticle.

has health promise,

The American gymnasium beginning with wrestling and jumping, and passing along the scale of pulling, lifting, rope-walking, parallel bars, and every kind of athletic and acrobat-performances. Of course there are the military fads where the heels are placed together and the shoulders straightened, and the system is completed by prolonged and deep breathing.



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Again we have noticed hot-water fads, where the system is kept forever pure and active by tri-daily applications, it being very bothersome to take the dose in odd places and one hour before every meal. And, oh, who could count up the different experimental diets equal in number to patent medicines without limit ! Sometimes meat is on the lead, sometimes coarse bread, better black than white; these cure every dyspeptic tendency.

Now again pure-alcohol will cure all the ills of humanity, and now all alcohol is a poison, which as beverage or medicine leads straight to drunkenness and death!

At present the system is renovated, cleansed, strengthened and kept impervious to disease by mineral water, beautiful, sparkling and delicious; but of these, Poland water, said to be the purest on record, and kept by all druggists, fills large jars and firkins in the household.

(2) Consolation.

These fads are simply suggestive. They need never worry the family practitioner in fear of too much health, because it is only once in a while that a man is born who passes through childhood and youth and manhood and on to old age and is finally gathered to his fathers, without giving some medical man a chance to experiment upon his wonderful mechanism. I do not know of a man or woman within my recollection that hasn't had something the matter at some



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time during my lengthy acquaintance. As hearty as I, myself, have been, I was very ill, so I am told, at the age before I could catch a fad or control it. The mumps, the sore-throat which has at last obtained scientific names, the chicken-pox, the whooping-cough and several other childrens' affections gave me each a blow and passed on. I was, however, properly vaccinated <sup>not only the small pox, but</sup> and hoped to escape the measles; but before I was thirty the measles speckled me with their beauty-spots and arrested my course and at last shut me up for at least two weeks. As with myself, so with my companions. I repeat, these are but hints. Humanity cannot escape sickness, sorrow, pain and death, so that there will always be in the field of medicine a wide range of observation, of investigation, of opportunity to exercise all the functions of your grand profession.

( 3 ) Science and Practice assured.

Surely shoes will always be wanted. They are a common if not an absolute necessity. So will medicine be wanted in all its potency and almost infinite divisions. But you could not expect a soldier to enlighten you on any point touching that mysterious and scientific supply; and you have already had four years of close study to acquaint yourself <sup>yes</sup> with its existence and its saving and killing uses; and you have had all along the ablest men of the age to bring you up to the highest points yet reached by the scouts



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and skirmishers of your profession.

(3 1/2) Progress

In surgery I am wiser; I have had a curious sort of experience; some of it is personal and some of it is acquired simply by observation. The early doctor nearly killed me by the manner in which, with a patent-lever or misnamed "key", he tore out every double-tooth which did not conform to Christian Science and stop aching at will. But in later practice the dentist-doctor has properly usurped the old doctor's functions, and by the legitimate use of some of the precious metals, has saved the few remaining teeth and relieved the pain, though at a greatly increased cost.

The first surgical wound on the head which caused erysipelas had to be cauterized by removing a membrane-band of some breadth around the neck which suggested in a permanent scar, the old process of rope-hanging and gallows experience always disgraceful; and the cuts through the epidermis, if that's the right word, in the trail of the essential suture, could hardly be excelled in its developments of jerking pain.

( 4 ) Sleep-making.

Oh, how much better the surgeons of a later time among the soldiers did, after all the agony of the tourniquet, to mix gas and chloroform and put a fellow into so sound a sleep that he could lose his leg or his arm, and



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( 5 )

Delirium.

A patient formerly sick with delirium-tremens, who was constantly seeing rats, snakes and bugs and endeavoring for hours to get them out of his way which groaning and yelling could not accomplish, is now relieved of his trouble in five minutes. And even the drunkard becomes a man again in less than ten days by the Keeley-Process when under choice medical supervision.

( 6 )

Visions of memory.

The surgeons are, however, bloody men. I have visions of them in both the Civil and Spanish wars. It is fearful to see them in a church which has been converted into a hospital with their coats off and their sleeves rolled up all besprinkled with blood. They are indefatigable, however, They work the whole night and must never weary. Wounds that in the Civil war were mortal are now, when taken in season, divested of half their terror. Many of them yield to treatment so that the patient whose bowels have been pierced through and through is saved.

( 7 )

Conservatism.

Last Wednesday morning I saw a medical class at Bowdoin College, about sixty strong, as it entered the audience chamber of Bowdoin's Memorial Hall. Dressed in cap and gown jetty black, compacted one against another in



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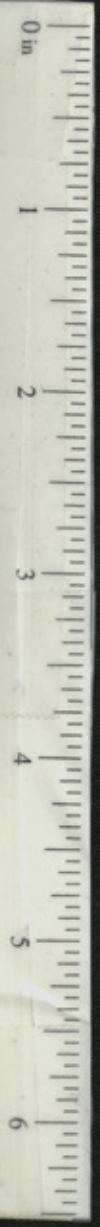
column, they marched with slow and steady tread as one man altogether, if we except their chosen leader who had the staff and colors of his ~~A~~ Asculapius, which he moved out and in, up and down to indicate solemnity, slowness and perpetuity. After a while he separated his men to the right and left. They, with the same equable tread and strange movement, at last found their way to two rows of seats in front of the platform. The President of the college immediately introduced a Justice of Maine's Supreme Court, who for perhaps forty minutes eloquently discoursed to them of their duties in things pertaining and not pertaining to their profession, their knowledge, their skill. He spoke of the advantages to the physician of a rare quality, viz: common-sense. I wondered at the whole performance and asked a neighbor if that movement so snail-like was an indication of the grand conservatism of medical men. He smiled and answered "Oh, no! It is only an antiquated custom which yet obtains." I am always a little puzzled about the meaning of those two words so handsomely spoken by the Justice, viz: "common sense."

My old professor of engineering who lisped a little would look at me seriously and with a touch of satire in his voice say: "Mr. Howard, I wish you would show a little more common sense." I reflected on that professor's inuendo for weeks. At last I came to the conclusion that his idea of common sense involved close and accurate observation, and



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(8) *P. Exhortation.*

With a few words of exhortation I will bid you farewell and God-speed. As a rule the most successful professional man, all other things being considered and disposed of, is the one who can preserve a cheerful deportment. But, there is something beyond one's profession and of much more importance, that is, the individual man himself. He has a soul which is to live <sup>here and hereafter</sup> and which needs strength, hope and comfort. His soul is omnivorous, and, no matter what the man's profession may be, his soul must not be starved and cramped. In my experience there are two sources of food that are more important than any other. One is, the Holy Scriptures which testify of a comradeship better than the earthly. Our elder Brother has said "The Holy Scriptures testify of me," and indeed they do from Genesis to Revelation, and therein are the issues of life. The professional man who gives, without carping and unfriendly criticism, a few spare minutes of every day to drink from this fountain will never have reason for regret. If he has not time to read a whole chapter or more, he can at least read a single paragraph or verse.



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The second source of food for the soul is the Holy Comforter - an abiding Spirit, that is always within call. When discouraged as you will sometimes be, when in danger or in any trouble, just lift up the heart and say yearningly, 'Fill me with thy Spirit and so give me joy and help.' It is enough. To the sincere trustful heart the response is immediate.

I know that every man needs recreation, relief from the load he must carry, and for this the field is wide and the world is large and there will be found plenty of harmless, or useful enjoyment. But the surest and best is not in long facedness, acidity, severity of demeanor or straight-lacedness which some men mistake for religion, but in the sweetest and best companionship obtainable, whether with men or books, together with Our Father's blessing.



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