

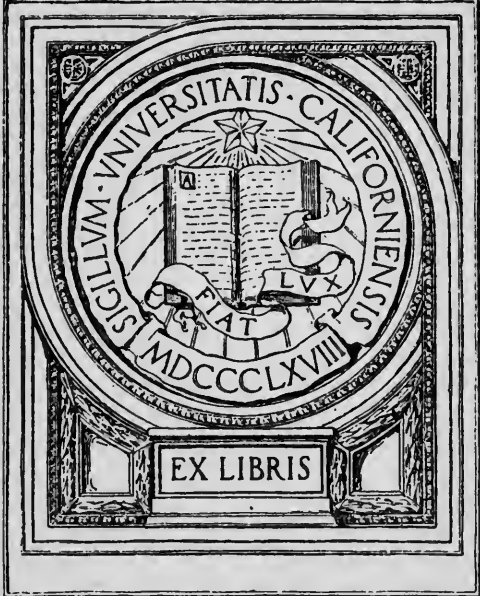
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CONFESSIONS OF · A · QUACK

By Dr. T. P. Bartlett

GIFT OF
Class of 1897



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CONFESSIONS OF A QUACK

By

Dr. T. P. Bartlett



Drawings by the Author

J. de Menezes & Sons
Oakland, Calif.
1921

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PREFACE

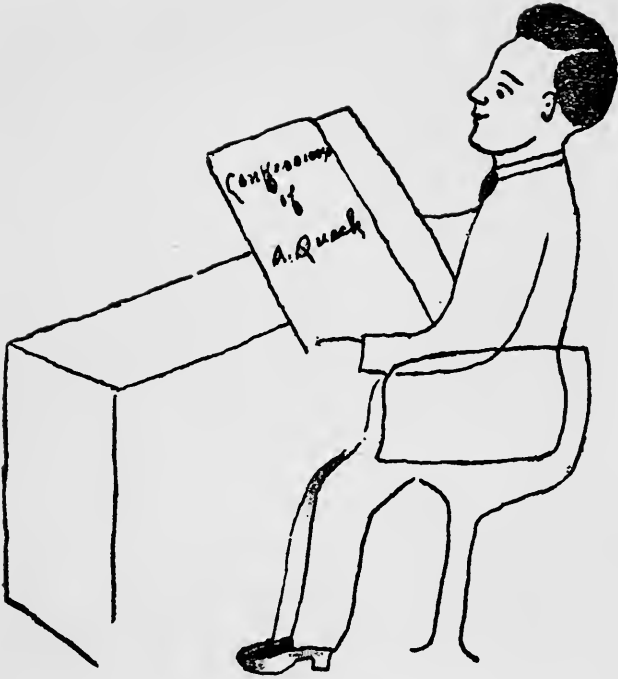
"Confessions of a Quack" is not, as some may infer, an attempt to ridicule and belittle medical men. The author is a practicing physician, loves his profession, and numbers many doctors as his most esteemed and respected friends.

The book is an effort of the writer to prove that we are living under a wrong system that owing to its innate dishonesty necessarily breeds the charlatan. One does not need to be long from the paternal roof to learn the ways of the great outside world. And one is not far from home when one loses many illusions. Ideals are soon shattered. Many people are brutally frank and seemingly take a keen delight in pulling the wool from your eyes. But when we think of the facts they tell us we feel as though they have done us a great service. Sooner or later we must find out that life is something quite different from what we had been taught. We are doomed inevitably and invariably to discover that society is not as perfect as we had been told and we are confronted with the unpleasant truth that the wicked often prosper while the good frequently suffer.

Ralston and Clayton are types common enough in these times when honesty is only too often called old fashioned and scoffed at; when men worship mammon and place the dollar above everything else in this world. They are quacks, not from choice, but rather from compulsion. Beginning their professional career with ideals for direction and guidance they soon learned that a too faithful adherence to ethics was keeping them at the bottom of the ladder while there was plenty of room on top. So both of them began mental house cleaning. They got rid of the cobwebs of obsolete and long ago beliefs and after this renovation set up business at the old stand in conformity to modern ideas as to what the measure of man's success is, judged by the very latest standards. Were they right or wrong? Were they justified in doing what they did? Were they the victims of a system corrupt to the very core, shattered and tottering and ready to fall in a mighty crash? The reader must answer these questions. To the man, woman, girl or boy who peruses this book is left the task.

The experience of none of us is so narrow that we have not witnessed cases of moral deterioration similar to that of Ralston and Clayton. How are we to explain it? Is it a trick of atavism? I think not. I have little faith in that theory. There is a reason for it—a cause that explains with unanswerable logic why the dark shadow of dishonesty hovers over the world. But I wish you to arrive at that conclusion by inference. I had that thought in mind when I sat down and wrote "Confessions of a Quack".

Dr. T. P. Bartlett,
917 Grove Street,
Oakland.



Forty years old and a failure! (Page 7)



CONFESSIONS OF A QUACK

I

Forty years old and a failure! I arrived at that conclusion by a slow and tedious process of self-analysis. My achievements in the profession of my choice were the simplest. I had never been called in consultation at a rich and influential home. I had never done a capital operation. My practice was largely among a class that knew no more about honesty than a pickpocket; who were ingrates and justified their behaviour on the ground that I lacked skill. But while these poor specimen of fallen man caused me many a heartache and forced me on innumerable occasions to frequent the Pawn Shop, they rendered me a unique and wonderful service. They opened my eyes to a full seeing capacity of all that was transpiring about me. They did more than this. They made me painfully conscious that there was something radically wrong in the system under which men lived. And it occurred to me that the quickest and safest way to arrive at that knowledge was by becoming an imposter.

So, strangling the many conscientious scruples that stood in the way, I cast aside the ideas I had since a boy, and became a quack. No one knows what it cost me to do that. Being a charlatan had never appealed to me as something to be proud of. But I early learned that it was both pleasant and profitable. And when I sit down quietly by myself and think it over, I have to smile at my former scruples.

My financial condition when I decided to take the step that brought a wonderful change in my

habits and mode of living was deplorable. My earthly belongings consisted of a shabby suit of clothes, many unpaid bills, countless false names and spurious addresses, my worthy patients had given me, a few medical books, some instruments a little rusty from non-use and neglect, and enough money to pay my barber and the laundry that washed my linen.

Is it any wonder that I became a quack? I think ninety-nine out of a hundred would do as I did. I remember how one of my patients had sympathized with me when I told him my circumstances. He was employed in the shipyards and I suggested that it might be best for me to seek employment there. But he declared that he would drive me home to my pills, splints and bandage. I took this friend's advice. I stayed with my absorbent cotton and adhesive plaster and became a quack. I don't blush with shame when I confess it. I know there are extenuating circumstances, and in order that you may know what they are I am writing you these "Confessions".

November 1st, 1919, is the beginning of that period of my life when the star of prosperity rose. From that day on I began to get new and desirable patients and demand and secure bigger fees. I can just laugh when I think how easy it was. What a strange world we are living in, and how easily are people deceived! It looks as though most of them like to be fooled. I had long learned that people judge you by appearances. Now I would prove it. I had taken the few dollars I had saved from all my years of practice and replenished my wardrobe. I selected the most fashionable and gaudy attire, being careful to keep within good taste. I gave attention to my office. I furnished it in the closest conformity to modern ideas as to what a doctor's place of business should be like,

leaned back in the chair at my desk, lit a cigar and now that the bait had been thrown, waited for fish.

I will never forget, as long as I live, how happy I felt as I started on this career of deception and money getting. Here I had waited for success for twenty years and it had not come my way. On the street I had heard rude people whisper "Horse Doctor" as I passed along. You don't know how it hurt me to hear them say that. It was so uncalled for. It was singularly and vulgarly out of place. I knew nothing about horses. I had never ridden one, driven one, harnessed or saddled one in all my life. "Horse Doctor"! I shudder as I think of it. Thank God it is now an unpleasant memory of the past. Today I am looked up to; my opinion is sought on vital questions; my professional services are in demand, and I am paid handsome fees by rich and aristocratic members of the community.

The day I decided to break away from old conventions I went for a walk. It was an exercise I was fond of and as I was dressed fashionable and in the very latest, I had a pleasurable consciousness of being presentable. It was a long time since I had "dolled up" like that. In fact I had taken pains to look well, only once before. That was when I got my sheep skin. I thought that the happiest moment of my life. I was young, not quite twenty-three, full of ambition and enthusiasm. I remember the words of encouragement of the little crippled notary before whom I had my license attested. "Young man, you can make a nice living for yourself". Alas! his prophesy didn't come true. It was a dream until I became a quack.

But I have wondered from my story. I guess nearly every one does who writes a confession. As I was saying. I went for a walk. My clothes attracted people. I saw men and women size me up and look me over. The cop on the beat gave me the "once over", smiled approvingly and nodded

pleasantly as I passed along. It would be easy for a crook to get by if he were a bit careful. But the trouble is they become too bold, get wreckless and are caught.

I reached de Fremery Park and intended to sit down and rest. But the gardener, a fine little Welshman, saw me and called me over to where he was watering the lawn.

"Why the togs?" he asked, dropping the hose and shaking hands.

"Going in for business", I replied.

"You've learned the tricks of the game at last. But you were so slow to catch on I thought your case hopeless".

"I am going to become a quack. That reminds me I can't stay here gadding to you. From now on I'll be a very busy man."

I turned abruptly and left the little gardener staring in open mouthed wonder at the change that had taken place in my appearance and manner, and went home.

II

My first case proved to be a fortunate one. A lady refined in appearance and gentle in manner awaited me. On entering she looked me over and, as my clothes were cut in the latest fashion and the best quality of goods, I knew at once she believed me a good doctor. She had come to consult me about a growth on her neck. An examination on my part told me it was a simple papiloma. But I could not tell the truth. I had done that for twenty years and nearly starved and got no thanks for doing so. Here was my chance, my first opportunity to prove that Barnum was right when he said: "The American people like to be fooled". Assuming a serious air and mustering all my professional dignity, I spoke in a tone of voice that filled her with fear.

"My dear woman, you have a growth malignant in nature. There is only one thing to be done and that is to have it cut out. But my charges are rather high".

"I don't care what it costs me. I am able to pay whatever you ask", she replied.

"My fee will be five hundred dollars.",

"Very well. When can you operate?"

"To-morrow morning."

"At what hospital?" she asked.

"I'll arrange the matter and ring you up and let you know", I replied.

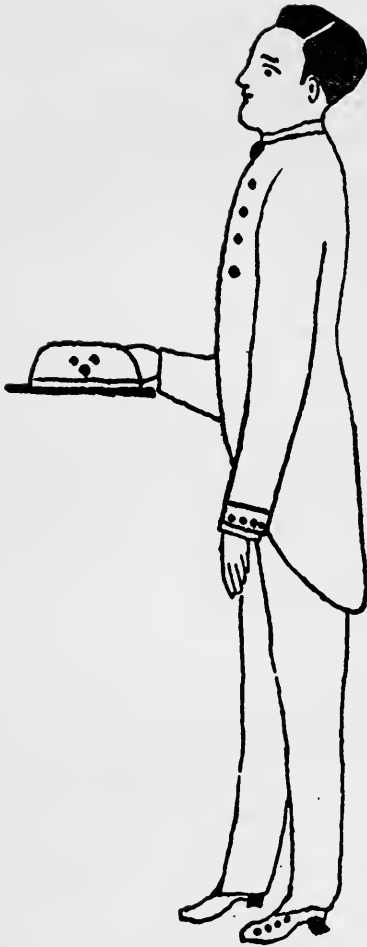
I could not think of any hospital that would stand for the trick I was about to play on this credulous woman. As I had little practice and therefore no standing with the doctors, my acquaintance with the surgeons in the hospitals was rather limited. It extended scarcely beyond a rather cold nod from a few, while most of them had a look of

scorn for me as I "hiked" around in my shabby suit and faded overcoat.

I was sure up against it good and hard. I must have a confederate. I could not do the job alone. And whoever I got as an assistant would have to be someone I trusted beyond a dream of suspicion. I thought a long time what was best to do. I pondered on this and that. And then it came to me like a flash of inspiration. There was one other doctor in the town who like me had made a failure of the practice of medicine. He too was a man of ideals. He had a fine character, a good name, and like me was very poor. I would look him up. I would lay bare to him my whole scheme. I would out line to him the plan by which I hoped to get wealthy. But what if he refused to be my accomplice? I shuddered when I thought of it. I had not seen him for some time. When I last met him he had complained bitterly of the injustice of life. He maintained rightly that a poor man had no chance. I had agreed with him in everything he said. He had promised to come and see me and we parted the best friends.

He was my hope, the only one I could expect to help me. So I took my new patient's address and telephone number, and assuring her I would soon ring her up and let her know what arrangements I had made, waited until she was a safe distance away, and then walked out of my office. People stared at me as I passed. I looked prosperous and had the brisk manner of a busy, overworked doctor with no time to waste. I elbowed and pushed my way through the crowds on the main thoroughfare. I walked at high rate of speed and was soon at the gates of Dr. Ralston. He saw me from the window, and came running down the steps.

"Golly, I'm glad to see you. Clayton! I imagined you had forgotten me; it is so long since you've been here! Why have you not come?"



Ralston was a man of fine character and, like me,
was very poor (Page 12)

I was at a loss for an answer. If I said I was busy Ralston would know it was a lie. So after an embarrassing silence, during which each read the other's thoughts, I blurted out the only plausible excuse I could think of.

"I was so shabby I was ashamed to show myself".

Ralston laughed. "But you are dressed very well just now. Tell me all about your recent good luck".

"I will if you only ask me in".

Ralston turned and ascended the stairs. I was no sooner seated in the dingy little parlor that answered the purpose of a reception room than I remembered it was over a year since I had last been there. For a few minutes I sat perfectly still and said nothing. I was studying Ralston. He had changed greatly since I had last seen him. He had aged perceptibly. The world had used him badly. Like me he was a miserable failure and he was man enough to admit it.

"How are you getting along?" I asked wishing to draw him out.

"As usual".

"Another way of saying "badly". I surmised as much. "See here, Ralston, you and I have abilities".

"We haven't succeeded in convincing anybody but ourselves".

"No sarcasm, please. I'm here to talk business".

"Go ahead".

"We failed to get on because we didn't impress people".

"That's very true."

"From now on I'm through with ethics. I intend to quack".

"To quack! Good gracious you don't mean that!"

"Upon my word I do. Here you and I have

gone on starving for twenty years when we might have been rich and famous. It all comes from observing the proprieties and a too rigid adherence to conventions. I'm going to imitate the successful ones and I want you to do likewise".

"I'll starve rather than do anything unprofessional".

"Haven't you pretty nearly succeeded in doing that?"

Ralston dropped his eyes. I didn't mean to hurt his feelings. But I knew I had and he was sensitive and thin skinned, almost morbidly so. I should have been more tactful and diplomatic.

"I don't mean to hurt your feelings, but I wanted to point out to you where you are wrong. We have been twenty years in the game. What have we to show for it? Plenty of debts, that's about all. Touching elbows with us are men who are successful and because they early saw in their professional career that to adhere to the principles we follow spells failure. Today marks the beginning of a change in my life. I'm going to do like the rest of them. I'm not going to have scruples of any kind. I'm after the coin and I want you to help me to get it".

"Me!"

"Yes, you".

"How can I help you?"

"By being my accomplice, my confederate".

"I never did a low or underhanded thing in my life".

"Neither did I until today."

"What have you done?"

"What they all do—told a deliberate lie."

Ralston laughed.

"That's nothing. I've been lying all my lifetime."

"You!"

"Yes, me."

"I can't believe it, that's all."

"Allow me to speak. I must explain myself. You and I have been lying ever since we began to practice. We told people they were suffering with diseases when we didn't know whether they had them or not. We took fees and said men and women were cured when the germs were present by the millions in their bodies. We couldn't be honest if we tried. Everybody is forced to be dishonest, only some turn the trick in rather a merciless, heartless manner. We've had a little pity. We didn't bleed them very strong. That explains why we are poor. This idea of your becoming a quack is nothing new. We are all charlatans."

"Now I am beginning to understand you. You see when it is too late that it doesn't pay to have conscientious scruples."

"I've known it for years. Say, we're wasting time discussing these things. What is your game?"

"I want you as capital, first rate assistant."

"I see, you want a partner."

"Not exactly, but some one I can depend on, to help me in emergencies."

"Has the occasion risen when my services are required?"

"Yes, this very day."

"Bully! Capital! I thought my luck would change."

"Ralston, listen. I've just come from my office. A lady dropped in with a simple papiloma on her neck. Here was the chance of my life and I resolved to make the most of it. I persuaded her she had a cancer. I convinced her it could be nothing else."

"You're a liar."

"Thank you. So are you".

"I know it."

"Of course, you told her there was only one way to get rid of it and that was to submit to the knife."

“Exactly.”

“You should be ashamed of yourself. It could have been burned off with a caustic pencil.”

“I know. But I decided I had done that long enough. As you know, honesty doesn't pay well nowadays. All the thanks you and I ever got was to be called ‘Horse Doctor.’”

“That's the reputation we acquired after all our years of conscientious practice. It makes me sick to think of it.”

“It can scarcely disgust you more than it does me.”

“How much are you going to charge the lady to remove the growth?”

“Five hundred dollars.”

“You're a robber.”

“H. C. L. is to be blamed for that.”

“In what hospital do you intend to operate?”

“I don't know. That's what's troubling me. Where on earth can we do the job without being found out?”

“Search me.”

“We'll have to give them a rake off.”

“That goes without saying.”

“If we do there'll be nothing left for us.”

Ralston's face dropped. He knew that society was corrupt. Men and women were insanely avaricious. Lust for gain and inordinate greed seemed to grip everybody. Oppression, thievery, graft everywhere prevailed. The religious brethren were quoting Scripture in an effort to convince incredulous mankind that the end of the world was near.

“None of the first class hospitals will do. Their demands are exorbitant. You say you are going to charge this lady five hundred dollars. We must persuade her to have the operation done in her home. Don't you see the necessity of that?” Ralston's eyes sparkled. The color had come to his pale, cadaverous face. All the look of despair that

had proclaimed him a disappointed broken man had vanished. "There no one will be able to discover our guilty secret," he went on in a tone of voice that throughly alarmed me. "It will be easy. Let me tell you why. People have an instinctive dread of hospitals, and well may they have. Many who enter there never come out alive. You will have no difficulty in persuading this lady that her home is the right and proper place to remove the growth."

In an instant all my fear and worry fled. Ralston had promised to be my confederate, and it was plain that I would experience little difficulty in convincing my patient to be operated on at home.

III

I came away from Dr. Ralston's full of hope and enthusiasm. It was a long time since I felt as I did. In fact my feelings were pretty much as they were when I received my sheepskin twenty years before. I whistled, I sang, I hopped along and acted generally like a schoolboy who's just received a holiday. My behaviour attracted considerable attention and I was given an ovation of side glances as I hurried home. But I was very oblivious of everybody and everything save the five hundred dollars I was going to receive for the removal of a harmless little wart from a timid, diseased, frightened woman. That was the biggest five I had ever extracted from anybody in all my life. And when I thought of the dishonorable means I had used to filch it from my patient the little remnant of shame I possessed caused me to blush. It was a long time since I had done that—not since I was a boy. In my student days I was quite an adept in the art. And I remember a kindly old professor who sympathized with me and quoted his idol Socrates who one day came across a youth in Athens who had the habit and reminded him that he should not be ashamed, "for such is the color of modesty." But I blushed this time, not because I was modest, my cheeks burned with shame because I had turned my back upon ideals that had been an inspiration to me; that had enabled me to live nobly and righteously for twenty years, and which I had in a moment of weakness and despair trampled under foot and all for pelf, filthy lucre that never made anybody happy in this world.

When I thought of what I had done I was so angry I could have torn myself to pieces. It was my better nature, my higher self crying out in

protest against my betrayal of finer instincts and nobler impulses. At once I was conscious that I still possessed a conscience that would administer a sharp reprimand the moment I did anything wrong. Immediately I became aware that the new career I had decided to follow might bring me worldly prosperity, but it held out for me little serenity of mind. Still it seemed as though the new way was the right way after all. My mind pondered on all the extenuating circumstances that would justify my actions. Foremost among these was my long struggle for success that seemed to be a "will o' the whisp". The prosperity and good standing of my confreres who never had scruples and stooped to all manner of trickery was another argument urging me on, and by the time I reached my office I had succeeded in silencing that inner mysterious voice that whispers unceasingly to the souls of men.

I was now a confirmed quack. I was not born so. Nature intended me for something better, but circumstances over which I had no more control than a babe unborn had made me one. In a worldly sense it represented prosperity. Freedom from pecuniary worries was something I had never known.

All my life I had money difficulties. In my boyhood days, in my student days I knew what it was to be short of coin. I had such a long and familiar acquaintance with it that it had no longer any horrors for me. It had smothered and throttled to a great extent my ambition. But beyond this it had not injured me. I had put up a brave and manly fight against it and failed. That was all.

As I sat down at the desk in the office I thought of the great and wonderful things I would do in the future. I pictured myself rich, surrounded by patronizing influential friends, courted and admired. I saw political honors bestowed upon me, and a vision of preferment and position in National

Councils came to me. Such dreams I had never known in all my life. It paid to be a quack. It brought splendid returns. Soon my name as a skillful, daring operator would spread. I would be known far and wide. A professorship in a medical college would be offered me. Pupils would sit at my feet and absorb my sapient sayings and obtain inspiration and insight from my lectures. Patients would flock to me by the hundreds, and then when I had drained the cup of human vanity to the very dregs and drank to satiety I would retire. I would lean back on my honors and riches and look forward with a sigh of relief to "the long, sweet sleep, sleep without measure, without dreams and an awakening."

IV

When I awoke from this dream of splendor and grandeur I rubbed my eyes, polished my glasses and looked about. There, before me on my desk, was the name and address of the lady on whom I was to do my first operation. Strange, wasn't it, that I should sit in this very office for twenty years and never, until now, be asked to operate on anyone? But I know the reason, and it was this very knowledge that prompted me to become a quack.

Ralston was to be my assistant. My first and greatest worry had been overcome. My next move was to get into touch with the lady herself. Calling her over the telephone she asked me to drive out in my machine and talk it over with her. In my machine, mind you. Now I was in a dilemma. I had never owned anything beyond a few medical books, old editions, and a second-hand bicycle I had bought at a down town store. What was I to do?

Immediately my hands went into my pockets. They contained a jack knife, a bunch of keys. That wasn't so bad. I could jingle the keys and make noise. The last dollar I had in the world was gone. I had parted with my all for clothes, and my money was well spent, as you will see a little further on in this biography. I now thought of a garage I had passed on my way from Ralston. There were some splendid cars for hire there. I might manage to secure one of them. But right away a new difficulty arose. Even though my neat appearance and affable manners obtained me the wish of my heart, I would have to enlist the services of some one to drive me out to where my patient lived, for I was grossly ignorant of the machines that nearly everybody found it easy and convenient to own.

Right then and there something happened that seemed like the answering of prayer. A boy drove a beautiful new auto to the curbing in front of my door. In an instant I was in the street.

"Young man, would you do me a favor?" I said, smiling pleasantly.

"What is it you want?" he asked.

"Drive me to Lake View Terrace as quickly as you can. There's a sick lady there I must see."

Without waiting for a reply I climbed in and sat down beside him.

"Your machine is being repaired, I suppose," he said as we went whirling along.

"Yes, there's been considerable delay. Just why I don't know." I was a quack and it was second nature for me to lie. "I have a serious operation to do and at such times it isn't very nice to have one's machine in the repair shop."

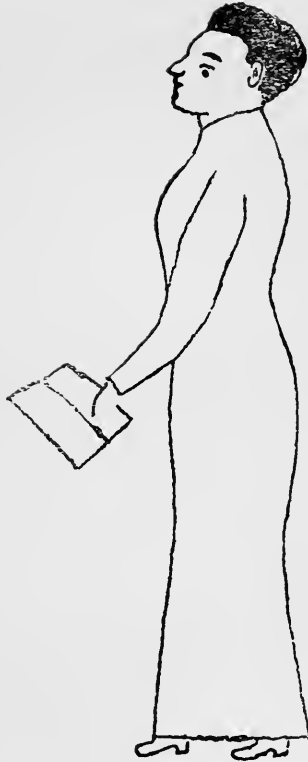
"I should say not," replied the boy.

The lad was a careful driver. I was too much engrossed with my own thoughts to ask him many questions. Besides I wanted to impress him with my serious, dignified air, which would cause him to believe he was singularly honored in driving a distinguished surgeon to his patient. Arriving at the number I had given him he brought the car to a standstill. I thanked him, told him he would not have to wait long, and alighted. I ascended the broad marble steps that led to my patient's home and pressed the bell.

I heard the shuffling of feet and presently the door opened and a Chinese servant let me in. I gave him my card. He read it. To my surprise he spoke perfect English. "You are Mrs. Grayson's doctor. She told me she expected you. She is terribly upset about having to undergo an operation. She dreads to go to a hospital."

"There's no reason why she should leave her home. We can do the work just as well right in the house. It will save her considerable money besides. Would you be so good as to tell her I am here?"

The Chinese, accustomed to obey, scuffed down the hall and climbed the stairway. I knew my patient was on the floor above. I was now given a few minutes to use my eyes and to bring to bear my wonderfully well developed powers of observation. I saw at once that the home in which I was an esteemed and invited guest belonged to people of refinement and wealth. In style it was modern, cemented on the outside with low ceilings and wide hallways. While I stood still admiring the structure of the dwelling my mind drifted to Ralston. Near me was the telephone. While awaiting the return of the Chinese who had gone to announce my arrival to Mrs. Grayson I would ring up my worthy colleague and acquaint him with my whereabouts. I would insist upon him coming to Mrs. Grayson's at once. I felt that I would experience small difficulty in convincing the young chauffeur, sitting in his splendid car, that he should bring Ralston to me immediately as he seemed a youth of easy persuasion. So I quickly stepped out and whispered a few words of flattery, in which I soon became wonderfully proficient, to my



Mrs. Grayson lived out on Lake View Terrace
(Page 23)

newly made friend. He proved to be a splendid fellow, remarkably accommodating. I watched the machine dash down Lake View Terrace and then walked up the steps.

In the hallway the Chinese awaited me with a look of genuine alarm on his face.

"I stepped outside a moment. Sent my chauffeur after Dr. Ralston. How is Mrs. Grayson?"

"Awful scared. Doesn't like the idea of getting cut up," he replied.

"Nobody does", I answered evading his glance.

It was difficult for me to keep a straight face. I could have laughed outright as I thought of the bluff I was going to make. But suddenly my sense of humor vanished. It was replaced by noticeable seriousness. What would happen if this simple, confiding woman, who had all the confidence in the world in me, and who trusted me as no one else on earth should discover that I was an imposter? It was hardly probable she would, as she was a victim of fear—a morbid hypochondriac, who, like a drowning man, grasps at a straw.

"Mrs. Grayson wants to see you", said the Chinese.

I followed him up the broad, high stairway that led to her room. I was soon in the presence of my patient. I stood at her bedside and as I studied her wan, anxious face I felt like a guilty criminal. I had lied to that woman falsely, maliciously lied and I had done so for money. How base and ignoble! It was the meanest thing I had ever done, the worst trick I had ever played. But I was a quack. That was sufficient justification, wasn't it? In vain I tried to persuade myself I had done wrong. At least I had acted as others did. I had taken advantage of an opportunity that had presented itself for a little easy money. It was all in the game. I had been fair and square long enough.

While these thoughts were running through my

mind Mrs. Grayson opened her eyes and smiled. It was a faint, sickly smile, such as one sees in those who have lost all hope and who are in the grip of awful despair.

"I'm so glad you've come. I'm nearly worried to death. I have a horror of being cut up", she moaned.

"Butchered!" I exclaimed. As it was impossible for me to control my mirth I laughed boisterously.

"That's right, laugh. I don't think you doctors have any feelings."

"You are mistaken. We are pretty much like the rest of mankind. Now, Mrs. Grayson, don't worry. Dr. Ralston will be here presently and before you know what has happened you will be rid of that terrible cancer."

As I said this I was careful to keep my eyes fastened on the ceiling. A man might lie with his lips, but his face would show it.

Suddenly the door bell rang. "Doctor Ralston!" I exclaimed. I breathed easier now. Soon everything would be over. My own suspense and Mrs. Grayson's anxiety would have an end. The first operation I had ever performed would be a success and Ralston and myself would have received an ample fee.

Dr. Ralston walked into the room beaming and smiling, but looking frightfully shabby. The only suit he had on his back. He surely had a seedy appearance, but I don't think Mrs. Grayson noticed it. Her mind was tortured with phantoms of fear. The question of style and the matter of appearance did not interest her. Her one thought was to get rid of the growth two unprincipled rascals, posing as doctors, had told her was cancerous.

Ralston opened his handbag and began to arrange knife, scissors, needles, bandages and gauze in a conspicuous place in the room. I thoroughly approved of this because I knew it was a capital

asset to impress the patient's mind that something wonderful was being done. I saw at once he was on the right track. He had made a good beginning and like me would soon be traveling over the road that led to success.

I took the Esmark inhaler and poured some chloroform on it and placed it over Mrs. Grayson's nose. She took the anesthetic beautifully. She soon fell asleep and I am sure in the realm of dreams she entered, nobody had cancers and there were no quacks.

The next thing to be done was the removal of the harmless papiloma, that had been sort of a beauty spot on Mrs. Grayson's neck. This was very easily accomplished. A caustic pencil, the good woman could have purchased at any drug store for ten cents, did the trick. Ralston and I put on a lot of gauze and bandages, threw open the windows to let in a supply of fresh air and sat down to patiently await the return of Mrs. Grayson from the land of dreams to the world of reality.

"The operation was beautifully and skillfully done," said Ralston.

"Quit your kidding," I replied.

"Honestly, don't you feel ashamed?" asked Ralston looking me straight in the face.

"I don't feel abashed at all."

"You're hardened already."

"Glad I am. Won't go around with a troubled conscience."

"It's easy to do this sort of thing. It takes a little nerve at first, but after the ice is broken it becomes as easy to lie as it is natural to tell the truth."

"What, if we are found out?"

"No danger of that. We're too clever."

Mrs. Grayson began to stir. She opened her eyes and smiled. But this time it wasn't a sickly

smile. Her face had lost the suffering look. She appeared happy and serene.

"Is it all over?" she asked.

"Long ago. The operation was a great success, I'm sure the cancer will not recur. You will live to be very old."

She offered me her hand. "Call the Chinese. I want to pay you."

Ralston stepped out.

"I'll remember both of you as long as I live."

"Thank you," I said.

"I'm in a position to send you many patients."

"I'm glad to know it."

The Chinese and Ralston entered.

"Give these gentlemen the check; it is on the desk."

The Chinese pulled down the lid of the escrivore and handed me the slip of paper. It was the biggest fee I had ever earned and I had acquired it by lying. It certainly paid to be a quack.

"Mrs. Grayson, we are much obliged for the prompt settlement. The fee is ample, all we could expect. Rest quietly in bed and we'll drop in to see you tomorrow morning."

Ralston and I bowed and walked out. But the automobile that had brought us to Mrs. Grayson's was gone. The young chauffeur had grown impatient waiting and had driven away.

VI

Ralston and I walked along in silence. We were thinking. And our thoughts were in quite different channels than when we last met. We were pondering on the sudden good fortune that had come to us. We had made a start. We had taken the step that would lead us far from poverty and dependence. It would now be milk and honey for us and our pathway through life would have pleasant scenes. What fools we had been! We had wasted precious years in being slaves to ideals. What had ethics done for us? Surely they had not helped us in any way that we could see. They had kept us down at the bottom rung of the ladder when there was plenty room at the top, and it was easy climbing if you only knew how.

It had taken us years to discover what most of men find out in a few months, and neither of us were slow of comprehension. In school we were said to have a wide glancing intelligence and brilliant things were predicted of us. If our teachers could only see us now, what would they say? We had trampled under foot the principles they had held inviolable and sacred. We had turned the noble healing art into a money getting business where lying and stealing were the all important and necessary accomplishments. We had debased our profession. We were a dishonor to the calling, and, best of all, knew it. That was the Great Secret between us. And both of us swore with an oath the world would never know. But what if we were found out. The thought filled us with painful apprehension. There was danger that success might cause us to disregard the law of caution. We might get bold, arrogant and defiant and that would be our undoing. We had not forgotten the

story of Mesmer and other equally famous medical fakers who, after enjoying unprecedented success, lost prestige and died in despair. There was need of prudence in everything we said and did.

Suddenly Ralston stopped and stared wildly at a newspaper lying in the middle of the street.

"Look! Read what it says!" he exclaimed, clutching me by the arm.

"Outbreak of Spanish Influenza! One thousand cases reported at Health Office!"

"Mon Dieu!" I shouted. "Don't you see what that means for us?"

"Plenty of work and no pay," Ralston replied.

"If we did business at the old stand. But now we have a new line to hand them."

"What's that?"

"No money, no treatment."

Ralston laughed. "It's strange how quickly one can learn the tricks of the trade."

"There's no time for gadding with this epidemic raging all around. Ralston, go home and dress up. Honor your calling. It is a noble one, you know. If I get stuck and need you, I know where you are. Ta ta, for the present. Remember now a discreet tongue. Good-bye."

I turned away in loathing and disgust from the man who had been my pal in a crooked deal.

VII

Arriving at my office I sat down and thought.

The waves of memory carried me back to all the quacks and charlatans I had ever known. I recalled stories I had heard about them. I remembered anecdotes told me of them. And after I had weighed and analyzed their short comings and defects, there was only one conclusion I could reach. I was like none of them. I differed from them in every respect. There was no similarity whatever between us. All of them, without exception, were delinquents. They were sadly defective, while I was normal in every way. Each and everyone of them had begun early to practice deception, and were by nature born prevaricators, while I was truthful, honest, upright and had become a quack by sheer force of circumstances.

Given an opportunity and a start in life I would no more have thought of becoming a quack than I would have planned to commit suicide. But I had reached such a point in my checkered career that it seemed the only possible solution of the problem that confronted me. The great question with me ever since graduating was how to get on honorably. I had tried long and hard. I had been kind and courteous to all. I had cultivated affability of manner and cheerfulness of mind, and all to no purpose. It seemed as though I could not attract. It looked as though I lacked the qualities that win and hold and was therefore doomed to failure.

God alone knows the depth of my despair. Through lonely days and sleepless nights I brooded over it, until at last I could stand it no longer. And then all of a sudden it seemed as though a strange light burst in on my darkened consciousness show-

ing me the way. I would become a quack, a boastful, deceitful, dishonest, lying pretender. It makes me almost dizzy when I think of it. My brain reels as I recall the deterioration that took place in my character. I who had never willfully told a lie, now found it easy, seemingly natural to utter falsehoods. I who had been modest and unassuming became bold and overbearing. I who had been charitable, became heartless and merciless. I who had been benevolent, had been transformed by some evil genii into an unfeeling monster whose avarice was limitless, and who took a fiendish delight in inflicting pain and witnessing acts of cruelty.

Better by far to have stayed in my dingy old office with its faded fresco and obsolete etching, its dusty shelves, threadbare carpets and musty smell. Infinitely preferable to that condition of mind and heart success brought me.

My musing was brought to a sudden termination. The door bell had rung and as I was a full fledged quack my first duty was to cease useless, senseless moralizing and get down to business.

My visitor proved to be a Jew, a very respectable looking Jew at that. As I was a quack it was my business to ascertain as best I could his financial standing.

A rather hasty survey of his personality enabled me to form a fairly accurate estimate of him. I inferred he was a prosperous merchant and subsequent visits proved I was right. He was neatly dressed as becomes any well to do business man.

"Are you the doctor " he asked, looking me over.

"I'll have to plead guilty," I replied.

"Then, for Moses sake, come across the way. My daughter is very ill."

"What seems to be the trouble?" I asked.

"That's what I'd like to know," he answered evasively.



My visitor proved to be a Jew, a very respectable looking Jew at that. (Page 33)

Right away I knew I was up against a case where quackish methods would have to be cautiously applied. Especially would I have to be careful when it came to the money side. My Semitic patient would surely prove astute when I tackled him along those lines. I couldn't put one over on him like I did on Mrs. Grayson.

"I hope it isn't the Fluë," I said.

"If it was as simple as all that I would not have come after you," he replied.

I decided to do no more talking but keep my eyes and ears open. The Jew's home was just around the corner, a place I had passed hundreds of times and never thought it worth while to inquire who lived there, and without ever thinking I would be called upon to make a diagnosis.

I hurried up the steps close to the heels of a new member of my clientele and entered. Inside I sensed a peculiar odor. It wasn't the nasty smell one detects in old buildings where sunshine and fresh air are unknown; neither was it the odor of anything I was familiar with. It was an aroma unique and distinctive, something peculiar itself. There was no adjective I could think of that would describe it, and immediately it occurred to me that I might make use of it to my pecuniary advantage. Since the alarming spread of the Spanish Influenza the people were in a condition bordering on hysterical frenzy. They were ready to believe anything. I would use my inventive powers, coin a name and announce the presence of a new plague. And to confirm the diagnosis I would call in Doctor Ralston whose reputation had grown somewhat since our operation on Mrs. Grayson. I smiled as I thought of my cunning and resourcefulness, and chuckling with glee I entered the sick chamber of my new patient.

Before me was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. Talk about stage beauties and rave a-

bout moving picture stars! That girl had it all over them. She reminded me of a Madonna of Raphael. Such exquisite perfection of feature and beautiful blending of color I had never seen. Her forehead, neck and shoulders were of marble whiteness; her cheeks were tinted like a rose. Her hair was as black as a raven's feathers, and her eyes, shaded by long lashes were of the deepest blue. She laid perfectly still seemingly unconscious of my presence.

"She's been that way all day," her father said.

I placed my ear to her chest and listened to the beating of her heart, her father all the while watching me closely and trying to read my findings in the lines of my face.

Carefully, painstakingly I examined her, but I found nothing wrong. I could not explain her attitude of listlessness. Immediately I remembered I was a quack. If I were true to my calling I would not be expected to make a correct diagnosis. All that would be required of me would be to lie. Tradition, experience, the common consent of mankind demanded it of me. I had begun that way, I would end that way and nobody would know it, but my confederate and colleague.

"This is the new plague that's just appeared". The words were no sooner out of my mouth than the Jew fell on his knees. He grasped his daughter's hand and whispered words of endearment to her. I was only a quack, a man with sympathy for nobody, who thought of nothing beyond the filching of money from the pockets of credulous and unfortunate people, yet as I stood there a silent witness to this display of fatherly love and devotion I was painfully conscious of something chocking me. My natural feelings were trying to assert themselves. A battle was being waged between stoicism and pity, with overwhelming defeat staring the former in the face.

"It's contagious", I shouted; "get up."

Immediately the Jew was on his feet. With a look of despair on his face he drew back. He thrust out both hands to me appealingly.

"Cure her! Save her! You must! She's all I have to live for. And see how beautiful she is. Poor little Rachel!" And he began to sob as though his heart would break.

Once more I was quack, a merciless, heartless charlatan, hard as steel, greedy and a monster in lying.

"I can cure her, but my charges will be rather steep," I replied.

"I don't care what they are. I'm not a poor man, I can pay."

"But first of all I must bring a very able consultant."

"That's right. Two heads are better than one."

"His fees are somewhat high, too."

"I don't mind. Bring him here at once."

I turned away from the bedside where lay beautiful Rachel and hurried down to Ralston's to tell him all about the new fish I had caught.

VIII

When I arrived at Ralston's I found him greatly changed. He was well dressed and had the air and manner of a prosperous physician. I could see he was a little surprised at my coming. It was evident he didn't expect me. He listened attentively to what I had to say and asked many questions about the Jew and his daughter who were now enrolled as my patients. I was aware that he took more than casual interest in Rachel and believed he was anxious to accompany me to the home of her father.

As I sat and studied the man who was now my tool and partner in all my lying and stealing, a strong aversion for him came over me. Here again was proof and evidence that my better nature and higher self were not extinct. A few fragments of shattered ideals that had guided me over a career of honorable failure might still be gathered together that would make of me the semblance of a man. But I laughed as I thought of it. I had begun to go down hill and nothing could now save me from the precipice at the bottom.

The man whose guest I was had not started me. I could not blame him for that. Chafing under discouragement I had taken the initiative alone and had gone and enticed him to do likewise. Ralston might have just cause for resentment against me. I had none for him.

"You're a lucky fellow to get another good case so soon," said Ralston.

"It seems that way, doesn't it?"

"I wonder if it will pay us as well as that operation."

The word "operation" caused me to laugh. Operations! Neither of us knew anything about them. We had no books on surgery. frequented no hos-

pitals and were as ignorant as a crocodile of technique. We had a few old instruments somewhat rusty from neglect and non use. We wouldn't know an appendix if we saw it. Little wonder we were failures. We hadn't looked inside the books for years, and in the old days when the necessity of passing examinations made us study we spent more time than was good for us examining charts and pictures. Long ago we had drifted into a don't care attitude, the result of which was that we would have starved to death if we hadn't decided to become quacks.

"There's plenty of money in it for both of us if we can scare the old man and get the girl on her feet," I replied.

"Let's get busy and try."

"That's what I say. Ralston, keep a straight face while I talk about the new Plague. The people are scared. There's no denying it, and there's good cause for their alarm. You know that all right. This Jew has money, plenty of it. We must get some of it. We're not going to hit him over the head. That would be brutal. There's no need of resorting to such tactics. All we have to do is to look wise, use a few technical words he doesn't know the meaning of, and give his lovely daughter a harmless mixture we could safely administer to a baby. Observe the results. Old man Shylock unties his purse strings and you and I have climbed another rung in the ladder of success.

"I hope it is as easy as you say. But I have a pretty thorough knowledge of Jews. They are a people not easily deceived."

"There I agree with you. But here's how we'll get the better of the Jew's acumen. He has wonderful love for his child. He's devoted to her. She's all he has to live for. Without her his money and jewels mean nothing to him. If she were to

fall a victim of this new Plague..." I paused to suppress a laugh; "he would be brokenhearted. Life would not be worth living. Our game is simple. A child could tell you what it is. We are to do our worst or best, whichever way you wish to put it, to convince him that his daughter is very ill. We are to prescribe for her something simple and harmless, of course. As she improves we are to claim that our treatment did the work and you will need have no fear about the girl's father paying us."

"You certainly have it all figured out."

"As a general plans his campaign. Come, let's be going."

I took Ralston by the arm and led him down the street. I felt young, buoyant, experienced no qualms of conscience at the thought of what I was about to do and was happy because I was a quack.

IX

Brisk walking soon brought us to our destination. We found to our great joy the lovely Rachel much improved. She was sitting up in bed and her father was kneeling beside her, fanning her. As we entered Ralston smothered an exclamation of surprise. He had seen beautiful women, plenty of them, but he was willing to swear this Jewess was the finest creature he had ever laid eyes on. And mind you he was gazing on her in the throes of an alarming fatal disease. At least I had said so a little before. And according to current opinion I was a skilful physician and should know.

"She seems much better, Doctor," he said, rising and bowing to Ralston.

"It is very aparent she is. But don't be misled by this temporary improvement."

The old man's face darkened. I had taken from him, as it were the crutch on which he leaned for support.

"It is quite typical and characteristic of the disease. People are buoyed up with the hope of a speedy recovery when alas! their hopes prove illusive."

He gave my words the closest attention.

"I don't want to frighten you or destroy your hopes. Dr. Ralston and myself have seen cases like this before. We've learned from experience that it pays to be guarded in one's prognosis. We prefer not to express an opinion until tomorrow. By that time the crisis will have occurred. In the meantime we will leave some tablets which you are to give her according to directions."

I placed a box of C. C. Pills on the table. My manner was grave. I carried myself well and I knew the Jew and his daughter were profoundly

impressed with everything I said and did. Dr. Ralston had walked over to the window and was looking out on the panorama of action in which he had done so little.

"It is customary to settle with the consultant."

Immediately Ralston turned around.

"As your daughter's case is serious I am afraid our fee will appear a little large. But we are going to do you a great favor. We don't intend to report the case. If we did you would be quarantined. That would entail hardship and suffering on you. The fee, including that of my consultant, will be five hundred dollars."

The old man shrugged his shoulders. His daughter leaned her head back on the sofa and sighed.

"Doctors cost pretty near as much as diamonds," said the old man as he sat down at his desk and wrote out the check.

X

In two days Ralston and I made a thousand dollars. That was the most money we had ever seen together in all our life. And we had earned it easily too. By fraud and deception we had acquired it and neither of us was ashamed. There were tricks to all trades. We had made the most of them in our line. We could boast and brag a little now. Five hundred dollars in one's pockets makes all the difference in the world in a man. I began to think life was worth living. It wasn't such a bad game after all. A little money changed my viewpoint on everything. It gave me new and different ideas on all subjects. I was beginning to lose a good deal of my pessimism. The optimism I had when a boy was coming back to me. As I glanced at my reflection in the mirror I imagined that I looked younger. And people everywhere congratulated me on my improved appearance. I noticed, too, that many went out of their way to meet me, and I was receiving smiles and nods from men and women who formerly didn't think it worth while to notice me. All of which made me believe we are living in a strange world where nobody looks beyond appearances and that worldly prosperity commands respect and good will of men.

But what a fraud I was! If they only knew me, what would they think and say! Here I was posing as an ethical doctor and passing as an accomplished physician and skillful surgeon, when, as a matter of fact, I was a quack, an imposter, a charlatan and fakir. And the only reason I "got by" and the countrefeit wasn't discovered was because I dressed well, had unlimited gall and could give Ananias points in an art that in modern

society is considered quite a necessary accomplishment.

How long would I keep on acting? That was the question I found myself asking. I might be discovered and exposed. It might happen any time. It could occur soon. Perhaps by being careful a year or two would elapse before people would find me out. By keeping within the law I could carry on my business unmolested. But the ghost of fear began to haunt me. People will talk. It is human nature to do so. No man can count on having everyone his friend. So I, like the rest of mankind, had enemies. In common with them I learned that there were people "knocking" me. It was just as I expected. Jealousy and selfishness underlied it. The doctors were watching me. My sudden prosperity and success surprised them. All kinds of rumors were afloat. Some said I had been left a legacy; others declared I had married a rich widow, and for reasons best known to myself, was withholding the lady's name from the public. It amused me greatly to hear what was being said. I contrived to keep out of the doctors way as much as possible. They never had much love for me, anyway. I didn't join the Medical Society and held myself aloof from all of them. I was about as popular with them as a skunk is in the chicken coop. They had no use for me because I was poor and didn't get on. But there's an old saying that every dog has his day, and I sure was having mine. Patients began to come by the hundreds. I couldn't answer half the calls I had. Those that looked doubtful I sent to Ralston. He was greedy and would run anywhere if there was a chance of getting a dollar. For all my "Flu" cases I prescribed calomel and quinine. Over and over again I wrote prescriptions for these two useful drugs. I became sick and tired of doing so and it was not easy for me to keep from smiling as one of my

patients would drop in to see me, plank down two dollars and ask for a preventive against the "Flu". I would take my blank out of my pocket and as fast as my fingers would go I'd write down the mild chloride of mercury and good old sulphate of quinine. Of course, occasionally I'd order aspirin tablets, but it wasn't very often.

When the epidemic was over I had a big pile of currency and a sack of silver to show for my trouble. I had good luck with all my cases which increased my reputation and strenghtened the people's belief in my possession of knowledge and skill. I could now play the role of quack in a bolder and more defiant way. By this time I had acquired a brisk manner that inclined most of people to leave me alone. I assumed an aloofness that was wholly unnatural to me. I was a Democrat by nature. I hadn't a particle of use for aristocracy and despised those who mimicked its ways and adopted its airs. Yet here was I practicing what I didn't preach, doing things I believed in not doing and making as big a fool of myself generally as is possible for a human bein intoxicated with success to do. And it all came from me being a quack. It was the natural sequence and logical outcome of it.

One day, shortly after Ralston and I cleaned up the five hundred for services as related, rendered the daughter of a wealthy Jew, a lady stylishly dressed came into my office. At first glance she seemed not unlike the many other patients who consulted me. But a little closer scrutiny on my part revealed the fact that she was wholly different from any of them. She had the subdued air of a woman whose spirit was broken and who had known a close acquaintance with grief and sorrow. Despite this she was decidedly pretty. She spoke with foreign accent in a low sweet voice. I'll remember it always. I could easily distinguish it anywhere.

And right now, as I sit here writing these "Confessions" I hear it. I imagine such a voice is given to one in a million. I could listen to it forever.

"Doctor, I want you to come and see my son. Something is the matter with him. What it is I don't know. But I'm nearly distracted because of it. Can you come right away?"

"I can go this very instant, right with you if you don't mind", I replied.

I escorted the little woman down the stairway and out into the street. Not for a moment did I forget I was a quack. This woman and her sick son had only one interest for me, namely, to deceive and fool them and turn their fears to my own pecuniary advantage.

I experience no shame in admitting it. I was callous and hardened. I had lost the last vestige of honor. I was an unscrupulous, unprincipled charlatan. As we walked along there was one thought in my mind and that was how I might get an ample fee for the services I was to render. So I began adroitly enough by asking a few questions that would give me an insight into my newly acquainted patient's finances.

"I suppose your husband is in business?" I asked.

"I have no husband. I am a widow."

"Your sick son is your support I presume."

"Gracious, no. I am quite beyond the need of assistance from anyone."

"I see. Well to do. How fortunate! It is nice to be in comfortable circumstances."

"It is to say the least very convenient."

"Quite so."

I lapsed into a thoughtful silence. I wished to know no more. I could charge a big fee but would I get it? I would on one condition only. If I were clever enough to scare her and make it appear

that I had cured her son I knew she would pay me whatever I asked.

"How long has your son been ill?" I asked, hoping she would tell me everything, so that I could play the game of imposter without fear of exposure.

"Since yesterday."

"Confined to his bed?"

"Yes."

"Any fever?"

"Yes. His temperature is very high."

"Headache and backache as well?"

"Yes. He complains most of that."

"My good woman, he has symptoms of the Plague."

She reeled and would have fallen if I hadn't caught her in my arms. I chuckled as I thought of it. How clever I was! How thorough my knowledge of human nature! How tactful and diplomatic for me to say that! Those few words of mine had called into being a legion demons of fear. This little woman with the sweet musical voice and subdued air was in a frame of mind to believe anything. The absurd and incredible were things quite alike. She had lost all power of distinction. Her sense of logic and the sequence of cause and effect meant nothing to her now.

"But I can cure him," I shouted, shaking her.

"Cure him! Of course you can. That's why I am bringing you to him", she added drying her eyes.

"My charges will be somewhat high," experience taught me it was always well to say this.

"I don't care what they are. My son is more to me than all the money in the world."

"That's the way for a real mother to think and feel. I suppose he has been a dutiful son."

"A joy and comfort to me. The thought of losing him is breaking my heart."

She began to weep bitterly.

"Come don't cry," I said patting her on the back. "I'll soon have him up and well."

She stopped crying and looked up. Before us was a beautiful home with a fine garden shade trees and an abundance of flowers.

"This is where I live. Come in."

I heard the heavy iron gate creak on its hinges and with a jaunty air and buoyant manner I tiptoed over the graveled pathway that led to her door. Surely some benign goddess was presiding over my affairs. I don't imagine another human being had such a streak of good luck in this world. In the space of few days I had secured in rapid succession three important cases that replenished my depleted purse and gave me prestige and professional renown.

I found my patient resting on a sofa in the parlor. He was a handsome youth of twenty and one hasty glance told me the boy was suffering from a heavy cold. But I was a quack. I wasn't born one, but had become so by choice. So the only thing for me to do was to lie. And I did so as fast as I could. I felt it was my duty to do that. There was a nice big fee at stake and the getting of it all depended upon my ability to speak untruths

"Madam I'm sorry to say he has the pneumonic plague," I said.

"The plague!" she gasped.

"But it is not necessarily fatal. You've called me in early. There's a great deal in that you know. We can cut short the disease. But I must have a consultant. The case is too serious for me to handle alone."

The boy turned and gave me a look. I'll never forget that glance as long as I live. It said more in the way of reproach than all the words he might utter. Scorn and contempt were in it and all the

hate of fraud that was in his young heart. He knew I was lying. He recognized me as an imposter and when he got well I could count on him as an open enemy. Suddenly fear came over me. Perhaps I would meet my Waterloo in this smooth faced boy, whose mother's love and fear I had taken advantage of to lie and steal. For the first time I became aware that there were people in the world who could detect the mask of hypocrisy I wore and some of them were very young.

"May I use your telephone," I asked.

"Certainly. It is right in the hallway," she replied.

This bit of information caused a tremor to pass over me. The thought flashed through my mind that the moment I left the room that boy would confide his suspicion in his mother. There was only one chance in a thousand that he wouldn't. If he did I would know it the moment I entered the parlor. It now occurred to me that I should not have asked for a consultant. In doing so I had blundered, made a grave mistake. But it was too late to rectify it. I must make the best of a bad situation. With a look of defiance on my face I walked out of the room and soon found myself conversing with Dr. Ralston.

He regarded my predicament from a humorous standpoint. My embarrassing position with my reputation as a gentleman of honor at stake, appeared to him in the nature of a joke. It might be funny to him but it was a mighty serious piece of business for me.

He promised to come at once. I knew that it wasn't that he felt sorry for me or cared a rap if I were found out. But it was greed that urged him to make haste and in the shortest possible time to be at my side. He was thinking of the fee and not of me. My compromising stand didn't interest or worry him in the least.

"Dr. Ralston will be here directly and we can both make a thorough examination and arrive at an accurate diagnosis," I said as I entered. I was careful to avoid the boy's gaze but somehow or other I contrived to discover that his eyes were boring into me. Their light was burning into my very soul. They were accusing me, blaming me for what I was. They were doing more than this. They were appealing to me to reform. If Ralston would only come! What wouldn't I give to have the consultation over! I never felt so ill at ease and uncomfortable in all my life. The short time I had to wait seemed an eternity.

Alas, all that I anticipated happened! The boy's mother assumed immediately an attitude of indifference to me. Her manner was chilling. She showed little disposition to carry on a conversation and naturally I felt awkward and embarrassed. In the midst of my perplexity the door bell rang. I sighed with relief. My suffering would soon be over.

Dr. Ralston came in smiling. He shook my hand warmly and bowed politely to the boy's mother.

"Dr. Ralston, we have another case of pneumonic plague. It is very typical. The symptoms are quite characteristic. Is there anything you can suggest?"

"Nothing more than you have already done."

"Neither of you have done anything at all," protested the angry boy.

"Sat around and talked," corrected his mother.

Her voice which had held me spellbound with its musical cadence was now harsh and strident. She was incensed to the very core. She was boiling over with wrath and indignation. Ralston and I saw that a storm was about to break.

"Clear out of here. You're a pair of quacks," she shouted, making for us.

We beat a haste retreat, forgetting to ask for

our fee, glad to escape the blows we so justly deserved.

XII

"Stung!" exclaimed Ralston when we reached the street.

"Good and hard and early in the game," I replied.

"We ran up against two we couldn't fool.

"We'll meet more of them before we're through."

"We'll have to be more careful the next time."

"That's what I say."

"Won't it be awful if this gets out?" said Ralston.

"The worst thing that could ever happen. And it all comes from not being careful. I might have known these two were not fools. Just think of the fee I lost. Why didn't I use better judgement in what I said and did?"

"Why didn't you? I think I can answer you. You were in too much haste. It was the thought of the fee that upset you. You saw five hundred in easy reach and lost your head."

"I guess that explains why I acted as I did. But I learned a good deal that will come in handy in our next case. You've got to study your patients well. You can't handle intelligent people as you do ignorant ones. They won't swallow all you say. You've got to hand them something plausible. The pills you give have to be more than sugar coated."

"Well said. The comparison is a good one," said Ralston.

Suddenly a great noise reached us. I looked at Ralston. He was deathly pale.

"What is it?" I asked.

"A clash between the strikers and the police."

Five days before all the shipyards and the Key Route System had gone on strike. Thousands of

men had walked out. Transbay traffic was badly crippled. There was a complete tieup of all the car lines. For a while it seemed as though both sides might reach some kind of a settlement. But that hope was now gone. It would be a fight to the finish.

Here was Ralston's chance and mine to distinguish ourselves. We were both known to be friends of organized labor. In our more obscure and less prosperous days, having much time and few patients we had attended every political meeting where the wrongs of the working man were explained and the proper remedy proposed. But since becoming successful practitioners we preferred very much not to be around political meetings. There were many reasons for this. But the main cause was we didn't see any money in sight at such gatherings and as we were quacks and out for the mazama we concluded the best thing we could do was to stay home and look out for victims. However, whether in public or in private we managed to maintain an attitude of sympathy for the workers. Of course, we knew the side our bread was buttered on. Most of our patients belonged to the working class, and whatever people might say about us no one could accuse us of being unloyal to those who produced the wealth of the world. We might be quacks. In the minds of many people there was no question about it. But no one could be found who could offer any proof or evidence that we were other than true and loyal friends to the men now on strike.

The tumult had increased. Curses, groans and hisses filled the air. Automobiles and motorcycles dashed by. Men and women ran through the streets pale and disheveled.

"Look!" exclaimed Ralston pointing down the street.

I turned my eyes in the direction indicated.

There were men in the twentieth century of so called Christian civilization pummeling one another like a pack of lunatics or blood thirsty Apache Indians. They fought, they cursed, they yelled. They blasphemed and uttered grossly obscene words and hurled vile epithets at their assailants. They bled like stuck pigs and battled against overwhelming odds with bull dog persistence. All the primitive instincts of prehistoric man had leaped to the surface and effaced the finer, softer feelings that centuries of culture had implanted. It was a spectacle little calculated to enoble anyone, and it had a depressing effect on both of us.

"Our services are badly needed down there," I said.

"That's very true. But will we get any pay?" asked Ralston.

"You're a regular quack," I replied.

"So are you."

He spit out the words and gave me a menacing look. I had hurt his feelings. I had cut him to the quick. It didn't always pay to tell the truth.

We ran down the street and only stopped when further travel was beset with perils. As long as I live I'll not forget the scene that confronted us. Several cars had been demolished and broken glass, trolley poles, fragments of shattered platforms were strewn all around. It reminded me of a battlefield when the detonation of cannon ceases and the smoke clears away. But this wasn't the worst, not by a long shot. As we moved a short distance from this debris of wreckage, we came face to face with several officers of the law. They were stalwart fellows, splendid specimens of manhood and stood like silent sentinels over the prostrate forms of several strikers bleeding and unconscious in the ground.

Seeing us one of them, presumably a Sargeant, stepped forward.

"You fellows are Doctors. Examine these men and tell us how badly they are hurt."

He spoke with a strong Celtic accent and there was a ring of authority in his voice. That man was accustomed to being obeyed. When he said a thing he meant it. There was no mistaking that.

It didn't take long for Ralston and myself to come to a conclusion as to what was best to do. And for once we would be honest. It wasn't because we liked to be on the square, we had to be. The all seeing eye of the law was on us.

But here was our chance to distinguish ourselves. This was an opportunity that didn't come our way every day. And we would get newspaper advertising that might increase our clientele and swell the sum total of our earnings. So it seemed most fortunate that we should happen to come along at an opportune time.

"Ralston let's get busy. And no monkey business this time," I said pulling off my coat and rolling up my sleeves.

We examined the first victim who had fallen in the battle waged by organized labor against capitalist monopoly and found that he had sustained a fracture of the skull, had innumerable abrasions and contusions and had lost all resemblance to a human being in the muddle that had just ended. His face had been beaten to pulp. His eyes were closed, lips swollen. His ribs were broken and the bones of both arms and legs as well.

"That fellow received the worst mauling I've ever seen," said Ralston lying the unfortunate man gently on the ground.

"No hope for him I suppose," said the officer.

"I'm afraid there isn't," I replied.

The next victim fared scarcely any better. He was black and blue from head to foot. All his

teeth were caved in. There was an ugly gash on top of his head from which flowed a crimson flood that had gathered in a pool near where he lay.

"There's no use in examining the rest of them. All have received fatal injuries. It seems a pity to let them linger this way, although unconsciousness has thrown the mantle of sweet oblivion over them," I said.

Ralston and I washed our hands, put on our coats and turned away. For the first time since we had become quacks we had given our professional opinion and not asked for our fee.

XIII

Ralston and I walked away, silent and thoughtful with weighty matters that occupied our minds. What we had seen impressed us mightly and it had made us think. We were living in a time of perplexity. Great material forces long held on restraint had been let loose. Industrial unionism had matched its strength against the cunning and native intelligence of capitalist oppression, and exploitation. The workers of the world had risen. In the might and strenght of conscios right they had forced their way to the front. And the whole universe seemed to be listening to their wrongs and pointing out to them the means of redress. There was no dodging of the issue. It was folly to try and get away from it. The truth was before us. We saw it and recognized its meaning. We gave it the right and proper interpretation and even though we were quacks and thought only of pelf our hearts were full of fear and our minds disturbed by painful apprehension. Neither of us were religious. We would hardly have been quacks if we were. But we saw something supernatural in what was happening about us.

A spirit of unrest pervaded the world. Officials and men who held the destinies of nations in their hands were troubled and perplexed. Corruption had invaded high places. Sin and evil everywhere prevailed. Selfishness and greed were dominant factors in life. And all looked forward to something to happen that would change existing conditions and purge society of its hellish evils.

Ralston and I had fallen in line. In becoming quacks we had done nothing more culpable and reprehensible than the rest of mankind. Everybody was dishonest and insincere. Why should we

be different from the rest? It was all in the game, the strange game called Life. We didn't know why we were here and didn't care. We had awakened to consciousness in a world where lying and stealing were considered necessary accomplishments, where men made money the God they worshipped. And to get it we early learned that many of these poor specimens of fallen man would stoop to acts at which the brute would revolt. Is it any wonder we became quacks? As I sit here writing these confessions I am conscious of no shame. I feel there was justification for Ralston and I, and I know the impartial reader who wades through this poorly and crudely written biography will have no word of condemnation for us. We were victims of a system that draws you into its vortex whether you want to go or not and your feeble words of protest are lost or speedily forgotten as men rush across the shores of time.

Be honest and you will fail is both trite and true. I have no intention to hold any man or group of men up to ridicule or execration. But I can say without fear of contradiction that Ralston and I haven't been any worse than many others with this difference however, that they covered up their tracks while we allowed our footprints to be seen. And in the heyday of our prosperity when the illusive thing called success that men so assiduously persue, seemed within our grasp, a conspiracy was hatched by jealous professional rivals that put human blood hounds on our trail and ended our career as quacks.

XIV

Arriving at my office I sat down. I felt tired and knew I needed rest. The day had been an exacting one. It had surprise and excitement for me and I had returned to my sanctuary of scheming and planning with an excessive weariness on me. I reviewed the incidents of the day and drew lessons and warnings from them. I might be a quack but I was not exactly a fool. I had enough sense to know that I should profit by experience and I made it a point never to repeat any of my mistakes.

Ralston and I had parted as usual the best of friends. There was a mutual understanding between us. Close association had given us wonderful insight into each others character. We were wholly unlike. Our tastes were entirely dissimilar, but identical interests and the same goal of ambition obviated all this and welded us as it were into one. Strange isn't it how men can get along so well when material gain is at stake. During my long and unsuccessful career as a legitimate practitioner I had observed that and since becoming a quack the truth had become more evident.

It was obvious from the start that I would have little difficulty in maintaining pleasant and agreeable relations with Ralston. I knew him thoroughly. His virtues and vices were on my finger tips so to speak. I could read him like a book. I understood how to take him. And let me say to his everlasting credit, that while he fell short of being an angel, and that when measured by ordinary human standards he had most of frailties common to mankind, he still possessed virtues and good qualities that more than compensated for and over balanced his vices and defects. For instance

he was a true and loyal friend. He had a fine sense of gratitude and he was generous and charitable to a fault. His benevolence and goodness of heart had made him a failure and had prevented him from getting on.

I sat still for a while pondering on the warm personal friendship that existed between us and then it occurred to me that it was fraught with dangers for both of us. In the first place I had talked Ralston into becoming a quack. The idea of prostituting his profession never entered his head, until I put the notion there, and I will never forget how bitterly he spurned the proposal at first. It was only by reasoning and argument with him and exhausting my powers of persuasion that I had succeeded in convincing him that it was the right and proper thing to do.

Many times since we have gone over the same ground and we both agree that the life of a quack has advantages and disadvantages. It has pecuniary emoluments. Any one knows that who has given it a fair trial. But it is beset with dangers and pitfalls lie on every side. It has moments when even the most hardened and callous experience the prickings of an outrage conscience, and worst of all fear is associated with it and somehow or other it is inseparably the ever present companion of the charlatan. I sat in the revolving chair before my desk thinking of all this when suddenly my telephone rang.

Would I come at once to Sixteenth and Chestnut Streets. I hated to go but I disliked to refuse. I knew the family very well. The father of the patient was a prosperous successful barber with a fine shop in Seventh street, near Myrtle, supplied with the very latest equipment in tonsorial art. It was there I got shaved. I learned years before it is not the best policy to prescribe for those you know intimately. There is an old say-

ing that familiarity breeds contempt and never for a moment did I forget it. Moreover my experience in life taught me it was a truism.

The mother of the patient insisted that I come. But I had an appointment at my office that I could not think of breaking. As soon as I was free I hurried down. I was received graciously and cordially. The mother of the sick man pressed three dollars into my hand for a previous visit to the patient's baby and escorted me in. She led me into the sick chamber and I sat down. Before me resting quietly in bed with a netting covering him was my patient. He was a young man of twenty five, whom I had not seen since he was eighteen. In his young and foolish days he used to come and see me and in a simple boyish way tell me all his secrets. He used to weary me with a narration of his escapades. When I heard he was married I ceased to worry about him as I concluded he would settle down and lead a correct and upright life.

A rather hasty and careless examination on my part revealed nothing further the matter with him beyond a slightly sensitive hip and considerable swelling. I also noticed that he was perspiring freely and that the perspiration had a sour acid smell. I was a quack hence I wanted to impress my patient with my learning. So adjusting my glasses and looking wise I told him in simple words what ailed him.

"You have rheumatism," I said with the air of one who knows and has superior knowledge.

"That's what your friend Ralston said, and I fired him."

I nearly fell over with surprise. Dr. Ralston had been there and had not told me. Infinitely worse he had not sent for me as he was wont. He was playing double. He was not on the level and

square as I thought he was. I would give him a good call down as soon as I saw him.

"I suppose both of you know or ought to know your business," he said sarcastically and turned his head toward the wall. I took out my blanks to write him a prescription. I ordered four drams of Sodium Salicylate dissolved in three ounces of Compound Tincture of Cardamons with five grains of Saccharine to sweeten the mixture, told him to take a teaspoonful in a glass of water every four hours, bid him good-bye and came home.

On my way home I did a lot of thinking about the patient. My mind went back to the time I had an office on Fourth Street, San Francisco. I remember how he used to come to me with all his troubles and ask my opinion and advice. I had a distinct impression that he was a nice likeable boy in those days, although a little wild and wayward. But I felt that I was going to have trouble with him. He would be hard to manage and when I tried my usual quackish tactics on him as I did on all my other patients, I would get the worst of it.

The first thing I did on reaching my office was to ring up Ralston. I can't recall all I said to him or use in these "Confessions" the language I saw fit and proper to adopt as my natural vernacular the day I called my colleague on the phone. I'm afraid if I did so I might be accused of praying to the Lord in rather picturesque phrases. Of course, as I expected Ralston pleaded excuses. There were reasons which for delicate causes he could not give why he had not sent for me as a consultant. He was profuse in apologies and protestations of innocence and promised to behave more like a true and loyal quack in the future.

There was only one thing to do and that was to forgive him, which I did with all my heart.

"I'm not sorry I got discharged. I'm glad of

it. I'm no prophet but I feel safe in saying you are going to have trouble there. Your man will be hard to handle. I've seen his kind before. None of his likes for me. Take my advice and retire from the case before your name is erased from the pay roll."

To my subsequent sorrow I found out Ralston was right. That one case caused me more humiliation than all the others I had in my whole career. And it did more than this. It brought down on me not only the wrath of the patient's entire family but the maledictions of the doctors who for the first time denounced me openly and proclaimed me a quack.

I would gladly give back the money I had extorted from credulous women and men if I could go back to the day I made the fatal blunder of taking this case. It seems the one blot of disgrace I cannot erase. And when I think of it, instead of becoming as all my other mistakes, less distinct with the passing of time, it appears a luminous spot in my consciousness that ever condemns and a tangible, permanent reality that always upbraids. But whether we be quacks or true men we all acquire wisdom in pretty much the same way. Its lessons are learned at a price we think dear. But in the end when all is said and done we see that experience brings us a wealth of knowledge of life and men.

XV

The next morning after breakfast I went down to see my new patient. His mother let me in and I could see by her manner something had gone wrong. As I entered the sick room he greeted me coldly. Really I would have felt better if he hadn't said anything at all. He was surly, insolent and in the mood to fight. I was in no condition to "scrap." Besides neither mental or physical pugilism had any appeal for me.

"You're a nice one," he blurted out.

"Why what's wrong?" I asked quiet innocently.

"What's wrong?" he shouted. "The medicine you gave me. That's what's wrong."

"What seems to be the matter with it?" I asked hoping to pacify him.

"Sweet as treacle. That's what's the matter with it," he snarled.

"Oh! Is that all? I can change that all right."

Immediately I thought of what I had done. I had put too much saccharine in it. I took out my writing pad and quickly scribbled off another R.

"There that will be more pleasant to take," I said as I gave it to him.

He cast it rudely aside.

"If it doesn't take effect there'll be trouble between you and me."

"See here, young man, if you talk that way to me you'll have to get another doctor," I said, my own anger rising.

"You needn't get huffy. I can get huffy too," he retorted.

"I'm not huffy, but I don't like being dictated to by you. Now be sensible, reason a moment with me. You are a very sick boy. You'll admit that. The fact that you are lying in bed, have sweats and fever, proves it. It's up to me to get

you well. I can do it too, if you will only give me a chance. But if you oppose and contradict me there's only one thing for me to do, namely, to let you go to a better world."

"Satisfied to stay in this world a while," he said.

This reply told me my words had the desired effect. He wanted to live. He was anxious to get well and his mother and wife shared his wishes.

As the day went by he seemed to get somewhat better. His condition had improved to such an extent that his sister got married and the house was full of friends. This would have been most fortunate if his case had ended as I thought it would. But Fate had decreed that everything should happen contrary to my wishes. The fever and sweats continued. Suddenly it dawned upon me that the petulant, peevish boy who had tried my patience as no other patient, had florid phthisis or quick consumption. The thought had come to me like a flash of inspiration and it was now conviction.

But how could I tell him? True, I was only a quack. But charlatan that I was, I still had feelings. I had been lying so long that it came quite natural for me to speak untruths. But when I thought of his sister just married and the gloom this would cause her, I resolved to be true for once to my calling. I would be a merciful quack and spare her.

Six months later he fell asleep and I got the blame for it. But why should I care. I was a quack. A pretender to medical skill that I did not possess.

XVI

News of the mistake I had made spread fast. It was suprising how quickly it traveled. In less than a fortnight the whole town had heard of it. I was abused and condemned. Former friends who had given me the glad hand, avoided me. For a while it looked as though I had met my Waterloo. Patients dropped off and it seemed as though Ralston and myself would soon be reduced to our old level. Both of us were nearly frantic with fear. Neither of us knew just what to do to recover our former standing. And it incensed me beyond the power of words to tell when I thought I had brought all this trouble on myself because I had pity and goodnesse of heart. I discovered when it was too late that to play the role of quack one had to be heartless. It would never do to be merciful. Compassion led swiftly to one's undoing.

We now began to think of a new way of deceiving a gullible public. Our minds naturally drifted to Mrs. Grayson, the kindly woman who lived out on Lake View Terrace and who had given us a boost and start. No matter what people might say we could count on her being steadfast and loyal. We would have to enlist her services. She would rally to our defense. We would tell her of the wonderful operation we had done on her and once more we would climb the ladder of success and bask in the sunshine of popular favor.

It seemed a pleasant and easy avenue of escape from all the obloquy that had been heaped on us. We both felt it was our only way out of difficulty, so we decided to call upon her. We believed that she would be delighted to see us. But when we thought of what we had to tell her our courage failed us. What a disappointment it would be

to her! Besides she had already done so much for us we had no right to expect her to do anything more. It was possible too she had placed credence in the rumors afloat. When we thought of that despair came over us. Our financial condition was deplorable. We had lived extravagantly, travelled over the primrose path at night, squandered our money recklessly. We had been improvident to an extreme, giving little or no thought to the future and the possibility of want. Money had come to us easily and it passed as readily from us. Now we saw our folly. And we both swore that if we recovered our lost prestige and got on our feet once more we would be more careful. Ralston who was somewhat superstitious attributed our tribulations to a just Providence that rewards the good and punishes the wicked. But I could not see it that way.

To my way of thinking it was the natural sequence and logical outcome of our own recklessness. It was an experience that had come to us rich in many lessons. Perhaps if we hadn't received a temporary check and setback our methods of quackery might have gotten us into serious entanglements with the local police. What we feared most was the Board of Medical Examiners. That august body had their eyes on us. They were watching us from a close angle. In their employ were detectives who traveled about in the guise of patients. They had laid their traps for us but somehow Ralston and I managed to escape. We both seemed to possess the happy faculty of knowing when human bloodhounds were on our trail. And as soon as we discovered we were being pursued we beat a hasty retreat and lay low. We could truthfully say that no blood was on our hands. What we had done was mostly within the law. We had never gone further in rascality than demanding exorbitant fees, and tricking people into believing that we were wonderfully clever.

XVII

The next morning I met Ralston just as he was coming out of his house. We had a brief conference as to what was best to do. We were both of the same opinion. In Mrs. Grayson was the hope of us becoming once more successful charlatans. She was the first patient we had ever deceived. She had been an "easy mark". She had allowed herself to be hoodwinked so easily that Ralston and I laughed when we thought of it. Yet she was a woman of intelligence and managed with consummate skill the vast estate her husband had left her. It looked as though Ralston and I exerted hypnotic power over her. She accepted all we said as absolute truth. Seemingly it never occurred to her to question our bragging and boasting. When we had pronounced the simple papiloma that occupied a conspicuous place on her neck and caused her no end of embarrassment and untold worry a malignant growth, and used the word "cancer" in describing it, it had never occurred to her to consult another practitioner to verify our diagnosis. With the faith and confidence of a child she bowed her head submissively to our superior knowledge and submitted to the knife. Yet this insignificant wart she might have removed herself with the aid of a ten cent caustic pencil. It is little wonder that we looked to her as being our saving angel.

Financial embarrassment made us believe that walking was an ideal exercise. So with an easy stride and anxious heart we "hiked" on to Lake View Terrace. Mrs. Grayson received us cordially. Apparently she was overjoyed with our coming. Of course she was suprised and disappointed to hear that we were not doing well. She sympath-

ized with us. She warned us not to let rebuff discourage us, and then she gave us a wonderful promise that raised the worry from our hearts and brought us new hope and enthusiasm.

Since we had been so successful in curing her, why didn't we specialize on cancer? The suggestion seemed a good one. It struck both Ralston and myself as being so. The field was interesting with possibilities for research work and original discovery that no other branch of medicine afforded. We might find a cure that would bring us undying fame and unlimited wealth. As Mrs. Grayson outlined the plan by which she hoped to replenish our finances and give us greater prestige than heretofore we enjoyed, I kept my eyes on Ralston. In all my life I have never seen so many different emotions pass over anyone's face at one time. He was certainly worth studying. From a psychological standpoint he was extremely interesting.

"Gentlemen, follow my advice and give up general practice. It is too hard. Specialize. This is the age of speciality. Take up the treatment and cure of cancer, I myself am a living testimonial of your wonderful skill. What you have done for me you can do for others. But you must have a chance. You haven't had an opportunity or long before now you would have been rich and famous. I'm getting old and I feel as though I'd like to do a little good in this world. So I'm going to set both of you up in business. I'm going to open a sanitarium for you where all the patients in the country who have cancer may come and get cured."

She paused and looked first at Ralston and then at me.

"What a pity some one didn't take two clever men like you in hand years ago?"

This was almost more than we could stand.

It was difficult for us to keep from laughing outright.

"But I've always said you can't keep real ability down. There's an old saying that every dog has his day, and I'm going to see that you have yours."

"Mrs. Grayson we don't deserve it. Beside the opening of a sanitarium would cost considerable money," I said wishing to have her believe I was overwhelmed with her benevolence.

"What do I care what it costs? I have plenty of money. I might as well spend some of it in doing a little good."

"You are too kind. We can never repay you for all you have done."

"I have simply obeyed my better instincts. I am happy for having done so."

Mrs. Grayson described in detail the "Cancer Home" she proposed to build. It was to be a magnificent structure outclassing anything of the kind that had ever been thought of. Ralston and I were to live there. We were to take no outside patients. Our efforts were to be confined to our speciality. And anything we would need in the way of equipment or apparatus Mrs. Grayson's purse would supply.

Our star of prosperity had once more risen. Visions of wealth and popular esteem flitted across our mental horizon. All our worry had fled. As far as we were concerned, debts and debtors had no existence for us. Enemies were vanquished. Detractors were silenced. The reputation we had acquired through nobody's fault save our own, we would live down. This time a real opportunity to become proficient presented itself. We had played the game of quack and lost. Now we would be ethical. We would recover the good name we had thrown away. We would gather to-

gether the broken fragments of a conscience that had long guided us over the straight and narrow path.

XVIII

There's a saying that it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks. Ralston and I found out this was a truism. We had scarcely left Mrs. Grayson's than the force of fixed habits began to assert itself. We discovered it is easy to make resolutions, quite another thing to keep them. Our ideals were rather short lived. Into our consciousness had come thoughts and plans by which we might "fleece" unsuspecting women and men. "Once a quack, always a quack", can be laid down as an axiomatic truth. We were beyond conversion. Hardened sinners are not readily brought into the fold. We had been so long at the game of fraud and deception that it now became second nature. We couldn't do differently if we tried. So we both gave up in despair.

"Honestly, I feel ashamed to take a penny from that good woman," I said when we were outside.

"You didn't think that way when you charged her five hundred dollars to remove a harmless wart from her neck," replied Ralston.

"But I was a quack then. I wasn't supposed to have any feelings".

"You and I will always be quacks. We couldn't be anything else if we tried."

"What's the use of us specializing in cancer then?"

"What's the use? There's big money in it. That's what we want."

"We've been after it quite a while and have little enough to show."

"That's our own fault. We played the game wrong."

"It is time we played in right. From now on I intend to do the proper thing. I'm going to be on the square. Nothing crooked goes with me."

Ralston was watching me closely, a grin on his face. He was disgusted with the cant I was speaking. He knew I didn't mean a word I said. He had been as close to me as it is possible for one human being to another. He knew my weakness and my good points as well. He was aware that I was fickle and vacillating when the question was one of selecting the good. But I believed if I had not taken the down hill grade I would still be upright. And I knew he thought that I and he as well were headed for perdition.

Mrs. Grayson's "Cancer Home" instead of reforming us would lead us further into the mire, than all the cases we had treated while in general practice. There we could carry on the nefarious business of fooling people and robbing them as well and no one would be the wiser. The kind hearted, well meaning woman had unwittingly placed temptation in our way, and as both of us were miserably weak, it was a certainty we would fall.

When I thought of all this I was inclined to go back and tell her to consider well what she was about to do. The venture might prove a failure. There were many reasons why it would, and chief and foremost among them was the fact that Ralston and I were quacks. We were charlatans by nature and choice. We couldn't be anything else if we tried.

But Ralston only laughed when I told him my scruples. He said I would get over them. The ample fees we would soon be earning would efface our sense of right. I'm sorry to say his words proved prophetic. When I sit down and think over what I have done, I can't understand how I, who was so well trained in ethics, should lose every vestige of honor. It didn't take me long to shake off principle and depart from truth. It is surprising how quickly a man reaches the bottom once he

starts down the grade. And it rarely happens that he climbs up the hill again.

But I can offer an apology for the wrong I have done. All men do. It is human to seek justification and any unprejudiced and unbiased mind, looking over the arena of life, will detect flaws or defects that explain the dishonesty of the world. Many doctors live off the ignorance of people and thrive on their vices. To follow the healing art in a legitimate way is to be true to its ideals. Never to waver, to turn aside from the path of duty, to be conscientious under any and all circumstances is hard indeed and quite beyond the average man or woman's ability to adhere. And this explains why Ralston and I were quacks.

XIX

Ralston and I parted with visions of a glorious future before us. Our past was checkered. There was no question about that. The career that lay behind us would not make nice reading. It abounded in acts of dishonesty, selfishness and cruelty. We had good cause to be ashamed of it and to keep it hidden away. So the best thing we could do was to try and forget. But both of us knew this wouldn't be easy. We were familiar with the working of the mind. We knew the laws that regulated and curtailed it and guided and directed it over that vast field and range of thought where were exercised its strange and mysterious actions. Better still we were acquainted with the human heart. We were conscious of the wonderful power of love and the far reaching influence for good it exerted over women and men. The life of a quack had taught us much. It had brought us knowledge that should have made us ashamed of ourselves. And as I sat down in my office and thought of all this, the elation I had so shortly felt fled. My buoyancy left me and I suddenly found myself infinitely wretched. The old despairing mood that had filled my days with unrest and my nights with dread was on me. In vain I tried to shake it off. It was no use. It had come to stay. I would have to suffer. It was the good in me struggling for supremacy. The remnant of the real man in the throes of extinction gradually by a slow process of deterioration undergoing annihilation. I had experienced many times before. And each attack I seemed a kinder, better man. My whole life passed before me. Youth with all its hopes and dreams, ideals and ambition, disappointed middle age with blasted hopes and cherished desires shattered and scattered beyond any possibility of realization.

Weary and disgruntled I went to bed. Soon I fell asleep, but my sleep was fitful and disturbed. I awakened with a start. My telephone was ringing. I jumped out of bed and looked at the clock. It was half past two. I was wanted at "The Oriental", a rooming house. I hesitated about going. I had no patients there. But the man at the other end of the line pleaded that I come. He promised me fifteen dollars if I would go. Money was the bait he threw out and as I was a quack I bit at it. When I arrived at the place to which I had been called, I was escorted to the room where I would find a sick woman. But no lady ever occupied it. Instead a red headed fellow soundly asleep. When awakened he stoutly denied having sent for me. So I saw someone was playing tricks on me. It might be fun for them. No doubt they thought it a good joke, but it didn't appeal to me as being humorous at all. The proper place for me and everyone else at that hour in the morning was in bed. And after that I saw that it was.

XX

The next day, when I related the incident to Ralston, he laughed heartily.

"Better accuse me of doing it", he said.

"Don't worry. Won't be bothered that way when you make Mrs. Grayson's "Cancer Home" your residence.

"Do you think the home is a realty or a dream?" I asked.

"It's the most real thing that ever was. That woman has money and she's an enthusiast. She's so set on going into this venture that we could not dissuade her if we tried."

"I'm not going to try."

"It looks a good thing for both of us."

"It's the most fortunate thing that could ever happen."

"That's what I said when Mrs. Grayson told us her plan."

"If we only make good and cure the patients."

Ralston, for once, we must. We are to quit faking. This time we are to be on the level and square. We owe it to Mrs. Grayson. Besides I'm sick and tired of fooling people. There's no satisfaction in playing the game that way. We are to reform. We've done enough mischief as it is."

"You said that before and did not keep your word."

"I know. But this time you shall see. Let's say no more about it."

"Very well."

"If you have no appointments or pressing engagements, I want you to go with me to a case."

"I have nothing at all on hand, so I am free."

The case I had on hand was a mental one. The previous evening a lady phoned to me asking me

to come and see her father. He was very wealthy and imagined he was poor. Here was the chance Ralston and myself had long wished for. This would be an opportunity to replenish our depleted finances. A little clever lying on our part would convince him of the wisdom of parting with some of his gold. And our ability as quacks would be proven in the success we had in persuading him he was ill and in need of our skillful treatment. When I think of how we fleeced this dear old man, I feel as though I should blush with shame. But blushing doesn't come easy to one hardened as I was. And while Ralston and I bled him unmercifully we attended regularly his church and testified at prayer meetings what the Lord had done for us. If ever a pair of conscientious crooks lived, Ralston and I were.

"Our patient has rats in the garret and we must see that he keeps them there. We are to make a big bluff that we are driving them out and we are to see that we are well paid for our services. The money is the thing we are after and we usually get it."

Ralston laughed, but he made no comment on what I said. It was evident it had struck him as being ludicrous and true.

"But it won't do to go about it in a haphazard fashion. We learned that from experience. We've got to be careful what we say and do. The first thing we have to do is to win the confidence of his daughter. This accomplished it will be an easy thing to handle her father."

"How much is he worth?" asked Ralston now thoroughly interested.

"Some say nearly a million. But I think that is a gross exaggeration. There is no doubt that he is comfortable and that we will receive a handsome fee."

"We were born under a lucky star," said Ralston.

"I'm beginning to think that myself.

"What if we are found out? We've had enough notoriety as it is."

"We have Mrs. Grayson as usual to fall back on. There's the "Cancer Home" in which we may take refuge."

"Has it never occurred to you that that good woman like the rest of the community may discover that we are a pair of quacks?" asked Ralston quite earnestly.

"I have thought of it very often."

"If she ever finds out the kind of ginks we are, we'd better take to the woods. Believe me, if she ever discovers we've been fooling her we'll make a lively get away."

"But she won't. She'll never mistrust us. Say here's the place."

"Some home all right," observed Ralston looking the house over.

I opened the gate and assuming a dignified, professional air marched boldly up the steps.

A servant let us in and escorted us to the sitting room. We were told we would not have to wait long, as Miss Rawlins expected us. Ralston and I had a whispered conference as to what the best method of procedure the moment she came in, and both agreed that an innocent manner and a sanctimonious air were most becoming. Miss Rawlins was an enthusiastic church member and if we were to play our cards well we must pose as Christian Gentlemen. It would be easy for us to do that as we possessed the faculty of readily adapting ourselves to different environments. We had acted the role of hypocrite so long that we were quite proficient at it.

Presently the door opened and Miss Rawlins entered. She was stylishly dressed and looked the

picture of health and beauty as she sat down. She was quite at ease and spoke affably to us.

"My father is resting on the sofa upstairs, so we can have a private talk about his condition down here. I think I told you most of the facts over the telephone. Perhaps I forgot some details I can now supply. But first of all, tell me if you can cure my father."

"Sure, we can," replied Ralston and I. It was easy and natural for us to lie. We had been at it so long it had become second nature.

"I heard you were wonderful Doctors," she said.

To my humiliation Ralston laughed and I gave him a sharp kick in the chins.

"We've effected some remarkable cures. I dare say we will find your father's case no different from the rest, although the nature of this malady presupposes a long treatment." I said this with thoughts of the ample fees we were about to extort from him passing through my mind.

"I don't care how long it takes or what it costs so long as my father is cured."

"That's a sensible way to look at it. A doctor, no matter how clever he may be, cannot cure you in a day. It takes time. The trouble with many people is they haven't the patience. They want to get well right away. After years of abuse they expect us to build them all over again in a day."

"You won't find my father that kind of a man, even though his mind is a little wrong. He's willing to give everything a fair trial. But when he's given a thing a test and there are no results, then look out. He's not particular about the kind of language he uses and doesn't care very much what he does."

Cold shivers run up and down my spine. There was no enemy as bad as a demented one. His capaci-

ty to do wrong was always unlimited and his desire for vengeance was intense.

"I know your father will be hugely pleased with what we do for him. If we thought we couldn't help him we would never have taken this case."

"I'm sure you wouldn't."

"It may take some little time to win his confidence, but that once secured it will all be easy sailing for us."

"How glad I am to hear you say that! I've tried so many practitioners with such poor results I was in great despair. It was fortunate I heard of you."

"And it gives us great satisfaction to know you have faith in us."

"Anyone would have faith in you."

Again Ralston laughed and once more I rewarded him with a kick in the shins, a little stronger than before.

"But we are wasting time discussing matters that have no bearing on my father", said Miss Rawlins, rising. "Just a moment and I will bring my father in."

When she was gone I turned angrily on Ralston.

"Have you no sense?" I asked.

"Have you no honor?" he retorted.

"I can see nothing comic in being betrayed."

"Who's betrayed you?" he demanded.

"It looks as though you were set on doing so. This is the chance of our life and it appears that you don't appreciate it."

Miss Rawlins returned leading her father by the hand.

"Father, here are the doctors!" she exclaimed.

"The doctors! Where?" he said, passing his hand across his brow. He had the wild stare of the paranoic and moved as though it cost him a great effort.

"Mr. Rawlins, we are here to cure you," I said.

"Cure me! I'm all right."

"And we are going to do it in double quick time."

"I have no money to pay you."

"He thinks he is poor. That's his main delusion," explained his daughter.

"No hallucinations of grandeur. Plainly not a case of parçsis. He can be cured easily."

"If I could only believe it were true!"

"You'll see how true it is if you'll give us a chance to cure him."

"I want you to begin treatment at once. I suppose your fees will be rather high."

"Somewhat. We are very busy. Our services are in demand everywhere. We'll have to refuse many other desirable cases to attend your father. But our fees will be nominal. We don't believe in being exorbitant. We'll take your father's case and guarantee to cure him for a thousand dollars."

"Your terms are agreeable to me, but, of course, they won't be to my father, as he insists he's poor," said Miss Rawlins. She rose and walked to the desk. Sitting down she wrote out the check.

"Another victim of our damnable deceit," exclaimed Ralston when we reached the street.

As Ralston and I walked away from the house where we had victimized a credulous, unsuspecting woman, we felt ashamed. We were not so hardened that now and then the softer, finer emotions did not assert themselves and proclaim their right to rule. In common with all men who lived off the fear and ignorance of their fellows, there were moments when shame and remorse were unpleasant companions. And the money we obtained, instead of giving us, as we foolishly supposed it would, peace and a sense of security, brought us nothing but unrest. We had already been exposed. We had lost our prestige. Most of our patients had drifted away from us, and in the midst of all this perplexity we had gone and committed our old crime over again and exposed ourselves to further tribulation. It looked as though we were making a desperate effort to bring speedy ruin on ourselves.

What would Mrs. Grayson say if she knew our rascality? And we lived in the constant fear that she would find it out. What would she do if she discovered the sort of game we were playing? It's safe to say she wouldn't open a Cancer Home and place us in charge. When I thought of it I concluded we had gone far enough. It is time we halted. We would turn the trick once too often. An angry victim would seek retribution.

Arriving at my home I bid Ralston good-bye promising to keep in close touch with him. On my desk was a note from Mrs. Grayson. She had dropped in to confer with me about the home. She had rented the Goddard house, a magnificent place in an aristocratic section of the city. I knew the location quite well. It was ideal. The surroundings, the setting, everything associated with the old, unoccupied mansion appealed to me and pleased me greatly. And I knew Ralston would feel equally as elated when told of our good fortune.

As I sat down and thought of what the good woman was doing for us and how little we deserved from her or anyone else, great remorse came over me. If the two of us had our just deserts, we wouldn't be going around fooling people and extorting money from them. We'd be doing time like other crooks and criminals. We had been lucky to escape detection and capture. That was because we kept within the law and confined our efforts to money getting. Pondering on this made me resolve to once more be straight. It was never too late to mend. We had not gone so far in wrong doing that we could not reform. Here was our chance, the opportunity that comes to everyone to take the right road. The Cancer Home would shelter us from the storm of public wrath and indignation so soon to break. There in peace and security we could do our work. Our mistakes and deliberate, willful betrayal of faith would be forgotten. We could make amends for the wrong we had done.

Ralston and I had resolved to do this once before. But we found we were miserably weak in the presence of temptation. Old habits of dishonesty had fastened a chain around us that linked us with wrong doing. And it seemed as though there was no hope for us, no way out of the labyrinth of lying and stealing in which we were lost.

I looked around my office and thought of the long years of bitter struggle I had with adverse circumstances. I would gladly live those days over. I would go through it all again, experience its heartaches and disappointments in preference to the unrest of soul I had known since I became a quack. But I could not go back. I could undo nothing I had done. There was one sensible thing for me to do and that was to place the past and its mistakes behind me. It was rich in lessons. It contained all the warnings of a long and varied experience with

my fellow men in the closest and most delicate relations of Life, and if I now went on in the same old way, there was only one inference to be drawn—I was a hopeless case, an absolute incorrigible.

XXII

Ralston and I were now installed in the Goddard place. In haste we had gathered together all our belongings and with the least possible ceremony had departed from our respective homes and taken up a permanent residence in new and palatial quarters. Our abode was exquisite. We had everything the most fastidious could crave. Mrs. Grayson had spared no money to have the Hospital equipped in the latest and most splendid style.

The house was ideally constructed for such purposes. While the architecture was a little obsolete everything had been planned with a thought as to convenience. On the first floor was the reception hall, the office, waiting room and wards. Above, the operating room, private rooms for patients, billiard and smoking rooms and library. All of the apartments were gorgeously furnished.

As Ralston and I walked from room to room examining in detail the elegance of the furnishings a consciousness of unworthiness came to us. What right had two unprincipled quacks to all this? It seemed as though the very walls and floors must cry out and condemn us.

We had reached the turning point in our career. Further travel over the road would lead us to a precipice. We must turn back. There was no alternative. We would have to retrace our steps to where we departed from accepted standards of right, and cast aside ideals that had been an inspiration and a guide.

It was easy for us to think of doing all this, but experience had taught us it was hard—so very difficult neither of us even dared hope it would come true. Early in our career as quacks we had

learned that habits become servitudes. We had been dishonest so long it was utterly impossible for us to be honest. But a new environment with everything associated with it calculated to inspire ethical ideals might break these fixed habits of conduct. With that hope to sustain us we had begun the life of specialists and hospital surgeons. What a splendid opportunity to redeem ourselves! What a glorious chance to recover our good name! But it seemed as though our self respect was gone. We mistrusted ourselves. We felt we were weak. We knew we meant to do what was right. But so many obstacles stood in our way! At the very start we saw our journey over the straight and narrow path hindered and blocked. Jealous professional rivals were watching us. Now that a streak of good luck had come to us they would be more than anxious to malign us. Some of them, no doubt, would call on us and offer us the hand of friendship. Others would spurn our acquaintance and hold themselves above us in a certain haughty aloofness. We expected none of them to treat us courteously. And we were prepared for many to be openly vindictive and courageously antagonistic. We were aware that it wouldn't be all pleasant sailing. Storms would be encountered, perhaps quite early too. So we decided to prepare for trouble and devise the best means of combating it.

Ralston agreed with me that the wisest and safest plan was to do nothing wrong. With a clean slate we had nothing to fear. Men might say all manner of evil of us, but if their charges had no foundations they would not last. So we both agreed to turn over a new leaf and begin anew. With this end in view we bought many new medical books—latest editions of standard authors, and familiarize ourselves with the use of surgical instruments and studied the technique of operations. We were earnest in the matter. We meant well,

and both of us predicted we could keep the good resolutions we had made.

But we hadn't been in our new quarters very long when we discovered that we were beset with many temptations we didn't think existed. The passion of avarice that we had nourished and fostered with such care, we found difficult to shake. We were just as thirsty for dollars as ever and not a bit more scrupulous how we got them. However we soon learned that we had to play the game of quacks in Mrs. Grayson's Cancer Home altogether differently from the way we did in years gone by. In the first place most of the patients admitted to the place were highly intelligent and had received treatment before coming to us. Their trouble had been correctly diagnosed. Hence we could not fool them into believing they had complaints they didn't. Our chance of extorting money from them was limited to charging exorbitant fees and keeping them in the hospital as long as possible. This was to be sure a modified form of thievery, a more dignified way of practicing deception.

But what did we care as long as we got the dollars? Big and easy money is what we wanted, and we got it. We received it more easily with half the effort than when we pursued our calling in a private way and with much less strain.

Mrs. Grayson visited us almost daily and encouraged and helped us in every conceivable way. I cannot imagine how any woman could have done more for two struggling doctors. And when I sit down quietly by myself and think of her beneficence and remember how I deceived her, my conscience troubles me. I wonder if she'll ever read these "Confessions". If she does, she'll see I'm very sorry for what I have done, and that the committing of them to paper was a penance imposed upon myself. It takes patience and labor to write out a narrative like this and I must say at times it seem-

ed an irksome task. But I felt when it was finished and the publisher gave it to a reading public, if it happened to fall into the hands of the good woman who was my protectress and saving angel, it would be the best tribute I could offer her of my gratitude and love.

III XX

Ralston and I were studying hard. Since assuming management of the "Home" we were reading early and late. Mrs. Grayson took great pride in the library. As books were her hobby she had succeeded in making a wonderful collection of them. We had at our command the latest works of the greatest medical writers. And I can truthfully say Ralston and I took advantage of this opportunity to amass much knowledge. And it wasn't that we just memorized facts. We applied, or at least tried to, what we read in the treatment of our cases. True we were quacks when it came to asking and demanding money, but in our treatment we were careful and painstaking. Both of us had become proficient in a surprisingly short time in all the branches of medicine. We had acquired dexterity and skill in addition to possessing knowledge and were bold and daring operators. It was natural that our success should make us known widely and greatly talked about. And those who recommended us were people of wealth and influence. We found ourselves rich, famous and popular and passing as very upright and honorable. Patients told how conscientious we were when neither of us had the slightest conception of the meaning of that word. It was said that we possessed kindness and goodness of heart when, as a matter of fact, we were heartless and merciless, having pity and sympathy for no one. Our ruling passion was avarice. We were so greedy that there was no lie we would not tell to gain our ends. I shudder when I think of the change that took place in our character. It makes me sick at heart when I ponder on it. And I often wish I had never met Mrs. Grayson and been the recipient of her generosity.

Infinitely better to have been a poor, obscure practitioner. What does success amount to if bought at such a price. With these things in mind I remember one morning walking into the "Doctor's Room" and finding Raiston in one of his "moods." This was a frame of mind my colleague fell into when he became extremely pessimistic and took a most gloomy view of life.

"Are you happy?" I asked.

"Lord, no!" he exclaimed.

"Haven't you everything this world can give to make you so?"

"Positively I haven't."

"You have success."

"What of it?"

"That seems to be what everybody is after."

"It's little peace of mind success has brought us."

"We're comfortable. There are people worse off."

"Very true. But these people you refer to are not quacks."

"I laughed. Raiston's tongue was sharp. He always had a come back.

"A man can commit a greater crime than that of being a quack," I said apologetically.

"There I can't agree with you. The calling of a charlatan is the worst a human being could select. Bear with me a minute and I will prove it. In that undignified position you take advantage of the greatest evils that afflict human race, namely fear and ignorance. And you don't stop here. You go further. You lie and lose all conception of the truth. You acquire a passion of avarice inconceivable to the man who leads an ethical life. True you pile up riches. But after you step beyond the boundary line where caution ceases and recklessness begins, you do something that you are sorry for the balance of your life."

"Are you speaking from experience?" I asked.

"I am. If what we have done were known we wouldn't be here in this "Cancer Home" taking advantage of people's credulity and feathering our nests, we'd be on the rock pile in the quarry or the Jute Mills, where we could think it over. I don't believe we'd be on the gallows, because we drew the line at murder. But we could give the fellow who sells spurious oil and mining stocks a few points all right. They are a bit tame at the game. But we, Lord save us, we copped everything in sight—grabbed everything we could put our fingers on."

"There are many others just as bad."

"Is this the excuse you plead? Is that your justification?"

"Yes."

"It seems to me a poor way of dodging responsibility. Ever since the day I began to quack I've been haunted by fear. Until then I was brave as a lion, you know I was. That's because I had a clear conscience."

"A clear conscience, but many debts," I interposed.

Ralston smiled. "Give me the debts every time. In those days I could truthfully say I had never harmed a human being in all my life. That's more than I can say now. When I think of what I have done I'm almost beside myself with rage, and I have you to thank for it. It was you who first came to me and talked me into it. Until then I had never done a mean or underhand thing. I would have spurned the calling of medical fakir. And here you came along and lead me into something that is against my grain and principle. Aren't you ashamed when you think of it?"

"I don't feel a particle of remorse and have no regrets."

This was more than Ralston could stand. He

was getting real angry. He rose and walked over to the window and looked out. For a few minutes he stood still. Then he turned around and glared at me.

"I sometimes think a curse came on me the day I first met you," he said savagely as he turned and walked out.

XXIV

This outburst of Ralston didn't worry me in the least. I had grown quite used to it. It enhanced his value in my eyes. He had increased greatly in my estimation because of it. It proved he was a fine man with a conscience that all my roguery had never killed. Regularly he had these moods. When he came out of them he seemed none the worse and was once more the affable fellow that made me select him as my pal and confrere in the art of quackery.

Free from these qualms of conscience he plunged into the affairs of the hospital with enthusiasm. It pleased and amused me to see the interest he took in things. Nothing that happened in the home down to the most trivial event escaped his observation. Really it was truly wonderful how observant he was. And it surprised me greatly when I discovered that he was just as familiar with the details of all that was transpiring when weighty matters occupied his mind as when moments of leisure caused him weariness.

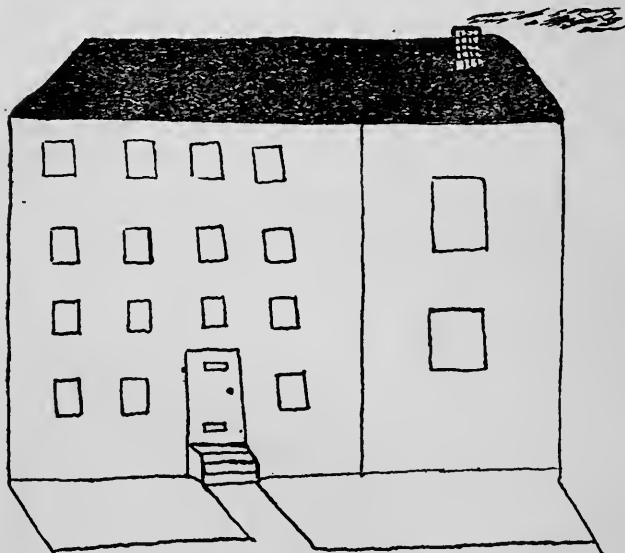
As I sit here writing this strange autobiography in which he figures so largely and plays such an important part, it seems as though he is right near me. His presence is a tangible reality although years have passed since we drifted apart. When I think of how true he was to me in all I said and did, much of which was intrinsically wrong, and as I recall how loyal and steadfast he was in his friendship when many things in that intimacy were essentially bad, I cannot help from thinking that his kind is rare in this world of infidelity of affection and betrayal of confidence. That is why I am here telling his life story as well as mine, and it is also the reason why I am not holding him up to the execration I deserve, but pointing out to you

the virtues he possessed despite he was a quack, and which I would have you emulate. Ralston was as noble as he looked. It was I who made a charlatan of him. That is some thing I can never forget. It is a crime I cannot forgive. He was struggling hard, eking out an existence when I came along and by praise and cajolery enticed him into the remunerative business of Medical fakir, all of which I have told before. But it bears repeating because it contains a lesson. It proves how a good man can be influenced by a rogue and it also teaches that we readily acquire the ways and take on the habits of those with whom we closely associate, although by nature we are made of finer clay and molded for a higher purpose.

Whatever wrong Ralston did I was to blame for it. On my shoulders, not on his, should be placed the responsibility of guilt. I made him what he was. I taught him to lie and it was from me he learned all the arts that are linked with the ignoble profession of quack.

When I think of my checkered career blackened by dishonesty and lying and reflect that it was I who first suggested to Ralston that the life of a charlatan was an easy and pleasant road to money getting, I feel as though I committed too great a crime for pardon. But I must say both to his credit and mine that we tried to make amends. A large portion of the money we so fraudulently acquired we gave away. Our charities were abundant. Many a helpless cripple, widow and orphan were beneficiaries. Women have shed tears of gratitude as we in a quiet and unobtrusive way helped to keep the wolf from their door. And we sought no recognition for this beneficence. We looked for no recompense. True it seemed like robbing Peter to pay Paul, to use an old and familiar comparison. But it was a healing balm to our wounded conscience.

Our religious friends tell us there is to be a Judgment Day. According to their belief it is then that all the graft and wickedness of sinful fallen man will be made known. How will Ralston and I be able to face the victims we so mercilessly trimmed? What justification can we offer for our misdeeds? The weak argument all wrong-doers will offer, I suppose. And how ridiculous and absurd will our small effort at atonement appear. Like millions of others who have done wrong our sins will condemn us. When I think of what we must face courage fails me. I find myself wishing the rocks and mountains would hide me and I unceasingly curse the day I became a quack.



The Cancer Home

XXV

At Mrs. Grayson's "Cancer Home" time passed quickly. We were busy. There was never a moment to waste. And Balston and I having little opportunity for reflection were happy. I daresay we were as contented a pair of rogues as could be found. The mornings we put in doing operations. As all kinds of surgical cases were admitted to the Hospital, we had a splendid chance to perfect ourselves in the art of "butchery". The ignorance and credulity of mankind is astounding. I knew this from the time I began to study and observe. But my ideas were somewhat vague and hazy until I became a quack. I then saw that ignorance caused two thirds of the misery of the world. It was this, the worst of human evils that permitted a false economic system to exist. Long before I became a quack, in my poor and obscure days when I was a legitimate practitioner I perceived that those who did the most of the hard work of the world received but a fraction of wealth they produced. This was so self-evident that it required no effort on my part to detect it. Naturally my heart went out to those who worked for a living. My sympathy was keen for them. In those days I could no more think of telling an untruth to one of these than I could of stealing, killing or doing any other crime. But what a change came over me when I shook off the yoke and harness of right doing, jumped over the traces and cast all moral restraint to the wind! I blush with shame as I think of it. No sooner had I shaken off righteousness and turned away from rectitude than I lost all compassion and sympathy for those who so shortly had been my friends. I would as soon lie to a working man as I would to a millionaire. I would deceive a poor widow as quickly as I would a society matron. I would rob

an orphan with no more compunction than I would a bank president.

As I ponder on it the conviction forces itself on me that in becoming a quack I departed from all virtue and goodness. I sowed the seeds of moral deterioration that sprung up and produced a crop of evils that brought about disintegration of my character.

One Sunday, as I sat in the office with these gnawing thoughts disturbing me, two men came in. They asked me if I could be so good as to make an outside call. It wasn't far, just a few blocks away. However I was averse to going. I was in a contemplative mood and wished to be left alone. But Ralston had gone for a walk and I knew of no other doctor I would care to send. So after much prevarication in which art I was most adept, I promised to go.

My visitors were old. Neither of them looked prosperous. But as I was now independent and it was high time I was becoming charitable, I didn't mind it a bit. Arriving at the address they had given me, the entrance was guarded by a dog who crouched in the door way with his nose nestling between his paws. He seemed to resent my coming as an intrusion, growling as I ascended the steps.

For a moment I was all at sea as to what was best to do. He looked vicious. And it was apparent he was a watch dog placed at the door to keep strangers away. It occurred to me that I should try on Mr. Dog the tactics I had so effectively used on human beings. I had a vast experience in dealing with men and women, little or none with animals. Perhaps they were as susceptible to flattery as the victims Ralston and I had fleeced. I would see. "Nice little dog, you wouldn't bite me", I said, patting him on the head. My words acted like magic. Immediately he wagged his tail. Assured he meant me no harm, I entered and climbed the

long, narrow stairway that led to the sick man's room. There the two gentlemen who had come after me awaited my arrival. On the bed lay the patient, a little wizened old man of eighty-five. He was emaciated and looked bad. He was dirty and unshaven. He had a swelling on the right side of his neck. I examined it and found it was very sensitive. As I was a cancer specialist it was the most natural thing in the world for me to declare it a malignant growth. But for once in my career as quack I would not lie. So I said it was abscess, prescribed flax seed poultice and sat down. You don't know how happy I felt after all the years of lying I could tell the truth. That was something to be proud of. I had despaired of ever being able to do that again. As I thought of it I became conscious of new strength. I was aware too that the essence of good was still within me. I could refrain from lying if I tried. I was able to throw off the mask of hypocrisy I wore. Once more I might practice the healing art in an upright way.

While these thoughts were flitting through my brain a little man, evidently a friend of my patient, sat directly opposite me. He watched me closely. He noticed every move I made and hung on every word I said. And right then I concluded he had passed judgment in me and declared me a fakir. But I misjudged him, as subsequent events amply proved. Instead of questioning my honesty, he was admiring the way I had of doing and saying things.

"Doctor, don't you remember me?" he asked.

"You're a little man I've known by sight for years."

"I used to work in stables. But I don't any more. I'm too old—sixty-nine. I just walk around to pass away the time."

"Where were you born?" I asked.

"In East London. I've been around the world

several times. There's nothing like travel, believe me. It broadens a man and gives him knowledge he never can acquire from books."

"I quite agree with you, although I have never traveled much. I've been so busy these years, I haven't had time."

"But think of all the good you have done."

Lord! If he only knew the kind of game I played!

"There's just as much joy in that as there is in being able to run about."

"I dare say there is."

"May be if you had been a dishonest doctor like some I know, perhaps you might have been able to take it easy and see some of the world."

"Perhaps."

I could not look him in the face. I had to evade his eyes. I knew he was a good judge of character. All men are who travel. May be a look or a word would betray me and he would discover what a fraud I was. By his own admission he had come in contact with dishonest doctors. I presume some of them were like me. I felt uneasy and wished I had never began a conversation with him. I longed to be back at the "Cancer Home", where Ralston and I could sit down and talk with perfect understanding and freedom. We were two of a kind. We had an intimate acquaintance and knew each other's good qualities and bad traits as well. All our secrets we shared in common. Neither of us had anything to conceal. But I felt quite differently in the presence of this little man.

"Sometime, if you don't mind, I'm coming over to see your "Cancer Home", he said, after a thoughtful silence.

"Do, by all means. I shall be glad to show you about the place."

Immediately I had fallen into my old lying hab-

its. I no more wanted him to pay me a visit than I wished to be a quack. What I desired most was a long conference with Ralston, where I could point out to him the necessity and advisability of us turning over a new leaf. To my way of thinking it was time we reformed. We had gone far enough in wrong doing. We were already on dangerous ground. A misstep might lead to certain ruin.

"I won't forget how kind and attentive you've been to this man. If I ever get sick you'll be the first doctor I'll send for."

There was only one way for me to answer this compliment. I thanked him most heartily for the confidence he had in me and promised if the occasion ever arose when he needed my services, I would treat him to the best of my ability.

XXVI

I was glad to get away from that old rooming house and back to Mrs. Grayson's "Cancer Home". The first thing I did on arriving there was to look up Ralston. I found him in the library pouring over a book on surgery. I invited him into the office where we had a long and serious conference.

"I'm going to reform," I said.

Ralston laughed.

"That isn't the first lie you've ever told. You've been getting this reform gag off ever since we became quacks", he replied.

"But this time you will see. Everything in this world has an end. And that applies to the game we have been playing. Say, I've just come from a visit across the way, where, for the first time in years, I was on the square. And I'm so happy I don't know what to do. I tell you it pays to do what is right. But it took me a long time to find it out."

"You old hypocrite! How can you sit there and say what you know is untrue "

"Are you really not to be convinced?"

"Not until I have more proof than your word for it."

"Very well. When I make my visit tomorrow I want you to accompany me."

"It's a go."

"I've been thinking of taking this step for a long time. We don't have to be dishonest any more. We're both well fixed. There's no need of us being quacks any longer."

"Once a quack always a quack."

"I don't believe it. A man can go a long way in wrong doing, call it quits and do what is right. I'm going to prove he can. Ralston, let's try it.

It's never too late to mend. We can redeem ourselves, recover our good name and with a clean slate begin where we left off years ago. Are you with me or not?"

"With you, of course. But we'll both prove unequal to the task."

"No, we won't. We'll find it as easy to do right and far more pleasant than to do wrong. Since we've been quacks we've not had a moment's peace."

"There I agree with you."

"Excuse me, Ralston, there's some one at the door," The bell had rung and as usual my colleague had not heard it. My hearing was fine. Without bragging and waiving all claim to conceit, I think I could truthfully say that I was able to distinguish sounds as few men can.

"Remember what I told you. Today marks the beginning of a new life for both of us," I said rising and going to the door.

My visitor was a colored boy. One glance was sufficient for me to understand that he was in great distress. He was scared and anxious looking. He could not speak above a whisper.

"Doctor, can you come down right away? My sister has taken a bad turn."

I grabbed my hat and pulled on my overcoat. Only yesterday I had been down to see her. She was a beautiful girl of eighteen, had graduated with honors from the High School and had just begun her studies in the Normal School when she fell a victim to the white plague. She had florid phthisis or quick consumption. Her case was hopeless, but, as I was still a quack, I had lied and told her folks she would get well. Her father was an old woodchopper and spent much of his time away from home. I will never forget what a pathetic picture he made as he stood before me and appealed to me to do something for his girl. I

felt wholly justified in telling him an untruth. It would have been cruel for me to have told him his daughter was so soon to be taken from him. Arriving at his home I found my patient lying in a pool of blood on the floor. A hemorrhage from the lungs had made further visits on my part unnecessary. That sad scene has never faded from my memory. It stands out distinctly among the pictures that haunt my waking objective consciousness and even my subjective mind reproduces it in dreams. I will always see that beautiful girl who had childlike faith and trust in me, and I regret exceedingly that I was so helpless to prevent the breaking the thread of her life.

XXVII

Early the next morning we had a call up the valley. This filled us with joy. The thought of taking a drive over the mountains in a first rate touring car was most pleasant. At last a chance would be given us to try out the the splendid machine Mrs. Grayson had given us.

We both felt the need of recreation. A little diversion such as the present journey promised us would go a long way in removing the unrest that had tortured us since assuming occupancy of the "Cancer Home." We were quacks but we were wonderfully susceptible to the beauties of nature. We were appreciative of all the grandeur and beauty of mountain and valley, plain and prairie.

The road we were to take passed the "Home" and wound like a serpent way beyond. We had started early. It was not seven o'clock, as we looked back at the place where we had passed so many restless days. Soon a bend in the road would hide it from view, and we'd forget all the acts of dishonesty we had done behind its walls. Every untruth we had uttered, the many mean and underhanded things we had planned to accomplish we would cover with oblivion. We would recall nothing ignoble or tricky. We would think only of the good we intended to do.

Ralston drove the car slowly. It was my request that he do so. It was a new route for us. We had never been that way before, although we had often heard of the wonders and beauties encountered on the journey.

There was another reason why I wanted to make the trip by easy stages. Our patient was in no immediate danger and could safely await our leisurely coming. I had much to say to Ralston. He

and I had come to some sort of understanding, and there was no more opportune time to do so than the present. Away from the distractions of the hospital I could think well and talk convincingly. I felt when we returned we would have a better knowledge of each other and of this I was sure, namely that we had turned away forever from all that was dishonorable and returned to those ideals that had been our hope and inspiration when we were poor and obscure.

"What a relief to get away from the "Home!" I said.

"Yes, indeed. A trip like this makes one feel as though life is worth living," he replied.

"These are some of the joys of the rural practitioner," I remarked.

"Joys not to be despised," he retorted.

"Ralston, I've often thought that there is the follower of the healing art who gets the most out of life. It is a struggle to get on the city. You and I found that out years ago. It is probable we would have starved if we hadn't become quacks."

"I have no doubts about it."

"And now that success has come to us, what has it brought us?"

"Nothing, but regrets."

"There you are. Don't you see a man cannot do wrong and escape the penalty? I tell you it is the law that holds good everywhere."

"I have always believed that way."

"You have!"

"Yes."

"Then why didn't you thrash me the day I came to you and asked you to become a quack?"

"That's what I should have done."

"It would have saved me many a headache."

"Me, too."

"Here's a promise I'll make you in good faith. If you don't quit quacking you'll be licked. You

can go fooling the public just so long and then you'll find out if you know what's good for you, you'll stop or, what's better still, take to the woods."

"What we're doing just now."

"Yes. But we're going back."

"Not until we've ceased to be quacks."

"Then you are in earnest about reforming."

"I want to turn over a new leaf from now on."

"It makes me feel ten years younger to hear you say that."

One look at Ralston was sufficient to convince me that he meant just what he said. He was disgusted with the life he was leading. Like me, he longed to get away from it. He wished to be free. The rest of the trip we made in silence. Our eyes wanderd over the valley and mountain. Here was the cancer patient we had come to see.

"This way, Doctor," said an old man, opening the gate.

We drove in. Way behind the orchard was the house painted white with red roof and green shutters as contrast in coloring. Here was peace and life in the primitive. How gladly I would have exchanged places with the man who had opened the gate and let us in! Serenity of conscience was written on his face. Better off by far than either of us was he.

Our patient proved to be a lady of eighty six, suffering with cancer. Her case was beyond any cure. All we could do was to leave some morphia tablets to relieve her pain. This done we demonstrated to our satisfaction that we were still quacks by asking an exorbitant fee, accepting our pay with many thanks and promising to come again, if our services were wanted. We were escorted into the dining room where we were given a splendid supper.

The hospitality of country people is remarkable. This wasn't the first time I had seen it. I had known it since a boy. At the table I maintained a dignified silence much to the annoyance of Ralston. The conversation centered around livestock and kindred subjects and as I was not well versed in those branches I decided the best way to hide my ignorance was to look wise and keep still.

XXVIII

The next day as I sat in the office of the "Home", cogitating on the past, present and future and bewailing the fact I was still a quack, I heard a loud knock at the door. Rising and opening it I found a mild mannered, soft spoken Portuguese gentleman awaiting me.

"Mr. Doctor you come right over and see my wife?" he asked.

"I'll go", I replied. But I hesitated a minute thinking.

"What seems to be the trouble with her?" I queried.

"Stomach", he answered.

"What do you feed her on?"

"Poor man's diet."

"That seems rather indefinite to me. Poor man's diet might mean many things with high cost of living. So I decided to wait until I saw the good woman herself and I would then ask her just what she did eat.

It was quite a walk over to his house, but I didn't mind it in the least. His home was a neat little cottage that stood well back from the street. At the gate an old lady awaited us. I was told she was the next door neighbor and advised to be careful what I said, as she was a regular gossip.

"Come right in, Doctor. Tony, get the gentleman a chair," she said smiling at me and frowning on the man whose wife was ill. Immediately I saw she was well meaning but officious. But I would cater to her somewhat to have her good will and keep in check her unruly tongue.

"Bring me the patient," I said authoritatively. The old lady went into the kitchen. Presently she returned leading a very fat and sickly woman.

"This is my wife. She's been sick a long time. Can't eat, sleep nor work."

He walked out.

"Darling, get the Doctor the medicine bottle." The fat lady tottered back into the kitchen. This was the old woman's chance to indulge in a little, harmless gossip.

"She's a regular pig, doctor. She eats and eats and is still hungry and wants more."

"It's plainly a case of indigestion," I said.

"That's what I've been telling her right along. She's a glutton." She put out her tongue and made a face at her.

The sick woman came in with a half empty bottle of medicine.

"Did you find the medicine, darling?" she asked in tender sympathetic tones.

I could scarcely control myself. Such a two faced creature I had not seen in many a day. I sat down near my patient and began to speak softly to her. As is customary with quacks I did my best to impress her with my knowledge and skill. I talked fluently and entertainingly of many things. I interpreted all her symptoms and made it clear to her that I understood them and could quickly relieve them. I was careful too, after the manner of quacks, to sound her financial condition.

When I had explained her case satisfactorily to her as I thought, I took my hat and rose to go.

"You must eat less. It is important that you remember this: Overeating is responsible for many of the ills the flesh is heir to. If people would only curb their appetites and go on hunger strikes for a while, it would cause quite a few of us to get to work and earn an honest living. But they believe, at least a good share of them do, that they were made to eat. Seemingly, that's all they live for. It appears to be their only enjoyment. Result: they are sick most of the time and are kept poor

paying doctor's bills". She listened attentively to what I said.

"Now, will you do what the doctor says?"

"She's awfully stubborn," said her next door neighbor.

"I think she will obey me. It is not very nice to be sick."

"Mr. Doctor, how much do I owe you," asked the lady who ate not wisely but too well.

"Twenty dollars, please."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the old gossip.

"It is expensive to be sick, but it costs money to get well."

"The services of a competent doctor come a little high nowadays," I said pocketing the twenty dollars she had given me.

I was still a quack. My case was hopeless. All my efforts to reform had come to naught. I would spend the balance of my life as a charlatan and all my promises to the contrary would prove unstable resolutions. Ralston had now a perfect right to scold me. Irresolute and vacillating, the plaything of whim and caprice, the idea of me ever changing had long ago faded from his mind.

XXVIX

By this time Mrs Grayson's "Cancer Home" had become widely known. The wards and private rooms were filled. Money was rolling in to us in a golden stream. Under such circumstances it is natural for men to be in high spirits. Ralston and I were as happy as it is possible for dishonest men to be. Every crook has a philosophy to justify his behaviour and we had ours.

But we had moments—many of them—when remorse and despair weighed heavily on us. It was during these times that the future seemed to reveal all its secrets to us and the past to force on us its many lessons and warnings. I shudder when I recall the vague indescribable mental suffering we both experienced. No words can convey an intelligent comprehension of what it was like. No one has the slightest conception of what it resembles, only those who have done wrong when reason commanded them to do right and who tried to smother the prickings of conscience by claiming that success sanctioned and justified all methods of obtaining it.

As the days went by the intimate acquaintance Ralston and I had of each other enabled us to see the kind of work that was most congenial to us. As I was nervous and active, a regular dynamo of restlessness, it was agreed that I should look after all outside patients, while Ralston would take care of the inmates of the "Home". I would insist on his presence only for the purpose of impressing the minds of the credulous and to enable me the more readily and easily to extract ample fees. He would be of invaluable assistance to me in the art of extortion. All quacks made use of such tactics and we could not afford to be an exception.

Arriving at the hospital I found another case

awaiting me. A little girl, whose father conducted a road house a mile out of town, had been burned badly. She had overturned a coal oil lamp and singed herself frightfully. Her father had driven in haste to the "Home", where he expected to find me. He was indignant because Ralston would not go and poured down on him a shower of stinging oaths. I succeeded in pacifying him somewhat and promised him I'd accompany him to the child at once.

He was a remarkable little man, a Swiss by birth and had traveled extensively. He was ruptured badly and had opened the Road House as a means of making an easy living. There crowds of Germans used to gather, drink steins of beer and sing songs. I found my little patient lying quietly on the sofa with her anxious and frightened mother bending over her and applying flour and water to her burns. I was a quack, but it didn't occur to me that this was the best treatment. I had brought a pint bottle of linimentum calcis, "Lime water and linseed oil", which I poured over her scorched limbs.

In all my experience I had never seen a child like that. She did not move nor whimper. She lay perfectly still and showed a stoicism truly wonderful for one of her age. She made a quick recovery and for attending her I received, as usual, a handsome fee.

When I recall how easy it was for me to fleece people and how readily I succeeded in causing them to pay me exorbitant fees, I think some devil of lying possessed me. An imp from hell had entered my soul and destroyed the flower of benevolence that early in my career had exhaled a delicious fragrance. This being who had left the infernal regions and taken up an abode in me made me hard as nails. Mine was plainly a case of "diabolism". If not that, how explain my selfishness, greed and untruthfulness?

XXX

The following day at noon I jumped into the machine and drove down to see a lady who was suffering with all the morbid symptoms associated with the climacteric or change of life. Her condition was as sad as it was deplorable. A week previous to calling me in she had made an attempt on her own life. She had tried to beat her brains out with a hammer. Repenting of what she had done, in her calmer and more lucid intervals, she had sent for me.

She was a lady of refinement and education and her daughter was a teacher in the public school. Her husband was a meek man whom everybody liked. I sat down and had a long talk with her. The family physician had gone East to visit his parents. This was the first trip he had made to see the old folks since locating in the West. She told me how kind and good he had been to her and I felt rather uncomfortable when she said his charges had been very reasonable. I promised to do all I could for her, which was, of course, nothing. But I intended to make a daily visit to her home to have a pleasant chat with her husband and daughter, and above all not to forget to jot down my visits in my visiting book.

On this day I found her unusually depressed. She appeared listless and apathetic. She showed no disposition to talk and seemed to be bored by my presence. I, therefore, decided to make my stay short. But I had to do something so it would look as if I had taken an interest in her case and was trying to cure her. I ordered an eggnog, which she drank with great reluctance, bade her good-bye, not forgetting, however, to promise her she would soon be well and that I would return to see her on the morrow.

I had just driven my machine into the garage at the "Home" when her husband, with a look of terror on his face, came running in, his hands fright-

fully burned. He was all out of breath and so excited he could scarcely speak.

"For God's sake, doctor, come over to the house. My wife has set fire to herself. Shortly after you left, my daughter and I sat down to dinner. While we were there she went quickly out into the back yard, covered herself with coal oil and put a match to her clothes. We heard the screaming and rushed to her aid. We succeeded in smothering the flames, but she is badly burned all the same."

I took out my R blank and wrote a prescription which I handed to him.

"Get that filled at the drug store across the way, then hurry to your home. I'll be there."

I might be a quack, but I knew what was good for burns.

At a breakneck speed I drove down to the unfortunate woman's home. There all was flurry. Several of the neighbors, in well meaning efforts to extinguish the flames, were severely burned.

My patient was lying on the bed unconscious. She was burned as I had never seen anyone before in all my life.

Directly opposite her sat two Spanish women saying the rosary. True to their faith they had not forgotten to pray for her who was so shortly their neighbor and friend.

A hasty examination on my part told me she could not live. So I took out my hypodermic case and gave her a shot of morphine. Next I poured lime water and linseed oil all over her. This done there remained one thing more to be thought of. That was to ask for my pay, which I did coldly and formally. When I received it I did something that must have branded me a merciless, heartless thief, for in the presence and hearing of those grief stricken people, I grumbled and said it wasn't enough. What further proof be needed that I was a confirmed and incorrigible quack?

XXXI

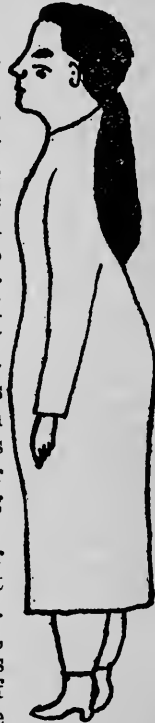
My next case was a Spanish girl with raven locks and white skin, who had been a victim for "fleecing", by a company of quacks with headquarters over in town. They had succeeded in getting six hundred dollars from her. She was suffering with ozena and angina pectoris. She had been bedridden for some time.

Her father was janitor at the High School and the family was dependent on his meager earnings for support.

I have the most distinct remembrance of my visit to this girl. I can see her now as though she were right before me. Beautiful and innocent of the world she reminded me of an ethereal being that had come by accident to earth. She had spent a good part of her life in bed. She had been an invalid most of her days. What little she knew of the world of action beyond the confines of her father's home was a child's knowledge that had come to her from listening to the conversation of friends who occasionally dropped in to see her mother and to ask how she was getting on.

From my first visit I considered her a saint. I'm positive the girl could not have spoken an untruth, if she tried. And as for her doing anything wrong, it was out of the question. She was deeply religious, but her piety was of the quiet variety. Whenever I came into her presence, hardened old sinner that I was, I felt ashamed and unworthy to prescribe for her.

At frequent intervals she had attacks of "heart pang" or agina pectoris, as it is technically call-



ed. It was to relieve this that she sent for me. But what are we to say of a man who would deliberately deceive a noble creature like this? What are we to think of him? I can offer no excuse or apology for what I did. I lied to her like I did to all the others who had sought my advice. I robbed her poor old father and had no more compunction in doing so than if he were a millionaire. I did it because I was a quack and for the simple reason that I had lost all sense of right and wrong.

When I sit down quietly by myself and reflect on what I have done, I feel as though it would be better if I had never been born. Indeed I'm almost convinced that my passing through this sphere of action has been a curse. With this thought in my mind I have sat down and written these "Confessions" in the hope that those who read them may glean some truths to guide and direct them over their pathway through life. The experiences herein related when studied and analyzed in the proper spirit are pregnant with suggestions. We all know that it pays to do what is right. And we are aware that wrong doing brings us troubles and suffering. But the fault with many of us is this: We won't let the folly of another teach us a lesson. We want to find out for ourselves. So it took years for Ralston and I to discover that the life of a poor and struggling practitioner is infinitely preferable to that of a prosperous and prominent quack. We had money, but no peace of mind. Success, but no reputation. Mrs. Grayson's "Cancer Home" had made us rich. We had an ever increasing clientele and one would naturally suppose that under such circumstances we would be happy. But the truth is we knew less about happiness than in the days we were poor and obscure and had no influence and few friends.

XXXII

As I entered the "Home" Ralston stepped forward and called me into the office. He looked pale and worried. One glance was sufficient to tell me that something had happened.

"I'm so glad you've got back!" he said, sinking into a chair.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"Mrs. Grayson's been here," he answered.

"Is that all?"

"That's sufficient. You'll think so when you hear what she had to say."

"I hope she hasn't discovered we are quacks."

"That's just what she has. Say, she's just wild. She's so hopping mad she can hardly talk. I never saw anyone so worked up over anything in all my life."

"Murder will out."

"It will and has. As for you and me we'd better pick up our duds and clear out."

"Nothing stirring when it comes to the running away stunt. There's only one thing for you and me to do and that's to live it down."

"It can't be done. It is all off with us this time."

"Don't talk that way. Wait till I see Mrs. Grayson. I'll convince her that we are the most clever and honest men that ever lived."

Ralston laughed.

"I'll give you credit of being able to tell more lies than any other man I know. But Mrs. Grayson has so much evidence that we are frauds that I don't think you will be able to change her opinion of us."

"How did she come to find us out?"

"By watching us closely. It seems she was a bit suspicious of us from the beginning. But she preferred to say nothing until she had proof. Do you remember the lady who called us in to see her sick son?"

"I'll never forget her as long as I live. She was, if I remember her rightly, the first one who ever called us quacks."

"She is a very close and very dear friend of Mrs. Grayson. At once she told her that we were charlatans. But, as you know, Mrs. Grayson is a good lady and loath to think evil of any one."

"We made a great mistake in not reforming long ago."

"That's what I have been telling you right along. But you were so sure that we would never be found out that it was useless for me to talk to you."

"What are we to do?"

"Clear out."

"Never. I'll stay and face the music. I'm sure I can explain everything in such a way that Mrs. Grayson will believe we have been misjudged and maligned."

"If you can it will prove that you are something more than a quack."

"It will show that the powers of persuasion that enabled me to convince people they had diseases nobody ever heard of and no one ever knew to exist I still possess. And it will do more than this. It will silence detractors, jealous professional rivals of the legitimate school who are green with envy. You know the world and what the heart of man is like."

Ralston walked away. He had fallen into one of his moods—periods of compunction when it was prudent and wise to leave him alone. Up and down the corridor of the "Cancer Home" he walked, a picture of despair. From the office I watched him. I noticed every move he made. I observed the play of emotions on his face and studied the conflict of opposing passions and the struggle for freedom and deliverance from the bondage of evil. And as I sat there a silent and thoughtful

witness to the resurrection of a soul that I had done my share to kill, I was conscious as never before, of a sense of guilt. It was to my door must be laid the blame of all the evil that had come into Ralston's life. I was instigator of whatever wrong he had done. Only for me he would have been a noble, upright man. The more I thought of it the stronger the conviction became that I had committed the unpardonable sin the day I had persuaded him to become a quack.

XXXIII

While these thoughts were flitting through my brain the door bell rang. My visitor was a little wizened old man, asthmatic and wheezy. He wished me to go at once to see his wife. It wasn't far, just a short distance down the street.

I was glad to get away from the "Home". I didn't like to be near Ralston when in a depressed condition of mind, and I was anxious to shake off my own fears and anxieties. This call would be a pleasant antidote for the sudden aspect affairs had taken. My patient was a woman of middle age, suffering with dropsy. Her trouble had been aggravated by over exertion incident to house cleaning. I ordered her to bed, prescribed infusion of digitalis and promised her a speedy recovery. Then her husband escorted me into the dining room where he had been counting his money. Twenty, ten and five dollar gold pieces were scattered carelessly around. It was a long time since I had seen so much money at once, and it occurred to me that here was my chance to get some of it. I feel the blush of shame spread over my face as I sit here and write down the record of my misdeeds. The sight of that gold fanned the flame of avarice that was burning up my soul and created in me a lust for gain. Before I had time to reason or reflect on the right or wrong of what I was going to do I struck that poor old man a vicious blow, scooped up the gold and put it in my pocket. This was the worst act I had ever done, one that would have branded me a criminal in any part of the world. Heretofore I had been satisfied to charge an exorbitant fee. Now I was not content unless I grabbed all the money in sight. I had deteriorated. The process of degeneracy had gone on in me at

an alarming rate. It was no longer safe for me to be at large. I was a menace to society. Nobody knew it better than myself. There was no hope for me now. I had reached the acme of wrong doing and if I did not get away swift avenging justice would punish me as I deserved. As I stood still pondering as to what was best to do, there was a knock at the door. I trembled from head to foot. I must do something or I would be caught in the act of thievery. I quickly spread the money over the table. Then I opened the door. There stood Ralston, his clear blue eyes fixed on me in a steady gaze.

"Mrs. Grayson wants to see you at once. Sent me down to get you."

He paused and looked around the room. "What's this?" he exclaimed discovering the old man lying on the floor.

"Fainted, that's all. He'll come through in a minute", I replied.

"Let's put him on the sofa," Ralston said.

"Very well."

"He'll be more comfortable there."

"Undoubtedly."

We lifted the old man up, placed him on the sofa and went out.

"How does Mrs. Grayson feel now in the matter?" I asked as we walked slowly along.

"Very differently than when I last saw her. She says she is pretty nearly convinced that the rumors that have reached her are the outgrowth and result of professional jealousy and rivalry."

"What did I tell you? I knew it would be easy to persuade her. She's a good woman and it isn't easy for her to think evil of any one."

"If we square ourselves with her and continue to quack, we ought to have our heads cut off."

"Well said, Ralston. But don't you see the plight we are in?"

"A very uncomfortable predicament to be sure."

"Habits once acquired and allowed to take root deeply are not easily shaken. That is the reason why all the good resolutions we made in the past came to nothing. It also explains satisfactorily our persistence in wrong doing. There is a lesson for others in our career that I hope they will learn and I trust have the good sense to follow."

We were within a stone's throw of the "Home". On the veranda Mrs. Grayson awaited us walking nervously up and down.

"Doctor, I want to have a talk with you", she said in a low, sweet voice.

There was nothing in her manner that indicated she had other than the kindest feelings for me. I walked upon the veranda and sat down beside her.

"I understand that you are of the opinion that I have lost faith in you," she said.

"I have no such notion," I replied.

"I'm glad to hear it. I was foolish enough to put credence in certain rumors afloat about you, which I am happy to say I discovered are false."

I breathed easy. All my fear fled.

"Doctors are not as charitable as they might be, and many of them are jealous."

"So I have been told. And I've heard it said that they will stoop to underhanded methods to injure a rival. I can understand how many of them feel sore because I favored you and Ralston. I did so because I believed you didn't have a fair chance to get on and make good, and I rejoice when I think both of you proved worthy of the high expectations I had of you. Reflect a moment on what you have done. Think how well you have managed the "Home". There were those, many of them who predicted it would be a failure. Thank goodness, it has been a great success."

"None of us can escape being talked about."

"Quite so. That is something we must expect whether we deserve it or not."

"What have the gossips said about us?"

"I wouldn't like to hurt your feelings."

"My sensibilities won't be wounded in the least."

"They say you are a pair of quacks."

I laughed.

"People often say things they don't mean."

"But those who heard it say it were very much in earnest."

"Nevertheless misinformed."

"To be sure."

"And easily deceived."

"Yes. There's no question but what they were."

"Do you suppose we would have achieved any success if we had been quacks?"

"It hardly seems probable."

"Think of the wonderful cures we have effected here in this "Cancer Home"? What further proof need you of our knowledge and skill. Why give credence to a rumor that jealous rivals have spread?"

Mrs. Grayson was beaming and smiling on me. My logic had dispersed any doubts she may have had.

As a legitimate practitioner I had early perceived the power flattery has. None are too wise or old not to be susceptible to it. But it was not until I had become a full fledged quack that I saw its untold possibilities.

"Mrs. Grayson, I don't think that Ralston and myself deserve the credit. It is you who should have all the praise. Your benevolence made possible the "Home". Only for your goodness of heart I would still be a poor and obscure practitioner."

"You've more than repaid me for what I have done. You've made the "Cancer Home" a big success."

XXXIV

I had succeeded in restoring Mrs. Grayson's faith in us. I did not think it would be so easy. I had counted on her demanding proof of the claim we had made of observing medical ethics. But, instead of seeking evidence to prove the truth of what I said, she took my word for it. In all my experience as a quack I had never met one so adverse to thinking evil of any one. She seemed a woman with so much goodness of heart and nobility of soul that she could not come to the way of believing that two thirds of mankind were dishonest and insincere. And yet she possessed unusual intelligence and had an accurate knowledge of men.

When I tried to analyze her character and explain the traits that endeared her to all who knew her, I must express the opinion that her kind are all too rare, and if men and women accepted her as a model, we would have a beautiful world in which to pass the days that are allotted to us. When I reflect that I made her a dupe and a tool for the furtherance of my own selfish aims, I feel as though I committed a crime for which there is no forgiveness. But, like all other wrong doers, I will try to justify it on the plea that I was not given a chance. I will contend with a measure of plausibility that an opportunity was denied me and that I only took advantage of the credulity of an unsuspecting woman. I know there are many who will say my view point is the correct one. They will argue with sound logic that the economic system under which we live is wrong and they will present facts and data to show why crooks and charlatans abound. With all due respect to their sincerity and well meaning efforts to reconcile the contradiction between men's lives and professed beliefs, I am constrained to say the fault lies in fallen man himself. To his door, not to that of the existing

industrial order or to any improved form of society that social evolution may unfold, must be traced the sin and evil that embitters life and makes the world a vale of tears.

On many occasions Ralston and I have gone over this ground. We have examined it from every conceivable angle. In doing so we have cast aside all prejudice. And then we have reached the only solution for the corruption of society. It is a conclusion that will bear the test of critical analysis. You must reform man first. The initial step to be taken in changing the complex system under which we live is to cultivate the heart or moral side of man. His conscience and will are faculties deserving the most attention.

But I am not going to philosophize or moralize on this question. It would only weary you in reading it. I have touched upon it lightly because it seemed to me to have a bearing on my career as quack.

When I began to write these "Confessions," I thought to confine them to a narration of personal experiences. But, as I went on with the work, incidents were crowded out and in their place came reflections that I am afraid make dry and heavy reading. I have not related one third the cases I treated. I have just selected a few at random that came to my memory. There has been no attempt to classify them or arrange them in the order of their natural sequence. And yet, in looking over them, I find I have been fairly accurate. I have told the story of my life as clearly as I know how.

You may be inclined to accuse me of gross exaggeration, but I assure you I give you my word of honor as a successful and highly respected quack. that I have gone to the other extreme. I have purposely refrained from telling many of the heartless things I did, lest you would condemn me as a monster of cunning and deceit.

XXXV

The fear and anxiety that had so shortly tortured us fled. Once more we were on friendly terms with Mrs. Grayson. Our benefactress has assured us she no longer believed the rumor that had been spread about. The load of worry that had wheighed so heavily and made the future one of uncertainty was removed. All our old time bouyancy returned. We were light hearted and gay. Life had a new meaning and we saw unprecedented success loom before us.

One day after dinner as I sat on the veranda of the "Home" thinking of the unfortunate turn affairs had taken, Ralston came up and sat down near me. His manner was serious and he had a thoughtful, preoccupied air.

"How do you feel?" I asked.

"As usual," he replied.

"Another way of saying that you are well and happy."

"Well without doubt. But far from happy. Say, old pal, I want to get away from here."

"Away from here? What's come over you?"

"Nothing. Disgruntled, that's all."

"Something's gone wrong. Tell me all about it."

"This place is not big enough for us."

"Not big enough? What do you mean?"

"Not large enough for our ambition. We've quite outgrown its narrow limitations."

"I don't understand you."

"Allow me to make myself clear."

"Do so, by all means."

"We have been a success, haven't we?"

"We certainly have. In spite, too, of the fact that we are the worst pair of quacks that ever lived."

"I suggest that we take outside offices where

the watchful eyes of Mrs. Grayson won't be on us."

"Your suggestion is a good one. Why didn't we think of it before?"

"We thought of nothing beyond "fleecing" our victims."

"It's time we had nobler and loftier thoughts in our heads."

"Well said. So you are with me?"

"We'll retain supervision over it. But Mrs. Grayson will have to get younger and less competent men to reside behind its walls"

"It's about time we branched out for ourselves."

"That's what I've thought for a long time."

"Now and always. But what's to become of the "Home"?"

At considerable length Ralston and I discussed the advisability of this and that location. We agreed it should be central, within easy reach of the "Cancer Home". We would show jealous professional rivals, who were trying to ruin us, what we could do. Wouldn't they turn green with envy when they saw us in our new quarters? We might expect more vicious attacks. But this time we were prepared for them. At the "Cancer Home" we had made use of our time. We had studied and read extensively. On the unfortunate patients who had been admitted, we had conducted all kinds of experiments and we had no thought of the outcome. We cared little what the consequences were as long as we weren't found out. Thus in a little while we had become bold and daring operators. There was no surgical case we wouldn't tackle with full confidence in our ability to see it through successfully. We could hold our own with any of them. And when it came to getting our money we outclassed all of them.

XXXVI

When we unfolded our plan to Mrs. Grayson she was indignant. She stormed and raved as though she was mad. I didn't think a woman of her refinement could say the things she did. She accused us of ingratitude. She imputed selfishness as the motive of our going away. She even threatened to put the police on us and find out just what kind of doctors we were. It looked as though we stirred a hornet's nest of trouble for ourselves. And it was quite beyond our power to pacify her. No explanation we could offer would suffice. No excuse or apology diminished her rage. Her indignation instead of lessening seemingly increased with the passing of the days. To her way of thinking we had committed an unpardonable offence. It looked as if we had lost the best friend we ever had.

For a while both of us were disconsolate, each in turn accusing the other of lack of judgment. We did not fully understand the mistake we had made until we were settled in our new home. Here we missed the sympathy and encouragement our benefactress used to bestow so lavishly upon us. We had no one to tell our troubles to, nobody to look to for advice and guidance.

For a while it seemed though we would never become reconciled to the mistake we had made. But little by little we adjusted ourselves to our new environment. Gradually we forgot the "Cancer Home" in which we had passed so many pleasant days. We even ceased to think of Mrs. Grayson. She had slipped quietly out of our lives.

When I recollect how shabbily we treated that good woman my remorse and shame are so great that I cannot find words to describe it. She had raised us up from poverty and obscurity to riches

and prominence. She had a mother's solicitude for us. And we repaid her goodness and benevolence deceiving and betraying her. When I reflect upon it I wonder why two such rascals were ever born. And if their coming here was an accident then may I ask why a merciful Providence didn't take them away before they were permitted to do so much mischief?

As I ponder on all the wrong I have done and see so little that is good to balance it, I cannot but conclude that my life has been a miserable failure.

Ralston and I have thousands of dollars in bank that accumulated in a way that no man with a drop of manhood's blood in his veins would be proud of. Infinitely more cowardly than the highway man who steals stealthily upon you under the cover of night were we who took advantage of people's ignorance and fear. There is some excuse for the footpad. There was none for us. We had prostituted a noble calling not a money getting game, where lying and stealing were necessary accomplishments.

We had carried on a traffic in the pain racked, disease tortured bodies of women and men. If you can tell me of a lower or more base business, do so at once, for I have exhausted my thinking capacity in trying to imagine it. Before the Bar of Justice I expect some day to be tried and an errorless equity will impose upon me the punishment I deserve. What that will be I do not know. I must confess it is rather unpleasant to think upon.

XXXVII

Our new offices occupied the four frontrooms of a fashionable apartment house one mile from the "Cancer Home". The location was ideal. It suited us exactly. We were both of the opinion that it was the best that anywhere could be found. Here we met the finest people. Men and women of influence and wealth were in our clientele. We had no use for the poor and as far as we could tried to avoid them and to forget that any of them lived. There was something about a shabbily dressed or indigent person that gave us the shivers. It brought back to our minds things that we wished to forget. We were living on Easy Street and we didn't want to know there was such a place as Poverty Row.

We had no regular hours. People wishing to see us made an appointment, failing to keep which we charged them just as though they had a consultation.

We furnished our offices in an impressive style and made a great display of books and instruments. We didn't have to wait for patients. Our names had preceded us, bringing us hundreds of the sick and ailing. We decided to be a bit careful for we were handling quite a different class from that we had been accustomed to treat at the "Cancer Home". This time we intended to be on our guard. A slip or two might be our undoing. The people we were now called upon to prescribe for were intelligent and familiar with the methods of the best doctors. We couldn't "flim flam" them as we did the poor wretches over at Mrs. Grayson's. The best we could hope to do was to set a high price on our services and see that we got paid.

I have the most pleasant memories of this location. Here I met only refined, educated people. The days passed quickly bringing me an abundan-

ce of the ever needful and I had no fear of anything. Ralston was also well pleased. He no longer had the "moods" which while they lasted made him a disagreeable companion. Our present methods met with his approval and his mental condition was the best.

It amuses me greatly and affords me material for reflection when I ponder on the absurd and ridiculous praise that was heaped on us by people one would suppose should be good judges of character. It seems to me from a worldly standpoint the best thing to have is reputation. Once let it be said that a man is clever and notice the "hub bub" that is made over some insignificant achievement that in lesser celebrities would excite no comment. I have to smile when I recall the extravagant praise that was heaped on us. More than once I found it difficult to refrain from laughing upon hearing people utter encomiums about us. Verily the world rests on a foundation of fraud and loves to be deceived by appearances. Early in our career we learned that fully ninety per cent of mankind did little or no thinking. This knowledge was invaluable to us in applying our methods of wholesale robbery. It enabled us to make a lie seem true and caused men and women to mistake bragging and exaggeration for a modest declaration of ability.

No amount of book learning, travel or observation could give me the accurate and thorough knowledge of human nature I acquired as a quack. Allow me five minutes conversation with a man or a woman and I know all about them. That may seem a little far fetched and overdrawn. Yet I can prove to the most skeptical that it is true. For instance, one day, as I sat alone in the office ruminating on my mottled career, a gentlemen neatly attired and with refined, polished manners, came in. He excused himself for obtruding. I assured

him his visit was not intrusive and asked if there was some favor he wanted.

"Are you a mind reader?" he asked.

"I make no pretensions in that line, yet I can prove it to you."

I studied him closely a minute. He had a good face, frank and open with traces of refinement and gentle breeding.

"You are in trouble, not the domestic variety, but the money kind."

He looked at me with open mouthed wonder.

"You have met with reverses. You have lost all you possessed in speculation."

He was dumbfounded. His lips moved but no words escaped them.

"Why didn't you come to me and ask me what was best to do? Don't you know it is rash and foolish to rely on one's own judgement solely?"

His eyes were staring wildly.

"If I knew you were going to take that step that has brought you financial ruin I could have saved you."

"Doctor, I have heard many people speak of you. They told me the wonderful cures you effected. But I never thought you could do a thing like that. I cannot pay you, but I can do something for you that will mean more to you than the few dollars I owe you. I can tell what a wonderful man

He grabbed his hat and rushed out.
you are."

The day before, while walking along the street, Ralston had pointed out this man to me and told me the story of his recent losses.

When my colleague stepped in I promptly informed him of our latest and most desirable patient. He laughed heartily and seemed to think it a good joke.

"You're a natural born quack. I've said that right along."

“But don’t you see the possibilities that lie hidden in this case?” I asked.

“A chance to lie, that’s all.”

“Isn’t that enough?”

“Quite sufficient for you and me.”

“We now have a new graft. Mind reading is our latest acquisition.”

“There’s a mint in it for us if we go about it rightly.”

Before us was a new and unexplored field. Here was a venture fascinating and sure to give brilliant results. Strange we had not thought of it before.

XXXVIII

Ralston and I now plunged with enthusiasm into the study of occultism. Our first step was to purchase a library of the latest books dealing with mind reading. This done we set to work to familiarize ourselves with their contents. For once we would be serious, earnest students. We looked over the new works that had, as we supposed, direct or indirect bearing on our specialty, and selected Tukes "Influence of Mind on Body" as an eye opener. This we read most carefully. From it we learned some of the laws of the mind that govern the body, which would enable us to find our way out of the labyrinth of mystery into which our investigation had led us.

As we received patients only by appointment we had abundant leisure. And we possessed ample time to absorb the knowledge we intended to use fraudulently. After two weeks of careful digging we concluded we had learned the salient facts and that we were quite competent to add a new line of lying to our long list of cheating. So above our door appeared the word "mentalists".

The sign attracted considerable attention and created no end of comment. No one seemed able to say just what it did mean. Naturally it brought us many new patients. The inquisitive wished to find out. The mentally sick hoped to be cured.

I wish I had the time and space to tell in full the story of our wonderful experience. But I will have to be satisfied and rest content with giving a few generalities, allowing the imagination of the reader to supply the details.

I had no idea there were so many mentally sick people in the world. I hadn't a vague and remote notion that men and women in every walk of life

were so utterly miserable. If I could give you the history of the cases that we treated you would scarcely believe what you read. You would rightly concede that our so-called civilization is a colossal failure and that its glories and greatness are built upon a foundation of ruined lives. Better by far the condition of primitive man, where derelicts were unknown and delinquents had no place.

One day, just after Ralston and I had a heated argument on this very question, a middle aged man stepped into the office. He was well dressed and looked prosperous and, one would wonder what on earth had brought him to us.

"Gentlemen, you were highly recommended to me by a man who swears you are the most wonderful mind reader he ever met."

A friend of the man who had lost all in speculation. Not improbable another victim. Ralston and I decided to take a chance. As I had a positive way of saying things I concluded that it was best that I should act as spokesman.

"You, like your friend who sent you here, made a grave mistake. All speculation is risky. Here you go and invest heavily and lose the greater portion of your fortune. But you had considerable foresight in allowing some of your money to remain in bank where a year previous you had deposited it."

"Wonderful! How do you do it?"

"It is largely a matter of concentration. Like all difficult things, once learned it is quite easy."

He opened his purse and placed a twenty dollar bill on the desk.

"Take my advice and leave your money where it is safe."

"Thank you," he said and went out.

"What do they want to come here for, anyway?" I asked.

"Because they are fools and we are quacks," replied Ralston.

"So that is your explanation, is it?" I said.

"Yes."

"Here is mine. These unfortunates are the easy victims of clever rascals who "fleece" them unmercifully. When they are trimmed to a finish they feel sore and seek the advice of some one supposed to be able to give them relief."

"And we put the finishing touches to the job by taking from them the few dollars they have left, as we have in this particular case."

I laughed. I saw the comedy of the thing, where in truth it was most pathetic. There is no humor in robbing men and women of the earnings of their lifetime.

XXXIX

In the specialty of "mentalist" we found much to stimulate thought and create a desire for study. We discovered that after all is said, life of the human on this planet is largely mental. I know there will be many who will take exception to this and who will say that man is just an animal. But those who accept this view have surely not studied him from close range in times of trouble and sorrow, or when the mental side of him is most imperative and dominant.

Delving into psychology may bring no practical results, but it certainly strengthens our belief in a continuance of life after the curtain is rung down on the short and miserable drama in which some of us play important parts. I can speak authoritatively on this subject, for I was a quack; and what a charlatan doesn't know isn't worth while to learn. My experience, I include that of my colleague, as well, bared the heart and soul of man to me far beyond my hopes and expectations. I soon knew all the secrets that men and women keep from their closest friends.

I also understood the influence far reaching and often deplorable in consequence that passions exert. And my opinion was asked on delicate questions, and my advice sought in matters of supreme moment to the individual. When I think of the trust reposed in me and recall how basely and falsely I kept that faith I feel as though I am some sort of a monster moulded out of proportion and beyond all human semblance.

What would the poor dupes say whom I fooled and robbed, if they knew me as I know myself? I don't think I would have been given a chance to write "Confessions of a Quack?". Long ago they

would have dealt me as I deserved. But may be I was spared and allowed to compile this strange biography so full of inaccuracies and inconsistencies to teach the lesson that it pays to follow the straight and narrow path, and that virtue is its own reward. These are days when men and women scoff at these truths and call them old fashioned and out of date. But they are just as binding, none the less obligatory, than they were of old. Truth never changes. It is the same today, tomorrow and always.

If those who read this book are impressed at all, it will not be of its intrinsic merit, for its title to that is small indeed. But it will be for the candor of the author, who has told frankly what he has done, and has sought no justification of it. I have been a quack most of my days. That is not to my credit. It is something of which I am deeply ashamed. But I've not stood alone. I've had Ralston and thousands of others to keep me company. I could never have acted without a partner the part. No crook does. All feel the need of others to lean on for support. No man is so strong willed that he can do without another's guidance. Besides there were times when I was puzzled and perplexed—when I felt the need of someone close to me—someone I revered and trusted to advise me. Many knotty problems I have solved, questions of casuistry and the ethical side of the various relations of life. I have done some good. All the wicked do. No man is so bad and depraved that a few rays of goodness are not found in his darkened career. Wheighed in the scales of the blind-folded goddess, the evil I have done greatly outbalances the good.

XL

One day, as we sat in the office discussing the strange cases that came our way, our minds drifted to Mrs. Grayson's and the "Cancer Home". We wondered how she was getting along, who was managing the place where we passed our happiest days and made so much money. Were our successors men of honor or unprincipled quacks?

We found ourselves wishing intensely to know all about the hospital we had dishonored.

The longer we talked about it the stronger became our desire to find out. So we decided to pay our old home an informal visit. Neither of us were timid men; we had an abundance of nerve. We wouldn't be quacks if we didn't. We knew Mrs. Grayson well. We believed she would forgive us and receive us with open arms. Such natures as hers didn't hold grudges long, and as we were experienced liars we could invent a story that would explain satisfactorily just why we had gone.

But supposing she insisted that we stay and resume our old duties? That thought changed the aspect of every thing. It gave a different coloring to our proposed visit. We could never do that. We had no intention of settling down to the monotony of hospital life. We were done with that forever. We had progressed way beyond the necessity of it. We were mentalists now and knew all about the mystery of the human mind. The best we could do for Mrs. Grayson was to act as visiting consultants, leaving the management to wiser, and to be candid, more honest heads.

We debated for a considerable time what was best to do. We were both anxious to see our old home and to discover if any changes were made during our absence.

Suddenly the door opened and, to our great joy and intense surprise, Mrs. Grayson came in.

"Thought I would drop in and see how you were getting on", she said.

She looked remarkably well. was stylishly dressed, and, to all outward appearances, had gotten along nicely without us.

"We were just about to pay you a visit," I said.

"Were you, indeed? I thought sooner or later you would come. But I got weary waiting for you and decided to go to you, if you wouldn't come to me."

"It is wonderfully good and kind of you and we deserve nothing from you."

"I often think I have been a foolish woman."

"Foolish to put faith in worthless cures like us."

"Neither of you showed much appreciation of what I did."

"I am sorry to admit we didn't. I regret to say we were very ungrateful."

"What excuses can you make?"

"None."

"Then explain what you did."

"We did the thing that might be expected, had you known the kind of doctors we were. Mrs. Grayson, allow me to inform you that we are quacks."

"Goodness, I can't believe that!"

"Believe it or not, it is true."

"Neither of you looked it."

"That fact explains our wonderful success. People believed we were souls of honor when, as a matter of fact, we were devoid of principle. Our one thought was how we might get the better of people, which we usually did."

"Not for a moment did I think that of you."

"We were aware of it. We know you discredited the rumors that were afloat about us. It was very evident that you had unbounded faith in us. The "Cancer Home" vouched for it."

The moment I mentioned the "Home" Mrs. Grayson bit her lip. Her face flushed, her eyes blazed. She was now a fighting tigress ready to spring.

"It makes me boil with indignation when I think of it. My heart and soul were in that institution. I trusted both of you as I did no one else. I believed you incapable of wrong doing. And what do I discover? That you are quacks, thoroughly dishonest, wholly incompetent. You deceived and betrayed me, you lied to me, you even robbed me. You talked me into submitting to an operation when it was unnecessary and told me I had a disease I didn't. You, rascals, don't you ever dare to come to see me. Keep away from the "Cancer Home" which you dishonored. You are a disgrace to your profession. Doctors! Bah! You're a pair of quacks. You know you are. I'm through with you. Good day!"

She rose and giving us a look of scorn swept indignantly past us and went out.

"I guess we'll postpone that trip to the "Cancer Home", I said.

"Indefinitely," replied Ralston.

Both of us began to think of some means by which we might pacify Mrs. Grayson. Something must be done to appease her wrath. It was possible that she might stir up no end of trouble for us.

"We must recover the good will of that woman," I said.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Ralston.

XLI

Nothing is so difficult that it is beyond the attainment of quacks. We could lay this down as a law and axiomatic truth. Confronted with difficulties that would have harrassed ordinary men, Ralston and I rose above circumstances and overcame obstacles that to less positive natures would have been insurmountable. We were endowed with aggressiveness way beyond the average. We were hopeful and persistent in our efforts. We never admitted defeat or acknowledged discouragement. When I think of it, our success is not so wonderful after all. It is the natural sequence and result of a faithful obedience and unerring subservience to laws that are inexorably fixed.

We achieved what we did in a dishonest way by the hardest kind of labor. If you think it was all smooth and easy sailing for us, you are mistaken. Our ship was often in troubled waters. We knew what it meant to be denounced and exposed. We took desperate chances, but somehow good luck was always on our side. We managed to escape the traps that jealous rivals laid for us. We were careful to keep within the law and this explains our success and the ease and adroitness with which we accomplished things.

But that doesn't palliate or excuse what we did. Neither does it expiate our rascality or efface the blot that besmears our name. There is a lasting stigma on us. Try as we may in years to come, we cannot undo the evil we have done. We were untrue to ourselves, false to our patients, traitors to our friends. And to Mrs. Grayson, one of the noblest women that ever lived, we were ingrates. There is something about ingratitude from which we all recoil. And when I think of how basely

we treated our benefactress, I wonder at her patience and forbearance. Her generosity was equalled by her tolerance, and her charity was as great as her compassion.

As I never married and it is time I should, I'm going to see what kind of a chance I have in winning the hand of the woman I fooled and robbed and whose benevolence I despised. I'll have to admit the odds are against me. I have to figure on Ralston as a possible rival. So you will have to be patient and wait a while.

I think it is about time I brought these "Confessions of a Quack" to an end. The writing of them has been a pleasant passtime. I don't know what their reading will mean to you. But to me, as I wade through the pages of the manuscript, it seems as though I have held up to you in a weak and puerile manner my own folly and vices. In a rather amateurish way I have chronicled a few of the incidents that have been exciting escapades in my life. The "Confessions" were written in haste, in the midst of distraction, and that explains all their inaccuracies and inconsistencies and accounts for their glaring defects. Quacks are very imperfect and their imperfection is never more apparent than when they write a record of their misdeeds.

THE END



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