

**CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN DRS.
WARREN AND PUTNAM ON THE SUBJECT
OF MEDICAL ETHICS: WITH AN
ACCOUNT OF THE MEDICAL
EMPIRICISMS OF EUROPE AND AMERICA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649064359

Conversations Between Drs. Warren and Putnam on the Subject of Medical Ethics: With an Account of the Medical Empiricisms of Europe and America by Frank Hastings Hamilton

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

FRANK HASTINGS HAMILTON

**CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN DRS.
WARREN AND PUTNAM ON THE SUBJECT
OF MEDICAL ETHICS: WITH AN
ACCOUNT OF THE MEDICAL
EMPIRICISMS OF EUROPE AND AMERICA**

121
1889

PREFACE.

THE "Conversations," written in moments of enforced idleness, while recovering from a serious illness, and published originally in successive numbers of the *Medical Gazette*, were intended to represent the conflicting opinions of medical men in this country on the subject of a written Code of Ethics, and substantially, the grounds upon which these opinions are based.

By a large proportion of the profession the question has seemed to be one of importance, not only in its relations to the interests of the public at large, but also in its relations to the morals and character of the profession, and the progress of medical science.

If, therefore, the discussions which have arisen have been characterized by earnestness, and perhaps by a certain degree of acerbity, it should be ascribed to the magnitude of the issues

apparently involved and not to personal or interested motives.

The writer does not deny that he feels earnestly upon this subject, but he trusts that nothing he has written indicates acerbity or illiberality on his part. Among those who differ from him are not a few of his most intimate and beloved personal friends, and for whose opinions in most matters he entertains the highest respect. It would be painful, therefore, for him to know that he had said anything by which he should inflict a wound, or forfeit their friendship and esteem.

CONVERSATIONS.

FIRST CONVERSATION.

A demand for liberty—Liberty is not license—We are bound to obey, but are not bound to respect all laws—Moonshiners.

Dr. Warren. Have you interested yourself in the struggle for liberty which some of us are making in our effort to free ourselves from the bondage of the Code of Ethics, which has hitherto held us in a most degrading subjection?

Dr. Putnam. I have noticed the "struggle for liberty," as you are pleased to call it, but I cannot say that I sympathize with its objects. It seems to me rather a struggle for license, than a struggle for liberty.

Dr. Warren. Is it possible that you, the descendant of a family famous for its love of freedom, should hold such views; and be willing to remain in a kind of moral slavery, in which

your masters forbid you to do as you please in matters of conscience? How can you call yourself a freeman while you remain in this condition of servitude? I hold that in matters of conscience every man should be free to think and act as he chooses.*

Dr. Putnam. Your idea of freedom is perhaps a little too broad. There never was a time in any civilized government in which men were permitted, without restraint, to act according to the dictates of their conscience. They might indeed be permitted to think as they pleased, but not to act as they pleased. To permit this would be subversive of social order and of all government. It would permit a man to take the life of his own child, if he thought it his duty to do so. As every jurist will tell you, you will have to abandon this ground, which I see some of your friends have taken, if you wish to commend your present struggle to the sym-

* "But even among medical men who have so long quietly submitted to be hampered by artificial restrictions, the irrepressible demand for free thought, free action, with no restriction but the high and noble aspirations of what pertains to physicians and gentlemen, will certainly arise. . . ."

"Freedom of thought and action are the palladium of our institution."—*S. Oakley Vanderpoel, M.D., President N. Y. Co. Med. Soc.*

pathies of an intelligent and civilized world. It was not this liberty for which your fathers and mine shed their blood.

Dr. Warren. Conceding what you have said to be true, you will not deny that all good citizens are bound to respect and obey the laws; and the laws of the State of New York declare that the diplomas of the Homœopathists and Eclectics are legal qualifications to practice. To refuse therefore to consult with them is virtually to disobey and to disrespect the laws of the State. For this view of the subject we have the authority of at least one distinguished jurist.*

Dr. Putnam. I reply that, if by "respect" is meant approval, the statement is not correct, but if it means obedience it is correct. Our Legislators pass many laws which I cannot respect in the sense of approval, but which I propose to obey.

That I must obey the laws is undoubtedly true; but our legislators have not passed a law declaring with whom I shall or shall not consult. If they had done so then indeed would our liberties have been invaded. If a law were enacted legalizing a policy-shop, or any other

* Letter to Dr. C. R. Agnew, from Theodore W. Dwight, Prof. Columbia College Law School, *The Medical Record*, May 13, 1882.

more infamous establishment, this would not make it our duty to frequent such establishments.

The time has been in this State (and may be again), when any man who chose could practise medicine. If your argument is sound, we ought then to have consulted with any ignorant charlatan who called himself a doctor.

Dr. Warren. Well, but, Dr. Putnam, we assume that these men with whom we propose to consult are not ignorant, but that some of them are as well instructed in the science of medicine as we are. What then?

Dr. Putnam. I doubt the correctness of the supposition; but if it were true it would not justify your proposed action. If a man learned in all that pertains to the science of medicine were to declare publicly that he prescribed in all cases nothing but moonshine, and even to advertise himself as a moonshine doctor, would you seriously claim that I ought to consult with him in a case of pneumonia, or of strangulated hernia?

Dr. Warren. You have made an extreme case, which does not apply to either of the parties with whom we desire to associate ourselves.

Dr. Putnam. Not at all. Study for yourself

the medical theories of these gentlemen, and see if you can make of them anything more than moonshine. They consist of nothing but the most absurd and ridiculous antitheses of common sense.

Dr. Warren. But, as you ought to know, some of them have openly and publicly declared that they have renounced the practice of prescribing moonshine, and that they are now giving the same medicines which we do.

Dr. Putnam. If this be so, then all that remains for them to do is to renounce their self-assumed and distinctive title, by which they ostentatiously separated themselves from the regular profession, and we are ready to consult with them. But I very much fear that so long as there are so many people who believe in moonshine, that they will not consent to do this. There are a good many excellent people who sincerely think that these gentlemen are continuing to administer to them the genuine article in its most attenuated form, and who, if undeceived, might no longer patronize the "new school." In fact, however, a pretty large proportion of the disciples of Hahnemann, retain their faith in infinitesimals, and continue to prescribe what may properly be called moon-