

Medical Matters.

MEDICAL ETHICS.



THE particular rules of conduct or etiquette that guide medical practitioners in their dealings with each other and their patients, furnish occasions of the utmost perplexity to the outside public, and are often a source of considerable difficulty even to medical men themselves. These rules have been said to be framed on the golden principle of doing unto others as one would that they should do to oneself. But many of the particular methods in which this principle is applied, are perplexing to the uninitiated, and this is especially the case in the matter of advertising. It is distinctly contrary to professional etiquette for a medical man to advertise in the lay press his abilities or his readiness to see patients—presumably on the same ground which prevents members of the Stock Exchange seeking to obtain business by a similar measure. But a serious difficulty is that in the case of eminent members of the profession, in attendance on distinguished persons, the public press insists, with or without their will, upon quoting their bulletins—a form of advertisement which is undeniably contrary to the rule we have quoted. But whilst the profession tacitly accepts this procedure on the part of its leaders, it sets its face against a general practitioner's treatment of a local notability being described in the local papers. Then, again, it is customary for physicians and surgeons who hold Hospital or other public appointments, to have their names and addresses widely advertised on the literature of these Institutions. This is not confined alone to charitable bodies, but even occurs in certain commercial undertakings. That is admissible; but general practitioners are roundly abused if they circulate cards giving their address and hours of consultation. The difficulty of knowing precisely what is right and what is wrong in this connection has been admirably

illustrated lately by an action for libel against the *British Medical Journal*. Our contemporary expressed the opinion that the publication of a medical man's name, as its physician, upon the prospectus of an hotel, was highly reprehensible, and disparaged the honourable traditions of the medical faculty. Apparently no names were mentioned, but the remarks were understood to apply to a certain gentleman in Blackpool, who thereupon commenced an action against our contemporary. At the trial of the action last week, Sir Dyce Duckworth was called as a witness to support the contention of the *British Medical Journal*, and expressed his opinion that such conduct was a violation of a well-established rule. He, however, admitted in cross-examination that he had not objected to his own name appearing upon the prospectus of an insurance office, and the Lancashire jury being unable to distinguish the precise difference between the one business and the other—so far as advertisement and professional ethics went—promptly found a verdict for the plaintiff, and awarded him £150 damages against our contemporary. The shrewd north-countrymen clearly did not hold

“That in the captain's but a choleric word,
Which in the soldier is flat blasphemy.”

CIGARETTE SMOKING.

MEDICAL men in the United States are expressing serious alarm at the rapid growth of cigarette smoking amongst women and children in that country; and it is stated that to this cause they ascribe the serious increase in the number of neurasthenics with which they meet in their practice. Those who inhale the smoke of tobacco very often suffer from chronic inflammatory troubles at the back of the throat and nose, in consequence of the irritation of the poisonous *nicotine*, and it is asserted that laryngeal diseases are also therefore becoming more common amongst American women than was formerly the case. It is often forgotten that the ill effects of smoking are thus two-fold: that the *nicotine* in excess acts as a virulent poison to the nervous system, and therefore induces nerve disease and disturbance, in various forms; and secondly, that the vapour of tobacco inhaled into the respiratory passages causes as much irritation there as coal-dust or other noxious vapours can produce.

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In sealed packets and tins only, of Grocers, everywhere.

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