

Oration from 1895

Oration Title:

The Duties, Trials and Rewards of the Physician

Orator:

Comey, M.D.

Abstract of Oration:

Dr. Comey describes the medical profession as unique and requiring a specific attitude of devotion and sacrifice from its members. It is, as he says, "the most noble calling or profession that exists," but stipulates that "we do not have the same reward that any other business or profession has." He points out that doctors must expend a large amount of time and money in order to achieve their degree and even after this sacrifice are not guaranteed success. Comey continues to list the hardships unique to the medical profession, such as insufficient compensation, lack of sleep, not having leisure time, and not being able to spend time with one's family. Not only do physicians prominent within the field rarely receive public recognition, but the entire profession is vastly underappreciated and most doctors must endure criticism harsher than that directed at other professions. He says that the "medical" quacks are the ones who are the most notorious and prosperous. Then he urges his colleagues to become more involved in politics as they are educated and could contribute much to legislation. It is also the only way for physicians to gain a representative voice in government. The doctor asserts that doctors' potential sphere of public influence extends beyond even public service in government to the judicial system.

Comey then urges more frequent attendance at medical society meetings such as the one convened. He says it is good for physicians to interact with their colleagues who best understand their profession for all its sacrifices and rewards. Physicians can also learn a great deal from each other, and therefore attendance benefits patients as well as doctors. He reminds his colleagues that they alone have the influence necessary to induce men to alter their behavior the interest of better health. To this same end, doctors can aid society by pointing out the quacks mentioned above to the public and boards of health.

Dr. Comey's overarching message is that physicians must have strong unity and embrace their profession in its entirety and maintain and promote its noble status. Such a galvanization will support doctors to face the hardships of medicine, lend the field a stronger voice in the general public especially through government, and further the profession academically.