1938

UA3/2/4 The Medical Profession

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In the good year 1825, one, Dr. Richard Carter of Versailles, published a book entitled "A Short Sketch of the Author's Life and Adventures From His Youth Until 1818, in the First Part. In Part the Second, A Valuable Vegetable Medical Prescription, With a Table of Detergent and Corroborant Medicines to Suit the Treatment of the Different Certificates." In this volume he gave the following remedy for the gout rheumatism, cramps, infirmities of the sinews, etc.

"Take a young, fat dog and kill him, scald and clean him as you would a pig, then extract his guts through a hole previously made in his side, and substitute in place thereof two handfuls of nettles, two ounces of brimstone, one dozen hen eggs, four ounces of turpentine, a handful of tansy, a pint of red fishing worms, and about three fourths of a pound of tobacco, cut up fine; mix all these ingredients well together before deposited in the dogs belly, and then sew up the whole, then roast him well before a hot fire, save the oil, anoint the joints, and weak parts before the fire as hot as you can bear it, being careful not to get wet or expose yourself to damp or night air, or even heating yourself, or in fact you should not expose yourself in any way."

It seems safe to assert that the medical profession has made considerable progress since the good doctor practiced. That a state of perfection has not yet been reached is indicated by the suggestion in the last issue of the American Magazine that occasionally yet a specialist leans toward a diagnosis which will locate the treatment in his field of
specialization. You will recall that doctors were once called leeches
and for what reason, and many of you will remember Gil Blas and his signal
success as a practitioner. They too have had their hobbies. I fancy
some poor devils sit before me who lost appendix, teeth and tonsils, in
vain while the removal rage was in the ascendancy.

I bring up these matters not to chide my friends the doctors
for their humble origin but rather to encourage you. Frequently the
medical group is held up to us as an example par excellence of professionali-
zation to show us how far we are yet astray from that most desirable status.
Now I insist that all the evidence indicates we are on the way.

I am not sure that we have ever prescribed anything quite so awe
inspiring by way of curriculum as to be compared to the prescription
of Dr. Carter which I read you at the outset but certainly we have changed
our ideas frequently enough to indicate progress and have been sufficiently
dogmatic concerning the efficacy of each production. Indeed I think there
was considerable kinship between the faith with which the country doctor
of my youth measured out his drugs on his knife blade for my consumption
and that of my rural teacher that the memorization of the names of the
bones of the body would benefit me. I can not speak from experience of
the times when a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek was the corner stone of
learning, but I am of sufficient maturity to have been given an English
certificate in lieu of a high school diploma because I did not have four
years of Latin. Do not understand me to object to the study of Latin. I
eventually fought my way through to the glory of Horace and the delicious-
ness of Martial and am glad today for having had the experience. I did
however question then and do not the assurance on the part of curriculum
makers that Latin was the indispensable element in the education of every individual. You will remember a similar faith in the study of four years of mathematics in high school, the insistence on English History, and the splendid pride in our progress when we began to offer the scientific course which consisted usually in textbook study without laboratory. So gradually we came to our present faith that the sine qua non is an abundance of study in citizenship. Recent election results in California would indicate that we may be wrong again and that the crying need is for increased emphasis on elementary economics. But I am taking a long time to express my conviction that if the dogmatism of the doctors was a factor in their professional advance, then we can have confidence.

In the second place let us consider the matter of vocabulary. Certainly you can not escape awareness that the medical and legal professions have specialized, I almost said, patented, vocabularies. The teaching group have made great strides in that direction. I feel sure that we have passed the point where the ordinary layman can listen to an educational conference with understanding, and I have had confession from at least one other college president that he like myself is occasionally lost in the fog of pedagogical discussion. It must be my fault, but I have sometimes been reminded of that classical instance in "Through the Looking Glass" when Alice, somewhat befuddled told Humpty Dumpty that she did not understand his use of the work, 'glory' to be met with the rejoinder, "Of course you don't till I tell you . . . when I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less."

I really think we can about qualify as to vocabulary.
Yet another mark of the medical profession is frequent conventions—county, state, and national. It is hardly necessary to present argument on that point. Superintendent Hill of this city has I presume attended the Central Kentucky District Educational Association in October. He is here. In November he is expected to gather with his fellows in Frankfort. February will offer the meeting of school administrators at Cleveland. April will bring the K.E.A. and in the summer the N.E.A. will challenge his attention. These in addition to such local meetings as the local area may offer. Who is so bold as to say these are not enough?

Each new tool the medical profession has discovered has been misused by the less competent members of the group. Teachers have been likewise guilty. It might be difficult to find a more horrible example than the misuse of intelligence tests by the untrained. You will recall the fanatical zeal with which innocent pupils were assigned an I. Q. after a group intelligence test administered by a relatively untrained teacher who did not even take the minor precaution to test the vision of the same pupils in advance. It would not have been so serious if the teacher had not taken the results so seriously, if you know what I mean.

It would not be difficult to think up other parallels such as these between the progress of the teaching and medical groups. Let us however consider some in which we can take more pride.

As of first importance I think we will agree on the raising of educational standards for teachers. Many of you can remember as I do when the education of the average teacher in Kentucky did not exceed the seventh grade and when the only qualification to teach was the passing of the county examination. Now it is generally accepted that college
graduation is the desirable minimum.

In the second place we have seen the development of teaching techniques to be acquired through study, observation and practice teaching under guidance rather than turning the would-be teacher loose by trial and error at the expense of children.

Again, as in all professions we have come to value and to depend on research. True much of our research may be criticised as resulting in little that is of value. The same may be said of research in other fields. I think however that the advance to reliance upon scientific investigation and objective measurement has been a most important step in our progress toward professional status.

The fourth great advance I would suggest is the increasing recognition on the part of the individual teacher that he is a member of the group as evidenced by membership in educational associations. Growth in the membership of our state association has been almost phenomenal and membership in the National Educational Association is increasing. Isolated individuals can not make a profession.

Finally I would mention the fact that teachers read more professional literature, they think in larger terms, they are a better dressed and more alert and aggressive group.

I suggest three points worthy of our attention if we are to continue to progress:

First, that we take pride in being members of the teaching group. If you think nothing needs be said in this connection I cite you to Mr. --'s article in this month's Educational Record in which he makes
this statement, "A college man studying to become a dentist looks
you in the eye and tells you so proudly; there is a confident swaggering
note in his voice, an eagerness in his manner as if impatient for the
struggle to begin. A college man studying to become a teacher tells you
so unconvincingly, listlessly, defensively." It could well be that so
many years of tiny salaries, uncertainty of tenure and multiplicity of
bosses have produced an inferiority complex in teachers. But if so we
must get rid of it. Professional status demands pride in one's profession.
Perhaps following Mr. Coue's almost forgotten suggestion we should adopt
as a morning exercise the repetition of some such formula as "I am a
teacher and proud of it. Thank God for my opportunities for service."

Second, we must forget jealousies between groups within the pro-
fession and fight together for the common gain. I confess that the older
professions are not free of such jealousies but being longer established
they can better afford them. I remind you of the gloriously successful
fight for the new school code. We got it because we stuck together.

If we are to go forward now, we must forget that we are city superin-
tendents, college administrators, and county superintendents in coopera-
tion to the end that educational opportunity may be improved for the
youth of Kentucky and the teacher's job become a professional position.

In the third place we must hold to a firm faith in education.
Ever so often I run on one of those pessimistic sour-faced educators
who makes his living from school work but doubts whether education is
worthwhile, especially on the higher levels. One often meets critics
who challenge expenditures for college education basing their complaint
chiefly on the numbers who find no employment waiting for them on gradu-
tion or whose general education does not technically prepare them for the
job. We must be willing to recognize the need for more vocational training at public expense to fit the individual for a specific task, but I think as teachers we must also maintain our faith in and preach the utility of general education. I confess to a sympathy with the statement in "Hutchins Answers Hutchins" in the issue of the Saturday Evening Post for September 24. You will remember that he said, "An educated man who can't find work would be worse off if he were uneducated and if the work he does find does not demand the education he had, he will still be able to use his education for the enrichment of his leisure and the tranquility of his soul."

Finally, I should like to present briefly a few of the things we may hope to attain as a united professional group.

First, and probably most important, is increased state support for education. Even a casual survey of school buildings and equipment in many parts of the state and a comparison of teachers' salaries even with wages in industry much less in other professions requiring comparable preparation will place beyond argument the necessity for greater support. Adequate provision for teacher retirement is a necessary part of this support.

Second, I think I should place increased provision for further securing the equal educational opportunity for each Kentucky child about which we have been talking for so long. An increased state per capita will help matters some. Elimination of the constitutional provision determining per capita distribution offers more hope but is very difficult to secure. Federal aid offers probably the greatest promise at present not only for equalization between states but within individual states.
Third, the removal of the office of state superintendent from the political offices of the state and the removal of the prohibition which limits him to a single term.

Fourth, the reducing of the elementary school to six grades and the increasing of the size of consolidated centers in order that provision may be made in the curricula of these larger centers for the varied abilities, interests and vocational outlooks of the varied group whose needs must be met if we are to properly do the job.

In the fifth place, I think we can hope for security of tenure for competent county superintendents in each administrative unit in Kentucky comparable to that now enjoyed in a large number of the units. Without security of tenure for competent and successful administrators, sustained educational progress seems to me impossible. I think too we have a right to look forward to security of tenure for successful teachers after a trial period.

These suggestions are by no means meant to be exhaustive. I am sure you think of many others. A loyal, cooperative group in my judgment based on past progress is unlimited in what it can accomplish to bring about better educational conditions in this state.